
Small Group Study

Desperate Hope: When People Don't Get It

Ice Breakers

Use the questions below to help people open up and to focus your meeting. It is very helpful to go around in a circle with the leader going first. (Remember if you have new members or guests you should take time to introduce everyone.)

1. What was the scariest film you saw as a child?
2. What were a couple things you were really afraid of when you were a child? Are you still afraid of them?
3. What is one challenge you've faced and overcome in your life?

Scripture

Have volunteers read the following scripture.

Numbers 13:26-33; 14:1-19 26 They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. 27 They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. 28 But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. 29 The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan."

30 Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."

31 But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." 32 And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. 33 We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."

14: 1 That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. 2 All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! 3 Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" 4 And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

5 Then Moses and Aaron fell facedown in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. 6 Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes 7 and said to the entire Israelite assembly, "The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. 8 If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. 9 Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them."

10 But the whole assembly talked about stoning them. Then the glory of the LORD appeared at the Tent of Meeting to all the Israelites. 11 The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them? 12 I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, but I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they."

13 Moses said to the LORD, "Then the Egyptians will hear about it! By your power you brought these people up from among them. 14 And they will tell the inhabitants of this land about it. They have already heard that you, O LORD, are

with these people and that you, O LORD, have been seen face to face, that your cloud stays over them, and that you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. 15 If you put these people to death all at one time, the nations who have heard this report about you will say, 16 'The LORD was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them on oath; so he slaughtered them in the desert.'

17 "Now may the Lord's strength be displayed, just as you have declared: 18 'The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.' 19 In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now."

Introduction

Just two years before, the Israelites had been “making bricks without straw” as slaves in Egypt. They had little freedom to worship or to do much besides work in the Egyptian building program. And then God set them free through their exodus from Egypt, including the miraculous destruction of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea.

Fast forward to today's lesson... The people are free, God is providing for their needs in the wilderness, but the people are unsatisfied. They begin to complain. They even wish for the “good old' days” back in Egypt! Let's see what we can we learn from their experience.

Questions

1. What is the most powerful and important spiritual lesson you can take from this story? In what ways have you ever done the same thing?
2. How do you see God's mercy and grace revealed here even when they openly rebelled against Him?
3. The Israelite spies all agreed that the land was good, and worth possessing. But most of them focused on the obstacles, which they perceived as too great. What events in your life are you looking at with unbelief or doubt? List some obstacles you are facing.
4. How can you learn to trust God despite the seemingly impossible obstacles in your path? What choices are you making today that will determine how you will respond to what you face tomorrow?
5. In his sermon this week, Fred said that “God's faithful leaders must learn to deal with loneliness, rejection, and negativity.” He also said that “God's faithful leaders continue to love, forgive, and lead those who will follow the vision.” If you are a leader, can you relate to this? If so, explain.

God bless,
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