

Small Group Guide GOD WHO DISCIPLINES

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

March 7, 2010

Numbers 13-14

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect...

Have everyone review their own lives and identify times when they could discern clear leading from God. Times like: looking for a new job, moving, starting a family, choosing a school, or other major life decisions. Have a few briefly share their experience and how they responded (positively or negatively). What short term and what long term effects came of the decisions they made?

Study the Text . . .

Spies and Their Report

The land the Spies are sent to see is the land of God's promise. This is not the first time they have heard of it. The promise has been a part of their History since it was promised to Abraham and the land has been in their future longer than the memory of any who are living. God has been moving them toward it by His sovereign direction, constantly remembering His promise.

Read Genesis 15:18-21 and Exodus 3:7-8 and remember God's promises as you study the text.

Numbers Chapter 13: 1-33

- The Lord gives instructions to Moses to send out spies. Notice whose name is changed.
- The spies are chosen for a specific task. They go in from the wilderness to witness the whole of the land. Over forty days they journey the land and see all that Moses asked of them.
- They return with a less than objective report for Moses and for the people.

Discuss

- What is the significance of the name change seen in v.16?
- What similarities do you see in the report from spies and the land described in Ex 3:7-8?
- What examples of faith and faithlessness are clear in this passage?

The Response of Israel

Numbers Chapter 14:1-10

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- Despite the spark of faith demonstrated by Caleb, the multitudes of Israel are given to faithlessness. They credit the Lord with bringing them so far but dishonor the provision by asserting that he has brought them to die. Their cries resonate with their disbelief when they were trapped between Pharaoh's army and the Red Sea (Ex 14:11) and when they were hungry in the wilderness (Ex 16:3). What does their longing for Egypt communicate?
- Israel goes so far as to call for a new leader. They show no trust in God or His appointed leader Moses.
- Moses and Aaron display their response to the sin of Israel in falling on their faces.
- Joshua and Caleb show their faith in God's plan and plea for Israel to believe in it also. They say to remember the promise of God for a land of milk and honey and that the Lord was with them.
- Because of their faith, they were treated as enemies in v.10 as their own people desired to kill them. However, to show His glory, God protected them.

Discuss

- Is it more common in the Scriptures for men and women to stand against the crowds or to follow the behavior of masses? What kinds of people follow the masses? What kinds of people take the stand against them? Give examples from this story and others.
- Think in your own life. Which kind of person do you more often resemble? What makes you act one way or the other?
- What word do Joshua and Caleb use to describe the behavior of the Israelites in v.9? Is this too strong of a word?

The Response of God

As children we learn that our disobedience and rebellion against our parents brings consequences. As parents we enforce consequences because we better understand the reason for them. Here we will see the Children of Israel face the consequences of their rebellion against God.

Numbers Chapter 14:11-45

- The Lord speaks to Moses using strong words. He says the people "despise" Him. He is ready to "strike" them and "disinherit" them. Why is Moses seemingly exempt from this treatment?
- Then Moses intercedes for God's people. He gives an argument that honors the Lord and the Lord hears him.
- God gives the pardon from His wrath because of the plea of Moses, but the current generation is excluded from entering the land that will be given as the fulfillment of God's Promise to Abraham.
- God sends word to the nation through Moses and Aaron of the consequences of their rebellion. The long-term punishment was promised to the nation and the surety of it enforced in the death of the faithless spies.

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- When the people saw the seriousness of the punishment to come they changed their tune. Like a child who does not want to be punished, they sought a way to avoid the consequences coming to them.
- Moses conveyed to them that it was no longer the will of God that they take the land, but they still tried.
- Without the Ark of the Covenant and without Moses, they were defeated and driven out of the land.

Discuss

- Moses is revered throughout the history of God's people as a great prophet. Deuteronomy 34:10 claims that there was not yet one greater, but one is promised to be like him in Deuteronomy 18:15. Because of the New Testament we know Jesus is this Prophet. Re-read Numbers 14:13-19. In what ways can you see Moses as a precursor for Jesus Christ?
- At what point in the story did Israel change their tune? What does this say about their motives? Were they trying to avoid punishment or honor God?
- Why did God not take Israel into the land when they decided they would go? What does this say about God's motives? Was His purpose in this story to get them into the land or to be honored in faith?
- When they did not leave the camp, what did the Ark of the Covenant and Moses symbolize?

Group Discussion . . .

Begin individually rethinking what you discussed in your connecting activity in light of the text you just studied. Then discuss together using these questions as guide. [Chances are that everyone in the group has experienced the Lord's discipline but may not have consciously identified it as such. Sharing together will help others in identifying their own experiences of discipline.]

- What has been your typical response to the leading of the Lord?
- What has been your response to the Lord's correction?
- Have you thought of the discipline you have received as a negative or positive thing? What is the reason for discipline? Does God purpose to harm you or prosper you?
- Do you feel that God is currently disciplining you?
- What does God chiefly desire from you?
- What can you do to be more prepared or conditioned to respond like Joshua or Caleb? In the little things? In the big things?
- What can you do to be a Joshua or Caleb to the people around you and help them honor God and avoid the need for discipline?