

Closer to God: The Real Reason for Lent

Small Group Discussion Guide, week of March 13th

MAR 13TH SERMON SUMMARY

CLOSER TO GOD: FEAR AND DOUBT (NUMBERS 13-14)

Moses sent 12 leaders to explore the Promised Land - ten were afraid and doubted God's promise. But Caleb and Joshua trusted God, and they alone entered the land of promise.

- 1. Fear and doubt can be a normal pattern that draws us away from God.** When we indulge the fear sins (worry, anxiety, insecurity, controlling), we feed doubt and disbelief. We forget God's promises and past provision, and we cut off the flow of God's generosity and blessing
- 2. We can interrupt the fear patterns, and instead, trust God.** We can choose to trust God and exercise self-control over our feelings, and find greater faith, self-control, and blessing. God has great plans, and we get to be a part of them if we choose to trust Him even when we are afraid.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

I. INTRODUCTION: Share one fear, or one thing you tend to worry about.

II. THINK AND REFLECT.

Read Deut 1:23-36 (below). In this parallel passage, Moses recounts the events of Num. 13-14.

20 Then I said to you, "You have reached the hill country of the Amorites, which the Lord our God is giving us. **21** See, the Lord your God has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, told you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

22 Then all of you came to me and said, "Let us send men ahead to spy out the land for us and bring back a report about the route we are to take and the towns we will come to."

23 The idea seemed good to me; so I selected twelve of you, one man from each tribe. **24** They left and went up into the hill country, and came to the Valley of Eshkol and explored it.

25 Taking with them some of the fruit of the land, they brought it down to us and reported, "It is a good land that the Lord our God is giving us."

26 But you were unwilling to go up; you rebelled against the command of the Lord your God. **27** You grumbled in your tents and said, “The Lord hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us. **28** Where can we go? Our brothers have made our hearts melt in fear. They say, ‘The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there.’”

29 Then I said to you, “Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. **30** The Lord your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, **31** and in the wilderness. There you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.”

32 In spite of this, you did not trust in the Lord your God, **33** who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go.

34 When the Lord heard what you said, he was angry and solemnly swore: **35** “No one from this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give your ancestors, **36** except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see it, and I will give him and his descendants the land he set his feet on, because he followed the Lord wholeheartedly.”

- 1a. In v. 26-28, what fears and worries did the Israelites face?
 - b. Do you think this was a real danger, or not?
 - c. How did fear distort their sense of reality? What exaggerations and lies do you notice?
 - d. How did they respond to the fear and worry?
 - e. How have you seen similar responses to fear - in people you know, or in yourself?
2. Think about the reasons the Israelites had for trusting God.
 - a. How had God provided for them in the past?
 - b. What did they know about God’s promises?
 - c. What do you learn about God and his character in these verses?
- 3a. Describe how the fear of the Israelites grew into doubt and disbelief.
 - b. Are you surprised by the response of the Israelites? Why or why not?

4a. Why was God so angry? See also Numbers 14:11-12, 20-25 for more details about this.

b. Do you think God's response was justified? Or does it seem like an over-reaction? Explain.

c. Why doesn't God respond to our fear and doubt in the same way? Explain what's different – if you can, share a verse that supports your answer!

III. PERSONAL APPLICATION (Choose 1 of the following if time is limited)

5. Think about your normal patterns of fear and worry. How are you like the 10 spies and the Israelites? Or how are you like Caleb in trusting God? Share a recent example.

6. How do you see the fear and doubt pattern in your life? Think about the following questions, and share as much as you are comfortable sharing.

- If you tend to worry, do you consider it a sin – or “just the way you are”? Explain.
- How does your view of God, and any lies you believe, impact your ability to trust God?
- How does fear and doubt prevent you from experiencing God's generosity and blessings?
- How might you be missing out on God's great plans because of fear and doubt?
- How do you want to draw closer to God?

7. How is God speaking to you through this discussion or Sunday's message?

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