



Sermon Discussion Questions

October 13, 2024

In the Wilderness

DON'T FEAR THE FUTURE

Numbers 14:1-38

1. **Opening Discussion Questions:** (in a group setting you may not want to use all of these)
 - a. If you are a parent, you have almost certainly had to determine how to discipline your child when they misbehave. How did you decide what “punishment fit the crime”? If you have more than one child, did you subscribe to the belief that they all had to be treated the same when you had to discipline or did you tailor unique punishments for each child?
 - b. Continuing to think about children, when you see one seriously misbehaving or acting spoiled while in a restaurant or other public space what do you think of the parents?
 - c. (Note: If studying in a group setting be careful not to allow this question to morph into a discussion of the current Presidential election.) Have you ever taken part in a protest movement (e.g., the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, the anti-abortion marches, or more recently the war in the Middle East)? What motivated you to do so? How were you treated by family, friends, or casual acquaintances who did not share your view?
2. **Sermon Outline/Key Points**
 - a. Israel Was Severely Punished for Rebelling Out of Fear
 - i. After hearing the bad report, the people rebelled against God
 - ii. God punished the people for their fearful rebellion
 - iii. God punished the spies for stirring up fearful rebellion
 - b. Don't Let Fear Keep You from Obeying God's Commands Going Forward
 - i. God still doesn't want His people paralyzed by fear
 - ii. Jesus affirmed God's displeasure when fear is our excuse for disobedience
 - iii. What is our "go at once and occupy it"? "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations"!
 - c. Trust That God Will Empower You to Do His Work Faithfully, No Matter What
 - i. Caleb and Joshua are right in verses 8-9
 - ii. God's Spirit empowers us even when faced with giants, powers, and authorities
3. **Study/Discussion Points:**
 - a. **Sunday Afternoon**
 - i. As soon as possible after listening to the sermon set aside some time to ponder these questions prayerfully:
 - ii. What one thing most stood out to you in this sermon?
 - iii. What new truth did you learn or of what truth were you reminded?
 - iv. After listening to the sermon, is there a Scripture passage you feel led to meditate on or commit to memory this week?
 - v. What is one thing you feel God is leading you to do after hearing this message?
 - vi. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?
 - b. **Monday:**

- i. Start this week's study of Numbers 14 by reading the entire chapter twice – the first time quickly to capture the big picture and the second time slowly and deliberately to capture the details.
 1. What would you want to know if you could ask Moses, Joshua, or Caleb for more details?
 2. What stands out as the most significant act or action in the chapter?
 3. People who haven't experienced God's love and forgiveness might feel that He was being arbitrary and capricious in His judgment of Israel in this chapter. Read the following passages describing some of the nation's earlier actions that serve as a backdrop for what is going to occur in Numbers 14: Exodus 14:10-18, Exodus 15:22-27, Exodus 16:1-5, Exodus 17:1-7, and Numbers 11:4-6 & 18-20

How did God respond in each of these cases? How does Romans 8:28-39 show that God will do the same for us? What greater act than bringing the Israelites out of Egypt did He do to prove it for us?

c. **Tuesday:**

- i. Today please focus on Numbers 14:1-12. Begin reading with Numbers 13:31 so you will have the background for the "then" at the beginning of chapter 14.
- ii. At this point the Israelites numbered well over a million (see Numbers 2:32-33). What does it say about the power of just a few negative people that the *entire* camp was grumbling (complaining)?
 1. Who did the people say they were complaining about? In honesty, who were they really complaining about?
 2. What do 1 Corinthians 10:10, Philippians 2:14-16, 1 Peter 4:9, and Jude 3-4 & 16 tell us about Christians' grumbling? What is a grumbling or complaining spirit evidence of in a person's life? Is it possible to be a grumbler and still honestly pray the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:10)?
- iii. What excuses do the people make for desiring to go back to Egypt in verse 3? How does Exodus 1:16 & 22 show that this is just a convenient excuse and not a true concern?
- iv. Only four men in the camp appeared to have trusted God to do what He had promised. Who were they?
 1. How did the Israelites respond to them?
 2. How does Jesus say we will be treated when we find ourselves in similar situations (see Matthew 5:11-12, 24:9, John 15:20)?
- v. Reading between the lines, how do you think the attitude in camp changed mid-way through verse 10 (remember the Tent of Meeting was located in the center of camp where everyone could see it)? Instead of grumbling what do you think was the primary emotion now?

d. **Wednesday:**

- i. Today read Numbers 14:10-19
 1. What did God say to Moses using the two rhetorical questions about the sin the people had committed? How is what the Israelites were guilty of the same as what we are guilty of every time we sin?
 2. How does Paul provide the best (maybe only possible) answer to God's questions in Romans 1:18-23?
 3. Compare this passage in Numbers with Exodus 32:9-13.

- a. What facts/events are similar? Different?
 - b. Why do you think God addresses Moses and not the people who were actually sinning? What application might we find in the church today (see 2 Timothy 4:2)?
 - c. Having been down this path with Moses at least once before why do you think God repeats the process here in Numbers 14? Did He forget? If not (He does not forget anything), what do you think He is actually doing?
 - d. In what way is God's suggestion that He will raise up new descendants to fulfill the promises He made actually looking forward to the work of Christ (see Romans 9:7-8 and Galatians 3:7-9)?
- ii. Moses' response to God is one of the greatest examples of intercessory prayer in the Bible.
 1. Can you find four "arguments" that Moses presents to God in this prayer? Of the four, which is paramount and should always be foundational in our prayers?
 2. Compare Moses' prayer with Jesus' model prayer in Matthew 6:5-13. What parallels do you see?
 3. In view of what God has promised Moses in verse 12 what does this prayer tell us about Moses' character? How close do you think Moses comes to obeying the command God had given him in Leviticus 19:18 and Jesus gave us in Matthew 22:39?
- e. Thursday:*
- i. Read Numbers 14:19-25
 1. What is God's immediate response to Moses' request (verse 20)?
 2. Moses obviously had a unique and very special relationship with God, but according to James 5:13-16 and 1 John 5:14-15 why can (should) we intercede for others and expect similar results?
 - ii. After announcing His forgiveness in verse 20 the next two verses are seen by some to contradict that forgiveness.
 1. In what way is God's forgiveness demonstrated conclusively (i.e., what didn't He do)?
 2. What lesson is He teaching the Israelites that every parent tries to teach their children? Why was punishment necessary to teach that lesson? What do you think would have happened if God simply forgave them with no other action?
 3. What should we learn from this that applies when we sin even though we confess it and are forgiven?
 - iii. Caleb was singled out as different. In what two ways does God say he is different from the other Israelites?
 1. Even though God has singled him out as a special case what is he going to have to endure?
 2. What does this teach us about the possible effects of our sins?
 3. While some would claim it was unfair, what well known verse in Romans shows that God was completely just in His action?
 - iv. That same passage in Romans tells us that God's grace is given freely. How is His grace demonstrated in verse 25?

f. **Friday:**

- i. Read Numbers 14:26-35.
- ii. These verses repeat what God had already told Moses, but this time Aaron also hears what the Lord says. Why do you think God saw fit to also tell him? What role does Aaron fulfill that makes it right, and perhaps necessary, for him to be involved? How might Hebrews 9:22 give a possible answer?
- iii. It is sometimes said that God's greatest judgment is to let people have their own way. How is this principle shown to be at work in this passage?
 1. What are the three components or aspects of His judgment?
 2. How is God's punishment exactly the opposite of what the Israelites had been fearing (verses 2 vs. 32 and verses 3 vs. 31)? Do you ever see God doing something similar today?
 3. What basis does God use for determining the duration of the punishment?
 4. During the next 38 years of living as nomads in the wilderness watching as the grumblers gradually died off how often do you think their thoughts may have returned to the last phrase of verse 34? Could knowing that you and your loved ones were being subjected to God's displeasure be the greatest punishment?

g. **Saturday:**

- i. Read Numbers 14:36-38
 1. Why did God single out the 10 spies for immediate death?
 2. What message would it have sent to the rest of the Israelites?
- ii. Conclude this week's study by rereading Numbers 14:1-38 slowly, meditating on each section.

4. Further Study: If you are interested in digging deeper consider the two numbers used several times in this passage: 10 and 40. Both are important in the Bible. Spend time with a good concordance examining the many passages in which these numbers are important.

5. Application:

- a. Grumbling – complaining about what God in His sovereignty is doing – is serious business but has become commonplace in our culture and to an extent in our churches. Pray that the Holy Spirit will show you any areas where you may be doing so – or have an attitude of discontentment. Then repent and seek forgiveness.
- b. Sin, even confessed and forgiven sin, can have serious consequences reaching far beyond our own lives. Recognizing this should help prevent us from adopting an attitude that we can keep on sinning because God will always forgive. If you find yourself confessing the same sin again and again perhaps it is time to seek help from one of our pastors or another more mature Christian.

6. Prayer Points:

- a. Adoration – Psalms 8:1 and 29:1-2
- b. Confession – Proverbs 28:13 and 1 John 1:8-10
- c. Thanksgiving – Psalms 95:1-2 and 100:4-5
- d. Supplications –Matthew 21:22 and John 16:19