

The Gospel Project® for Adults

Daily Discipleship Guide CSB, Unit 7, Session 1

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The Rebellion of God's People

Session in a Sentence: Rebellion against God is rooted in failing to trust God and always has consequences.

Main Passages: Numbers 13:1-2,30-33; 14:1-4,30-35

Firefighters responded to the call of a building on fire. Upon arrival, they noticed a girl on the tenth floor, but they could not reach her with their ladder truck because the street was too narrow. So the firefighters set up a net for the girl to jump into. They pleaded with her to jump into the net, doing their best to assure her that she would be safe. But there was a problem: the girl was blind. The girl could not see the net and could not bring herself to trust the pleas and assurances of the firefighters.

Then the girl's father arrived on the scene, grabbed the bullhorn, and called out to his daughter for her to jump into the net. The girl leapt from the window and landed safely. Throughout the girl's life, she had trusted the sound of her father's voice to guide her where she could not see. The girl heard her father's voice and knew she could trust him because he had faithfully guided her so many times in the past. Because of her trust in the faithfulness of her father, she walked away from the burning building unscathed. 1

What is the difference between trusting someone you know and trusting someone you do not know?

Group Time

Point 1: Rebellion against God begins by ignoring His provision and promises (Num. 13:1-2,30-33).

1 The LORD spoke to Moses: 2 "Send men to scout out the land of Canaan I am giving to the Israelites. Send one man who is a leader among them from each of their ancestral tribes."

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30 Then Caleb quieted the people in the presence of Moses and said, "Let's go up now and take possession of the land because we can certainly conquer it!"

31 But the men who had gone up with him responded, "We can't attack the people because they are stronger than we are!" 32 So they gave a negative report to the Israelites about the land they had scouted: "The land we passed through to explore is one that devours its inhabitants, and all the people we saw in it are men of great size. 33 We even saw the Nephilim there—the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim! To ourselves we seemed like grasshoppers, and we must have seemed the same to them."

God promised the Israelites the land of Canaan, and He had also showed them, quite clearly, that He had the power to make good on that promise because He had made good on another promise—deliverance from Egypt. But Israel's ability to take residence in the promised land was contingent on their faithfulness to the God who had always been faithful to them.

What are some things in your life you can remember to help you remain faithful to God?

The spies Moses sent saw that the land was flowing with milk and honey, confirming the truth of what God had said about the land, and they acknowledged this before the people (Num. 13:27). But when they spoke about the cities and the people in the land, their report turned negative (vv. 28-29,31-33). Ten of the spies saw their own weakness and stopped there, but Caleb and Joshua looked through their weakness and looked upon God. The spies may have felt like grasshoppers compared to the people in the land, but the people of the land were not even ants compared to the God of Israel. All the Israelites had to do was trust in God's power and faithfulness. Sadly, they did not.

Point 2: Rebellion against God impacts others (Num. 14:1-4).

1 Then the whole community broke into loud cries, and the people wept that night. 2 All the Israelites complained about Moses and Aaron, and the whole community told them, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt, or if only we had died in this wilderness! 3 Why is the LORD bringing us into this land to die by the sword? Our wives and children will become plunder. Wouldn’t it be better for us to go back to Egypt?” 4 So they said to one another, “Let’s appoint a leader and go back to Egypt.”

The Israelites failed to trust that God is faithful, which led to disobedience as they refused to enter the land He promised them. The Israelites’ response was not a surprise to God. Their rebellion against Him only revealed the sinfulness that was already deep in their hearts, of which God was fully aware (1 Sam. 16:7). Because of their unbelieving hearts, the Israelites complained like a people who were without hope, though God had made it plain to them that He would provide for them and protect them from their enemies.

What are some things that our actions reveal about our hearts?

Sin as Rebellion: The Bible often portrays sin in terms of defiance and rebellion toward _____. Sin is personal and willful disobedience, the raising of a _____ toward the One who made us.

The Israelites, swayed by the negative report of the ten spies, decided it would be best for them to choose a new leader for themselves and return to Egypt, to the place of their captivity. Therefore, they threatened to kill the leaders God had placed over them (Num. 14:10). Furthermore, their rebellion deserved immediate judgment from God, but Moses interceded for them once again on account of God’s glory before the nations, and He relented (vv. 11-19). The sin of the Israelites affected the way they viewed the leaders God had given them, and it had the potential of affecting how the nations around them viewed God.

Voices from Church History

“Conduct, is what we do; character, is what we are ... Character is the state of the heart, conduct its outward expression. Character is the root of the tree, conduct, the fruit it bears.”²

—E. M. Bounds (1835-1913)

Point 3: Rebellion against God has consequences (Num. 14:30-35).

30 I swear that none of you will enter the land I promised to settle you in, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. 31 I will bring your children whom you said would become plunder into the land you rejected, and they will enjoy it. 32 But as for you, your corpses will fall in this wilderness. 33 Your children will be shepherds in the wilderness for forty years and bear the penalty for your acts of unfaithfulness until all your corpses lie scattered in the wilderness. 34 You will bear the consequences of your iniquities forty years based on the number of the forty days that you scouted the land, a year for each day. You will know my displeasure. 35 I, the LORD, have spoken. I swear that I will do this to the entire evil community that has conspired against me. They will come to an end in the wilderness, and there they will die.”

God’s glory is paramount to Him, and by extension, it should be for us as well. That’s why He created us—to glorify Him (Isa. 43:7). That is why He formed a nation through Abraham and his descendants, so that He might be glorified through His great and glorious acts of redemption. Yes, God has a faithful love for His people; He is great in His compassion and mercy. But these are not all that drive Him. His glory does too. The wondrous beauty of it all is that the salvation of people is one of the greatest ways God makes His glory known. The Israelites missed this and suffered the consequences.

How can we glorify God and make His glory known through our lives?

In Numbers 14:30-35 we see the chilling reality of the consequences of sin. The Israelites had disobeyed God time and time again, and time and time again, God had been patient with them (v. 11). But now their rebellion had earned their eventual death in the wilderness because “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). God had been patient with these people, but God’s patience does not mean He will spare sinners from the consequences of their sin forever.

What should it look like to share the gospel with urgency?

My Mission

Because we have experienced God's forgiveness of our rebellion through Christ, we trust God as we obey His calling to share His kingdom with the nations.

- **How will you respond in faith to God's patience toward rebellion?**
- **What are some ways your group can remind one another of God's faithfulness and encourage each other toward obedience?**
- **How will you share the gospel of Jesus Christ with urgency in the coming days?**

Daily Study

Day 1: Read Numbers 12:1-16

It was bad enough when the Israelites rebelled against Moses, but the rebellion of Miriam and Aaron surely hit him harder. Like we see happen in many confrontations, Aaron and Miriam hid the true motivation of their criticism behind a different excuse: Moses' marriage to a Cushite woman. But their main complaint was Moses being God's primary spokesperson.

When Miriam and Aaron confronted the man God had chosen to speak for Him, He chose to speak for Himself. God pronounced judgment on them for their sin, and in His anger, He gave Miriam a skin disease. Aaron was immediately repentant and asked Moses to do something about Miriam's disease. God's servant responded by lifting His voice in intercession to God, and Miriam was healed.

This account offers a picture of how we are to respond to God when He reveals Himself to us. God's self-revelation shows us two things: who He is and who we are. When we see God for who He is and what He has done, we then can properly see ourselves for who we are. All pretense is stripped away. All false comparisons crumble around us. We look upon the holiness of God, which forces us to face our sinfulness, drawing us toward repentance. And because of the intercession of Jesus, the One who made atonement for our sin, we are able to experience forgiveness, cleansing, and the joy of our salvation.

In what ways does seeing the truth of who God is humble you?

Voices from the Church

"God is the rescuer. Jesus is the hero. You don't have to carry the burden for all your people, you just have to trust that Jesus does." 3

—Annie Downs

Day 2: Read Numbers 13:1-33

The way God told Moses to send the Israelite spies into the land was a reminder to him and the Israelites of God's promise to give them the land: "Send men to scout out the land of Canaan *I am giving to the Israelites*" (Num. 13:2, emphasis added). The land of Canaan was a good land, flowing with milk and honey, which made it a land worth fighting for, and God would drive the people out of the land so His people could take possession of it. Yet they rebelled against Him and refused to go into the land where they would have had rest and all of their needs provided for.

Later in Scripture, the land of Canaan is used as a picture of heaven—our place of rest (see Heb. 3–4). The Israelites had left slavery in Egypt and endured a trek through the wilderness to make it to the promised land, but their sin prevented them from entering. Through Jesus, we are freed from the slavery to sin, yet we continue to live in the wilderness—a fallen and broken world. However, in light of eternity, our journey to our promised land is short. We are called to trust God in faithfulness as we journey on, placing our hope in His promise to bring us home to the place of our rest.

How might the hope of what God has in store for you in heaven change the way you approach each day now?

Day 3: Read Numbers 14:1-25

Faith in God leads to obedience to His commands. God has revealed Himself to us so that we would turn to Him in faith and love Him and then, through that faith and love, obey Him. But our obedience is short-circuited immediately when our faith erodes. After the Israelites' rebellion, when God pronounced judgment on them, God first declared how patient He had been with His people. He then threatened to do away with them completely. But Moses interceded on behalf of the people, appealing

to the glory and promises of God.

Each day, we encounter people who have not trusted in Jesus for salvation. They too stand under the righteous judgment of a patient God (2 Pet. 3:9). God invites us to join Him on His mission of making His presence known. We do this by proclaiming the gospel but also by praying earnestly for those who don't know Him that they might repent of their sin, turn to Jesus, and experience life.

Whom will you pray for who doesn't know Jesus? How will you tell them about Jesus this week?

Day 4: Read Numbers 14:26-45

After God pronounced judgment on the Israelites for their disobedience, the people responded by grieving. However, there is a difference between *grieving sin* and *grieving the consequences of sin*.

When we grieve the consequences of sin, we are distraught by being disciplined or because we missed out on something that we wanted. The focus is on us. But when we grieve sin itself, we are distraught because our fellowship with God has been disrupted and we are failing to glorify God as He deserves. The focus is on God.

The Israelites' willingness to go into the promised land without the presence of God shows that they hadn't repented of their sin. They didn't want God's presence; they wanted God's presents. The worst place for us to be is in sin because it disrupts our fellowship with God. Having anything without God is far worse than having nothing with God. We need to remember this, let God drive it into our hearts, and be quick to grieve over our sin, not just its consequences.

How have you grieved over sin recently? Have you focused on the sin itself or on the consequences of sin?

Day 5: Read Numbers 16:1-50

Once again, we encounter a rebellion against Moses. But we have to see Israel's repeated lack of trust in Moses for what it really was—a lack of trust in God. This was their root problem. This was what had to be addressed over and over. Rebelling against Moses was merely the symptom. Rebelling against God was the disease needing to be cured.

While most of us may never be in charge of leading a massive group of hardhearted people through the wilderness, we are all called to take the message of the gospel to a world that wants nothing to do with it. Our job is simple: live the gospel; preach the gospel. But because the gospel is offensive, people will despise us. Like Moses, we must remember that it is not *really* us whom they despise and reject; it is Christ. And so, like Moses, but even more so like Christ, we must show compassion to the people we have been called to love and serve, and we must pray that through our kindness and perseverance they might be reached with the gospel we proclaim.

How does praying for people change the way you see them?

Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- Rebellion against God begins by ignoring His provision and promises (Num. 13:1-2,30-33).
- Rebellion against God impacts others (Num. 14:1-4).
- Rebellion against God has consequences (Num. 14:30-35).

How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?

What are some ways you need others to encourage you to obey the commands and instructions of the Lord?

How are you being wise with your time, in light of the patience of God, to help others see the glory of God in Jesus Christ?

References

1. Tony Evans, *Tony Evans' Book of Illustrations* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2009) [eBook].
2. E. M. Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, in *The Works of E. M. Bounds* (Lulu.com, 2015), 337.
3. Annie Downs, "Miriam," She Reads Truth, July 20, 2018, <http://shereadstruth.com/2015/06/17/miriam>.