

TALK IT OVER GUIDE



BREVARD COMMUNITY CHURCH PROVERBS: LESSONS IN WISDOM FROM SOLOMON UNCOMFORTABLE SITUATIONS NUMBER 11:4-18 07/30/2017

MAIN POINT

When God puts us in uncomfortable situations, our perspective on life changes.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Share about a time when you forced yourself to do something that made you uncomfortable (working out, trying a new restaurant, engaging in a relationship, etc.). How did doing that thing change your perspective?

Have you ever done something to serve in the church that made you uncomfortable? What did you learn from that experience?

Throughout the Bible, we see examples of people putting themselves in uncomfortable situations and God using that situation to strengthen their faith. If we refuse to put ourselves in uncomfortable situations, the Holy Spirit will do it for us, because He wants to change our perspective and grow our relationship with Him.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ NUMBERS 11:4-18.

Were the Israelites' memories of their time in Egypt accurate? Why or why not?

What had God done for the Israelites up to this point? How might remembering those things have changed their perspective?

The Israelites were not living in luxury in Egypt. They were living under brutal slavery, and Pharaoh had made their lives miserable. God had delivered them out of the hand of Pharaoh through ten plagues and miraculously led them out of Egypt through the parting of the Red Sea. God had also cared for their spiritual health by giving Moses the Law on Mt. Sinai. When the Israelites grew hungry, God was gracious and gave them manna from heaven. Despite the many ways God had provided for them, the Israelites were not content and had convinced themselves that they were better off when they were in slavery in Egypt.

How did Moses respond to the Israelites' complaint (vv. 11-15)?

How did God respond to Moses' complaint (vv. 16-18)? What is significant about God putting His Spirit on the elders of Israel (v. 17)?

The Holy Spirit rarely dwelt in people in the Old Testament. Only those who were specially chosen to be used by God or to enter into a special relationship with God were given the Spirit. This can be seen in the life of Moses who spoke to God "face to face, just as a man speaks with his friend" (Ex. 33:11). That same spirit was given to the seventy elders, and it signified a special and intimate relationship with God.

How might Moses' perspective have changed when God placed him in the uncomfortable situation of leading and providing for the Israelites?

How do you tend to respond when people complain to you about petty things?

Does it surprise you that God gave the Israelites meat even though their complaints were not valid? Why do you think God did this?

It is difficult to put up with the petty complaints of others, and it is even harder to bless such people. It is important to remember that the Israelites did not deserve to be delivered out of Egypt, given bread to eat, or any of the many blessings God had given them. God does not bless us because we deserve it, He blesses us because He is good. God blessing the Israelites with meat, even though their complaints reflected a lack of appreciation for God, is a picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ. God sent Jesus to die for our sins even though we did not deserve it. God demonstrated his love for us by sending Jesus to die for us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8).

One of the primary ways God calls us to step out of our comfort zones is through serving others. No matter how uncomfortable service may be from time to time, it is an act of worship, and your life will be changed through the process.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 6:1-7.

What complaint was brought before the twelve? Why did the twelve refuse to deal with this complaint themselves (vv. 2, 4)?

Did the seven men chosen to oversee the distribution of food to the widows audition for this task? Why were they chosen?

If the twelve were to take on this task of overseeing the distribution of food equally to the Hebrew and Hellenist widows, they would have had to spend less time preaching the Word. Thus they chose seven men who had a good reputation, were full of the Spirit, and were wise (v. 3) to take on the task so that the "ministry of the Word" would not be hindered.

Given that these seven men were chosen to serve the widows rather than volunteering, how do you think serving in this capacity changed their perspective?

What was the result of these seven men taking over the distribution of food to the widows?

While there was nothing particularly impressive or fancy about the ministry that these seven men took on, it freed up the twelve to preach the gospel and the result was incredible as "disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly." While such acts of service may not seem all that impressive to us, in the eyes of God, they are precious.

Do you view serving others as an act of worship? Why or why not? Read James 2:14-17 to aid in your discussion.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

One of the ways we worship God is by serving Him. What steps might you take this week to make worship a more integral part of your lifestyle?

What is one way you could make yourself uncomfortable in order to serve someone in need this week?

What are some of the things our church is already doing to minister to people in need? How can you get involved?

PRAY

Thank God for blessing us even though we don't deserve it. Ask Him to help us find joy in both sharing and showing the love of Christ to others. Pray that God would make us uncomfortable so that our perspective might change and we might be used by God to point others to Christ.

COMMENTARY

NUMBERS 11:4-18

11:4 Contemptible people were a mixed crowd of Israelites who were descendants of Jacob and others who had left Egypt in the exodus. The text contrasts with two parallel events in Ex 16:1-36 and 18:13-27, drawing new perspectives on the themes of God's provision for the people and the matter of leadership on the human level. The human response factor has deteriorated in the current context. In Exodus 16 God supplied needed food, but in Numbers 11 the people complained about God's provision.

11:5 The people's complaint is summarized in the words, "We remember the free fish we ate in Egypt." This amounted to calling the evil of the Egyptian oppression "good" and God's good provision in the wilderness "evil." Insatiable human lust, whatever the object of desire, will lead to a life of bondage.

11:7 The phrase "the manna resembled coriander seed" is one of the few descriptions of the wilderness diet. This description was inserted to refute the people's complaints. Precise identification of manna is somewhat tentative. But manna's association with coriander seed is probably an indicator of its taste, since the seed was used for flavoring. The comparison of manna to bdellium indicates a yellow-white aromatic resin similar to a by-product of the tamarisk tree found in northern Arabia.

11:10-15 The effect of the discontentment throughout the camp drew the attention of Moses and God. Though he was angry with the people, Moses approached God with respect, asserting that he could not carry all these people by myself. Moses also declared, "If You are going to treat me like this, please kill me right now." The words of his misery-filled complaint bordered on rebellion, as this section prepares the reader for the rebellion of Moses and Aaron in chapter 20. Moses is the focal person in the first cycle of rebellion (chaps. 11-15); Aaron is the main leader in the second cycle; and in the third cycle, both men rebel, leaving God to raise up a new temporary spokesman, Balaam.

11:16 The term for "officers" (Hb shoterim) also denotes scribes, who might have been responsible for the writing and collecting of documents that would eventually become the Pentateuch. The tent of meeting was the place of revelation and mediation, two aspects of the relationship between God and His people.

11:17 The possession of the Spirit of God that had been exclusively on Moses would now be distributed to the 70 elders, giving them a spiritual dimension that would set them apart from the administrative and judicial appointees of Ex 18:25-26. The work of the Spirit of God would enable the elders and officers to carry out the tasks of teaching, judging, and leading the Israelites through the wilderness. God ratified the 70 registered elders by placing His Spirit on them,

even two who had remained in the camp. Later in Numbers, Balaam also received the Spirit of prophecy from God (24:2). 11:18 Purify yourselves refers to the process of consecration through the bathing of body and clothes that was used to prepare people to receive a theophany—a manifestation of God’s presence.

ACTS 6:1-7

6:1 The distinction between Hellenistic and Hebraic Jews probably refers to their respective languages. Many Jews whose primary language was Greek were converted to Christianity (e.g., Paul; Ac 9; see note at 22:3). Needy Hellenistic believers felt they had been neglected in the early church’s charity “distribution.” This imbalance may have arisen due simply to the logistical challenge caused by the rapid addition of Hellenistic Jewish Christians. The existing church structure proved unable to meet the growing demands. It was time for change.

6:2-4 The distinction between those responsible for “preaching” and those responsible for distribution of food marks the beginning of functional distinction of roles and responsibilities in the early church. The apostles (“the Twelve”) believed prayer and preaching were their primary duties. It is not that other roles were unimportant. In fact, the high requirements (“good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom”) that had to be met by the seven men who would take over the duty of food distribution signals the importance of all roles in Christian service. Each of the “seven men” filled a position that later came to be reserved for deacons. Informally, therefore, these men were the first Christian deacons. They were responsible for the practical needs of the congregation.

6:5-6 “Stephen” and six others (their Greek names probably identify them as Hellenistic believers) were selected as the first deacons. They were set apart for service by prayer and the laying on of “hands” by the apostles. The laying on of hands occurs in several contexts in Acts (Acts 8:17; 13:3; 19:6). Here, as in 13:3, it indicated the church’s recognition that God had called these people to a particular ministry.

6:7 Bold “preaching about God” drove growth in “the number of the disciples” in the early church. Even a “large group of priests” became followers of Christ. Luke did not specify who the priests were, but they were probably those who performed duties in connection with worship at the temple. This put them in a good position to hear the apostles preach on a regular basis.