

The Land Between

Session One: Complaint

Welcome, opening prayer and worship

(5–15 minutes)

Introduction

(5–10 minutes)

In this series based on the book *The Land Between*, we will look at the biblical story of the Israelite's journey through the Sinai desert as a metaphor for being in an undesired, transitional space. After enduring generations of slavery in Egypt, the descendants of Jacob travel through the wilderness ("the land between") toward their new home in Canaan. They crave the food of their former home in Egypt and despise their present environment. They are unable to go back and incapable of moving forward.

Bible study

(20 minutes)

Numbers 11:1-9

1. The people of Israel were slaves in Egypt. Why are they recollecting fond memories of their lives there? See vs. 5.
2. This is not the first time the Israelites are complaining. Skim through Exodus chapters 15-17 and describe the three episodes where the Israelites face life-threatening circumstances. How do they respond to these events?
3. Why do you think God lead His people into the desert wilderness for an extended period of time? What was He trying to form in the Israelites through these crises?

DVD presentation

(10 minutes)

Questions and discussion

(20 minutes)

1. Was there anything from the DVD that was new to you, or had an effect on you? Did you hear anything that raised more questions in your mind?
2. Describe a time (perhaps it is now) when you lived in the Land Between. What brought you there? Are you still there?
3. We tend to look down on the Israelites as complainers. In what ways have you complained about God's provision? Did this complaint ever reflect bitter resentment against God?
4. It's not only our hardship, but also our reaction to the hardship that forms us. When faced with hardship, how do you most commonly respond?
5. How do our patterns of response to challenges and trials shape who we become? Are our responses usually negative; for example: grumbling, rage, depression, shopping, drinking, or overeating? If so, how can you change that pattern of behaviour?
6. How has God shown his faithfulness to you in the past? How does that encourage you to respond with trust and obedience in difficult times?

Prayer ministry and closing prayer

(15 minutes)

May our gracious God who redeems all things give us the capacity to open our hands to release those things that we have hung on to for way too long and in the process to receive the good gifts that He has to give. May He guard our hearts and our minds against a spirit of complaint and may He fill us with His Holy Spirit who enables us to trust Him through the good times and the hard times.