

The Story Adult Study Guide

For the Week of October 13, 2019

Chapter 6: “Wandering”



Key Events: the Israelites grumble against God, spies sent to Canaan, wandering in the wilderness, the bronze snake, Moses' farewell speech and death

Key Characters: Moses, Joshua (see *The Story* page 488 for character descriptions)

Bible Reference for this Chapter: Numbers 10-14, 20-21, 25, 27; Deuteronomy 1-2, 4, 6, 8-9, 29-32, 34

1. In chapter 6, the Israelites exhibited a typical human frailty: discontent leading to defiance. What is the antidote for this weakness?
2. Some of the spies sent to explore Canaan gave this report, “We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are.” (page 75) Recall and share situations in your personal life or in the life of our congregation when God made possible what seemed impossible.
3. The Israelites suffered the consequences for their defiance. Those 20 years old or more would not enter the promised land of Canaan and the nation would wander in the wilderness for 40 years. (page 77) What hard lessons did the older and younger generations need to learn?
4. Moses and Aaron disobeyed God at the waters of Meribah. Although they were forgiven, they were not permitted to enter the Promised Land as a consequence. (page 79) Why should leaders, especially Christian leaders, be held to a high standard of conduct? What about compassion for leaders who are fallible humans?
5. Read the episode of the bronze snake at the bottom of page 80. How is the bronze snake a picture/type of Christ?

6. Read the paragraph from Moses' farewell speech, "Hear, O Israel . . ." in the middle of page 85. What blessings does God bestow on families that follow these words? What is the fallout when parents and families ignore these words?

7. Consider Moses' statement, "Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people." (page 86) How does this statement speak to us in our lives as Christians?

8. Upper Story = God is present and working in the world to bring about the salvation of souls. Lower Story = God is present and working in my life every day to strengthen my faith in his plan and promises. Please share messages of personal comfort, hope, and encouragement you received from chapter 6.

Prayer Suggestions

- Ask God to forgive my sins of discontentment, complaining, and defiance.
- Thank God for his loving discipline and guidance to stay on his path in my life.
- Pray for a heart of contentment and maturity when things don't go my way.

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Study Guide Helps for Lesson 6

1. Like all sins, doses of law and gospel are needed. LAW: recognize/confess that discontentment and complaining about my situation in life expresses doubt in God and mistrust of his promises. GOSPEL: recognize and dwell on the wondrous grace of God through Jesus, the blessings of forgiveness, saving faith, and eternal life. When mired in discontent, we often fail to see the ways we are truly blessed in life, spiritually and physically; we suffer from the “grass is always greener” mindset. Through regular contact with the Word of God, the Holy Spirit can turn our sour attitude into one of “godliness with contentment” (See: 1 Timothy 6:3-10).
2. Personal situations vary – examples: when God turns the heart of a friend, relative or acquaintance from rejection to faith in Jesus; God resolving difficult situations like marriage conflict, work dilemmas, financial troubles, health problems, etc. In the church, such things as a building project or calling for a pastor or teacher for an extended period of time.
3. Lessons to be learned include: do not ever defy God, discount his power, or doubt his intentions to bless his children; God is true to his Word – if he promises to do something, count on it; although God forgave their sins, there were consequences for their sinful actions that may have life-long and generational ramifications; God’s plans and ways are different from the plans and ways of people; aligning to God’s way results in blessings, and rejecting God’s way results in wrath.
4. Leaders influence and guide people/followers, thus, they are held to a high standard to inspire others toward proper conduct. Christian leaders (pastors, teachers, lay leaders and servants, etc.) represent God and his Word in ministry. In fact, all Christians represent Jesus to others. Their God-pleasing conduct positively impacts gospel ministry; conversely, sinful behavior diminishes gospel preaching, may incite others to spurn God’s Word, and may lead others into sin. Leaders need compassion and forgiveness like anybody else; however, sinful conduct may require discipline and removal for the welfare of the people (and gospel ministry).
5. (see John 3:14-16) Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole, so that people could look on it, believe God’s promise, and be delivered from earthly death. In like manner, the Son of Man was lifted up on the cross, so that people could look to the Savior, believe God’s promise of salvation, and be delivered from eternal death.
6. The greatest blessing is saving faith through the work of the Holy Spirit, faith for family members of this generation and future generations as the Word is passed from parents to children to descendants. God also blesses people when they follow his will and design in life—marriages, families, relationships, and lifestyles are benefited and blessed. Conversely, failure to love God and share God’s Word has catastrophic effects—condemnation for families and descendants, and impaired relationships and lifestyles.
7. We may be tempted to claim entitlement regarding God’s favor. We may think we deserve a life of ease, comfort and material blessings since we are followers of Jesus, “good” Christians. All the blessings God gives us, including righteousness before God, are gifts merited only by the holy, precious blood of Jesus. We are unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness God has shown us.
8. Answers will vary. Consider/discuss elements of chapter 6 that relate to our daily walk of faith.