

Group Gathering Question:

As your groups start again for the fall, share a high and a low for the summer. What has been a high point and what has been a low point for you or your family this summer?

Read this week's scripture and discuss:

1. Have you ever experienced "true" desert? What was that like?
2. Have you ever truly been "desert" thirsty (verses 22-23)? What was that like?
3. The people complained here for the first time since crossing the sea. What led them to complain and what leads us to complain in our lives?
4. What has been your "sweet and sour" (or bittersweet) experience of 2020?
5. When is a time that you were struggling and God provided an oasis (Exodus 15:27) for you to rest in and be restored by?
6. Are there practices (if not, what practices might you engage in) that ensure you don't mistake the oasis for the Promised Land? (The oasis is meant to be only a stopping point.)

prayer requests

- > Prayers of healing for Gloria Conners, Steve Furste, and Steve Gates.
- > Prayers of comfort for John Steen in the loss of his brother.

We begin a new sermon series and a new Home Group series this week. Before we dive in, we can think back to the story of Joseph in Genesis 37-50 and how God used Joseph to save his family and all of Israel from famine by bringing them to Egypt. Over the course of 400 years, the Israelites became a huge people group and were made slaves by Pharaoh and treated cruelly. God provided Moses to lead them out of Egypt after a series of 10 plagues, to cross the Red Sea and head towards the Promised Land in Exodus 14. So we pick up the story with their struggles in the wilderness in Exodus 15. The wilderness theme can relate to us today in so many ways. Our hope is that together, we can flourish from our walk in the wilderness and grow to become closer to God and each other.

1. While the wilderness was truly a desert for Israel, complete without much drinking water, the wilderness for us might be more of a sense of isolation, difficult medical issues, or dealing with Covid-19 or racial injustice.
2. The Israelites were literally thirsty. We may have times when we have been literally incredibly thirsty. We may also have times when we thirst for God, as we saw in last week's message in Psalm 42. What has your thirst been like?
3. The people had already complained before crossing the sea when the Egyptian army was chasing them. Now they complain again. One author said they went from prison to praise to protest very quickly. What makes you complain?
4. Have you experienced something this year that has been sour like the water, but turned sweet in some way? Was something negative but also positive, a place where you learned something?
5. An oasis here is 12 fresh springs and 70 palm trees. Just the vision of that seems beautiful and biblical in a desert setting. Twelve is the number of tribes of Israel and seventy is a multiple of 7, one of God's favorite numbers (like 7 days in a week or forgiving sins 70 times 7). It is a place to rest, take a deep breath and be refreshed. Where was that place for you?
6. The question is about practices. What practices might help you to enjoy the oasis but continue the journey to the Promised Land? One practice might be to work at finding or planning oasis stops along the way for you or your family during challenging seasons. An example is how schools plan fall breaks, Christmas breaks, and spring breaks to get refreshed. Or the oasis might be something more personal for you to be quiet with God.