



BridgeChurch *Small Group Questions*



FOR SERIES WEEK #3: FORWARD * SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2023
PASTOR ANDREW SMITH. * EXODUS CHAPTER 16

NEXT SUNDAY IS COMMITMENT SUNDAY CONCERNING THE "FOR" INITIATIVE

We are striving for 100% involvement with the FOR Initiative. We're on a journey personally, but we're also on a journey as a church. We're moving next week to commitment Sunday. Be praying about what your commitment should be. Some of you need to follow through with your prior commitment. Some of us need to increase our commitment. Some of us need to make a commitment for the first time. For more information about FOR, go to FORinitiative.org.

WHEN WE FIND OURSELVES IN A PLACE WHERE WE DON'T HAVE CONTROL WE TEND TO WORRY OR GRUMBLE

[Exodus 16:1-3] Israel left Egypt and passed through the Red Sea. They saw God fight for them. Things were working out well for them and God gave them their first statute or rule: If you do what I instruct you, it will go well. Not that it would be *easy*, but that it would go well. Then, the Israelites were led into the wilderness. The entire community grumbled. We've got to give Israel a little grace because this faith walk and freedom was all new to them; however, the moment things didn't go the way they thought, hoped, or wanted, their response was grumbling. We feel like we're in control when things are going easy. When we find ourselves in a place where we have a loss of control, we do one of two things: (1) internal worry or (2) external grumbling—putting words to our worries. The Israelites chose to complain. It became an ongoing theme or pattern for Israel conveying a lack of faith. The real test of our faith isn't how we respond when things are easy, but how we respond when things get tough.

1. What is most tempting you to worry or complain to God about right now in your life?

WE CAN'T TIE OUR CIRCUMSTANCES TO GOD'S CHARACTER

We have a tendency to look at the Israelites response with judgmentalism on their faith, but in actuality, we do the same thing. The moment we don't feel like God is going to come through, we begin to question God's goodness and our faith, which leads to worry and grumbling. That grumbling is an affront to who we say God is. Many times we end up tying our circumstances to God's character. We begin to make an unhealthy association between our circumstances and God's goodness. The truth is that we're fickle and we change, and our circumstances change, but God's character never changes. The fact is that we're responsible for sin because we've chosen to be our own god. Humans have difficulty taking responsibility for our own actions. We shift our focus away from God to our challenges.

2. Can you relate to the pull to change your view of God when things aren't going great?
3. What can we do to proactively keep our focus on God when things get rough?

HARDSHIP REVEALS WHAT COMFORT CONCEALS

How do we respond when things get tough? How did people respond when Covid-19 hit? God didn't stop taking care of his people because there was a global pandemic, but our faith was tested in a way it never had been before. When things get tough, God didn't cause the test, but He will often allow a test. When things are easy, things look good. When the heat is on, our true selves emerge. Covid revealed things that cause division and the distrust we have in people. But in the end, much of this had to do with our faith.

4. What did Covid reveal about your faith?

OUR FAITH GROWS WHEN ITS TESTED

[Hebrews 11:1] This verse provides a definition of faith. No one enjoys a test, but our faith grows when its tested. A test establishes and challenges our understanding of what we say we believe. A test's benefit is to cause us to grasp what we're being tested on.

[James 1:2-3] James tells us that the testing of our faith produces endurance. As we experience sequential tests, each test may be easier based on what you've learned before

5. How has your faith grown through a time of testing?

THE DEGREE OF OUR TRUST IS BASED ON THE OBJECT OF OUR TRUST

Jumping back to Israel, the people grumbled against Aaron and Moses. When we're under duress, we say things we don't mean. This is why we need to be slow to speak and slow to anger. There's no magic eraser for words. We also need to realize that we have a tendency to blame leadership. Often people's frustration may not be based on a leader, but it's easy to make leaders a target for blame. Every relationship is predicated on trust. The degree of our trust is based on the object of our trust. Israel took their eyes off the pillar of fire and their focus went to Moses and Aaron. When things go wrong, we want someone or something to blame.

6. How have you seen this principle of assigning blame on leaders play out?
7. How does this apply to church leadership?

WE NEED TO KEEP OUR FOCUS ON JESUS

[Hebrews 12:1-2] We need to ask ourselves if we truly trust God, then we need to be reminded to keep our eyes on Jesus. Some of us have tied our circumstances to our faith in God's character. Some of us have been focusing on something else as the pinnacle of trust...our career and finances, relationships, etc.

8. What areas of your life are you having trouble trusting God with?
9. In what ways have you been frustrated and need to realize that your faith is being tested?
10. What have these questions revealed to you about your faith?