

LACK OF TRUST IN GOD – FORTY YEARS IN THE DESERT

Objective

The children learn that the Israelites had to bear the consequences of their acting against God's will, but that God continued to look after them.

Contents

- The twelve scouts (Numbers 13–14).
- The people's discontentment (Numbers 16; 20–21).
- We act according to God's will.



Lesson Plan

Lead-In

Workbook, Exercise 1

A child reads the “letter” in exercise 1 aloud.

Discussion

Afterwards we can briefly discuss how arduous life must have been during the journey through the desert, and that all must have longed to reach the promised land, Canaan, quickly.

Implementation

Teacher's Presentation

The twelve scouts

The Lord had promised the land of Canaan to his people. According to God's directive, when the Israelites had come near this land, Moses chose twelve distinguished men—one from each tribe—who were to have a good look at the land.

The scouts were away for forty days. They then reported to Moses and the people about the wonderful fruits of the land. Ten of the twelve scouts felt there was no possibility of taking possession of the land because its inhabitants were big and terrifying.

The Israelites allowed themselves to be intimidated by the faintheartedness of these ten scouts. They became afraid and began to grumble. They even wanted to return to Egypt because they would have fared better there (Numbers 14:2–4). Only two scouts, Caleb and Joshua, assured the people that, with God's help, they would take possession of Canaan.

The Lord was furious about the Israelites' conduct. He wanted to let them all die as a result of a bad sickness. Moses stood up for the people. Although the sickness did not come over the Israelites, they did not get away without being punished.

Bible

The children read Numbers 14:27–34 aloud:

“How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swore to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye

Discussion

said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in the wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise."

The children condense what God said here into a few words.

Teacher's Presentation

The time in the desert which now followed was often very difficult for Moses. It lasted about forty years. A few happenings taken from the final year are described in the Bible.

Water at Meribah**Teacher's Presentation**

Once again there was no water. The Israelites were desperate and dissatisfied with their situation. They abused Moses and Aaron for leading them out of Egypt. Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle to ask God for water. The Lord's answer can be read in exercise 2. (Note: "Meribah" means strife, contention)

Workbook, Exercise 2

A child reads the Lord's instructions aloud, another child reads what Moses did. The children should understand that Moses' not following the Lord's instructions to the letter was merely something small. However, this small deviation was sufficient for the Lord not to allow him and Aaron into the promised land.

The serpent of brass**Teacher's Presentation**

Out of dissatisfaction, the Israelites once again grumbled about God, Moses and Aaron. They would rather have remained as slaves in Egypt than to continue on with this arduous journey through the desert. In addition, they detested the manna, the nourishment with which the Lord provided them in the desert.

Workbook, Exercise 3

The children read the further course of events aloud.

Discussion

We discuss with the children that all of the experiences described here have a common core. The Lord expected them to obey and trust him, and the manner in which he led and preserved the people.

Question Prompt

How do we act according to God's will?

■ We heed God's word.

■ We do what he tells us.

Conclusion

■ We trust the Lord.

■ We are thankful for what the Lord gives us and are content.

The children report about situations in which they experienced God's protection.

Notes