



PLEASANT HILLS
COMMUNITY PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

Week of Sunday, January 10

*Questions with asterisks are meant to be answered by everyone in the group.
(typically, the icebreaker question and the final question of the evening)*

Do not feel pressure to answer every question. Leave time for prayer at the end of your time together.

Icebreaker

****What was one high point from your Christmas and New Year experience?*****

Questions for the sermon series, *In the Bleak Midwinter*

Read this passage to provide the context for the discussion questions that follow.

The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days."

So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you will know that it was the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?" Moses also said, "You will know that it was the Lord when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord."¹

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¹ Exodus 16:1-8

1. Prior to 2020, was there a *bleak* time or event in your life that the Lord ultimately used to bring about something good in your life? Share that story.
2. ****Complaining compounds the emotional weight of any bleak season. How have you experienced the negative impact of someone complaining (or perhaps your own complaining)?****
3. ****The world needs encouragers. How have you experienced the positive impact of someone encouraging you (or seen the impact of your encouragement to someone else)?****
4. During times of uncertainty and unrest, it often seems difficult to sense God's presence. Can you describe how you experience God's presence with you, whether in good times or in bad?
 - a. This may be difficult to articulate, but maybe there's some basic ways that you have seen God's work in your life (through a relationship, or a conversation, or an unexpected call, or just a quiet, profound moment...).
 - b. What can you do to develop a stronger sense of God's presence on a more regular basis?
5. Pastor Mark said, "When you spend more time looking back at your past rather than focusing on the present, don't be surprised if God feels far off. God is still present here and now... and he is leading us into the future."
 - a. Why do you think people sometimes focus on *how things used to be*, often remembering the past with rose-colored glasses?
 - b. While it is good to give thanks for good things that have happened in the past, what is the danger in holding onto those circumstances rather than focusing on God's work in our present circumstances?
 - c. If we find ourselves longing for the past, what are practical ways that we can shift our perspective and look for God here and now?
6. ****Manna was God's daily provision for his people - his daily expression of love, and his concern for their well-being. It was also a call for them to trust him daily no matter their circumstances. In which area of your life, right now, is it most difficult for you to trust God?****

As you close your group time with prayer this evening, have someone pray specifically for additional faith to trust God - even in the areas of life where it's most difficult.

Personal Challenge: Avoid grumbling and complaining. Instead, be an encouragement to people around you.