

WC ENCOUNTER GROUPS CURRICULUM
LONG WALKS & SHORT PIERS
WEEK TWO



Week Two: Cynicism

OPENING PRAYER:

Dear Loving God, we give you thanks for the gift of community and your presence among us. Please set us free from the chains of cynicism. Help us to seek you in our times of trouble, trusting that you are present and are working for

ENCOUNTERING GOD:

**How have you seen God at work in your life this week?
What good have you done for someone else this week?**

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WEEKLY SCRIPTURE READING:

Exodus 14:10-15

“As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses, ‘Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, “Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians”? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.’ But Moses said to the people, ‘Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still.’ Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward.’”

REFLECTION:

Cynicism: bitterly or sneeringly distrustful, contemptuous, or pessimistic.

Harry worked extremely hard for a fortune 500 company for 15 years, giving blood, sweat and tears. His boss always gave him high praise and he consistently got high marks during his annual reviews. He worked long hours and rarely took time off. He brought in a lot of business to the company. However, he only received two very small pay raises and he was passed over multiple times for promotions. Finally, John, his best friend, who also worked at the company suggested that they go into business together. The suggestion appealed to Harry and he decided to go into business with John. During the first couple months, business was slow and Harry had to dip into his savings to keep the business afloat. Soon, Harry began to think about his time at the company that he left. When he worked there, he never had to worry about whether he would be paid or if the business would fail. His former job provided some security and less worry. He wondered if he had made a major mistake. While brainstorming ideas to get the business back ‘into the black,’ Harry lashed out at John. “Was it your intent to destroy my life? Why did I listen to you? Maybe I should go beg for my old job back?” He said. John responded, “Don’t be afraid. Trust me and our plan. Give it more time.”

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When Harry faced adversity, he forgot about all the times he had been passed over for promotions and didn't receive pay raises. All he remembered the security that his past position had afforded him. He became cynical, meaning became distrustful of his business partner and started to question John's motives. Furthermore, he could not see the possibilities of the new business but could only see the present problems. How often do we become cynical when times get tough? How often do we turn on the very people who are attempting to help us because we don't trust their motives or we don't believe there is anyone who truly has our back.

Although Pharaoh had previously agreed to let the Israelite people go, Pharaoh's heart has been hardened, prompting him to recover his fleeing slave work force through military might. The Israelites became cynical and quickly turned against Moses, their deliverer. They make three accusations against Moses:

- 1. "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?"*
- 2. "What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt?"*
- 3. "Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, 'Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians'?"*

Israelites mention "Egypt" or "Egyptian" five times in their complaint, but they do not mention the name, "Yahweh." Through their omission of the name of Yahweh, they are acting as if God is not active and present. Moses tells them not to be afraid and reminds them that God will deliver them. Then, God tells Moses to tell the people to move forward. When it seems that our enemies are about to overtake us or our lives about to be negatively impacted, we need to remember the name of God who has done wonders, worked miracles and bestowed blessings upon us. The Israelites had forgotten the miracles that God had performed in Egypt which had led to their release. Perhaps, when the Israelites saw Pharaoh's massive army advancing toward them, they thought God had abandoned them. God does not abandon his children, which means that God is always present and actively working for our good. Here's what the Israelites did not know: this was just an opportunity for Yahweh, the Lord, to display His power and get the glory. God used this event to demonstrate that our God is Bigger than any worldly power. Rather than becoming cynical, we need to trust that truth. We need to move forward rather being paralyzed by fear.

GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Encounter the Head:

What is cynicism? What is the cause of cynicism?

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How does cynicism negatively impact our lives?

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Why did Pharaoh decide to let the Israelites free? Why did Pharaoh have a change of heart, deciding to recover his slave workforce?

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Encounter the Heart:

What is the most impactful thing that you have learned from the scripture, sermon, podcasts, or sermon discussion guide?

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Share a time when you would have missed a miracle, blessing or a lesson if you hand gone back or quit too soon.

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GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What makes us think that we are powerless to affect change (cynicism)? What keeps us from trying? What excuses do we need to overcome?

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Encounter the Hands:

Write down what Moses did right to address the people's cynicism. Share how we can apply this to our lives.

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PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Encounter The Hands:

Please go around the group and have each person share a praise for this week and a prayer request/

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CLOSING PRAYER

Have a volunteer lead closing prayer: asking for prayer concerns and lifting up the needs of the group.

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DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

We encourage everyone to do a daily reflection. This can be done alone, as a couple, or with your family. This spiritual practice will help answer the questions you have and it will improve your ability to see where God is at work in your life, and in the lives of those around you. Please answer the following questions during your personal devotional time at the end of the day.

Where have you seen God today? For the children, we say, “what made you happy today?”

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What broke your heart or made you sad today?

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What good thing did you do for someone else today?

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What are you thankful for today?

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