나눔 메모

A Visit in the Midst of Despair

Small Group Discussion Guide · Judges 13:1–7, 15–20

Passage

Judges 13:1–7, 15–20

Key Message

Before Samson was born, Israel had become so accustomed to sin and suffering that they no longer felt the need to repent. Like Manoah's wife, who was unable to have children, they had lost hope: they were neither enjoying what God had given them nor passing it on to the next generation. Yet even when Israel could not cry out in repentance, God took the initiative. He sent the angel of the LORD into the midst of their despair and revealed himself as "Wonderful." Our hope today rests not in our own resolve, but in the God who comes to us first.

Discussion

1. Warm-up

1. Tell the group about a time when you were injured or exhausted but hardly noticed the pain.
2. The sermon told the story of a child with Hansen's disease who could not feel the pain from a cut on his hand and used the blood to draw on a wall. What thoughts or reactions did that story stir in you?

2. Exploring the Word

1. Judges 13:1 says that Israel once again did evil and was oppressed by the Philistines for forty years. Unlike the earlier stories in Judges, one familiar scene is missing. What is it?
2. How does the absence of Israel's repentance and cry for help reflect the "spiritual numbness" described in the sermon?
3. What sin in your life or community has become so familiar that it no longer makes you uncomfortable? Share honestly.

4. Like Manoah's wife, a person can spend many years in church without leading anyone to faith or nurturing new spiritual life. Would you describe your faith as spiritually "barren," or is it bearing fruit and bringing life to others? Share honestly.

3. Going Deeper

1. When Manoah first meets the angel of the LORD, he does not recognise him. Manoah offers him food and asks his name, gradually trying to understand who this mysterious visitor is. Why do you think God patiently revealed himself to Manoah in this way?
2. The sermon noted that church attendance among people in their 20s and 40s fell by 50% over ten years. We may have said, "Let's save the next generation," yet failed to show them the joy and responsibility of following Jesus here and now. What kind of faith have you modelled for children, younger people, or those who are new to faith? Share honestly.

4. Life Application

1. Choose one day this week. Think of something you said or did without recognising that it might be harmful. Write it down before God and pray a prayer of repentance.
2. When you are about to brush aside a familiar sin this week, pray like Manoah: "Lord, come to me again and teach me how to live."

Related Passages

1. Isaiah 9:6 — The angel of the LORD reveals his name as "Wonderful," a title also given to the Messiah in this verse.
2. Psalm 32:3–4 — The image of bones wasting away in silence points to the spiritual numbness that sets in when we lose our awareness of the need to repent.
3. Judges 6:12–13 — The angel of the LORD also comes to Gideon first and speaks to him, showing God's pattern of entering places of despair.
4. 1 John 1:9 — The promise that God cleanses us when we confess our sins shows why we must move from numbness towards repentance.

Good to Know

"The angel of the LORD" (mal'akh YHWH) is a title that also appears in Gideon's story. In this passage, he does not eat the food offered to him, ascends in the flame, and reveals his name as "Wonderful." Because of these details, many Christians understand him not as an ordinary angel, but as a pre-incarnate appearance of God the Son. Manoah and his wife support this interpretation when they say, "We have seen God; we will surely die."

This Week's Practice

1. At home this week, notice one sharp comment or habitual action towards a family member. Pause and ask yourself, "Have I become numb to this?"
2. At work, uni, or church, pause when you are about to casually join in criticism of someone else. Acknowledge to yourself, "I'm treating this as normal."
3. Find a quiet moment this week and pray these words aloud: "Lord, come to us again and teach us how to live."

Choose one, put it into practice, and share your experience at the next gathering.

Pray Together

- Ask God to reveal the areas of our lives that have grown numb because sin has become so familiar that we no longer feel the need to repent.
- Ask God to lead us out of spiritually barren faith so that we can share the life-giving message of the gospel with the next generation.
- Ask God to make Manoah's prayer—"Come to us again and teach us"—a genuine cry from our hearts this week.

Closing Prayer

Father God, we confess that we have sinned without feeling the pain, living like the child who did not realise his hand was bleeding and used the blood to draw on a wall. Have mercy on us in our spiritual numbness. We have become so used to repeated sin and suffering that we have forgotten our need to turn back to you. Like Manoah, we ask you to come to us again and teach us how to live. Lord, you are the Wonderful One who willingly entered a place of despair. Come again into our homes, workplaces, universities, and communities, and raise us up. Turn our despair into hope, and use us to share the life-giving message of the gospel with the next generation. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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