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This week at MRC we continued our series in Numbers by focussing in on chs 13-14 as the people are on the very edge of the land God promised them.

We started by saying that at the heart of the account is a challenge for us as we face problems - do we focus on the problem or do we focus on the Lord.

#### + A God who makes promises...

As the people are on the edge of the land promised to Abraham we said that this should be the end of the book! They've arrived at their destination and the language as the spies return from their reconnaissance mission is deliberately promise-filled. In v22 the mention of Hebron ties us deliberately back to Gods initial promise to Abraham, as well as the patch of land he bought for burial (for his wife, himself and later the patriarchs). The language of plenty and blessing is clear as they return with a bunch of grapes so big it takes 2 men to carry it! They should have been excited... But it all goes wrong because the majority report of the returning spies is to doubt they can get into this beautiful land.

We then identified aspects of the doubters and non-doubters...

#### - a people who don't believe

Belief in the bible is more than mental assent - it is trust and obedience. They begin in v27 by identifying the land not as 'the land God promised' but as the land that Moses commands them then to explore. Then they focus on the size of the inhabitants (eg v32-33) and begin to spread lies to the rest of the community which by 14v1-4 have spread to the rest of the community who want to be back in Egypt - or even dying in the wilderness! Their focus upon their return is very 'sensible' - it feels rather like a risk assessment exercise, but they only see the problems and challenges - the Giants rather than the Lord and his promises, power and track record.

#### - a people who do believe

Belief in God is trusting the promise keeping God to keep his promises! The difference

between the 2 reports is where the 'But' comes. If you compare 13v27-28 and 14v9 - Joshua and Caleb see all that the other spies saw but trust themselves to the Lord as he is faithful!

#### + A God who keeps his promises

God ends up giving the people what they ask for. They said they would rather die in the desert - and so they will (14v2, 28-29). As with last week and the meat incident - God judges the people by answering their prayers in the affirmative. It's tempting to miss the thorny verses in 14v12-19 but they are vital. In them God coaxes Moses to mediate once again and so God re-commits himself to his people. In so doing Moses models some beautiful aspects of prayer for us. He prays in light of Gods glory (v13-16) and mercy (v17-19). The verses also ought to give us incredible thankfulness to Christ for his obedience! Because of Jesus' death in our place we can be sure of Gods commitment to us.

Hebrews 3v12-14 are a challenging response to these accounts though. The writer uses these wilderness incidents to warn us from turning aside from trusting the Lord. These warnings are meant to encourage us to keep trusting him...

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*As always feel free to use these questions as a starter for ten - adapt them as needed for the context of your group...*

What do you remember so far from Numbers? Brainstorm.

What is your 'tendency' as you face problems in life - how easy do you find it to focus on the problem or on the Lord? Why?

Have a look at 14v11 - what does the Lord say is the issue with the people?

What has God promised his people in this account in Numbers?

Why do you think the majority report of the spies was to not attempt entry to the land? What did Joshua and Caleb remember that the others did not? Do you tend towards the 'majority' or 'minority' report?

How do we focus on 'the Giants' in life rather than the Lord? What are these things in our life? What other things are we tempted to trust in?

How does Moses model prayer for us in 14v12-19? What does it mean to pray in light of Gods glory and mercy?

In line with Hebrews 3v12-14, how can we be a community that helps one another to daily trust and not turn aside?