

Small Group Guide

Jehovah Nissi: The Lord Is Our Banner

Overview

This session explores the name of God revealed in Exodus 17 -- Jehovah Nissi, meaning "The Lord Is My Banner." Through the story of Israel's battles in the wilderness, we examine what it means to trust God in the middle of trials, to intercede on behalf of others, and to stand together as a community of faith holding up the victory of Christ.

Key Takeaways

- God uses wilderness seasons not as punishment but as purposeful formation, exposing what is in our hearts so that He can transform us.
 - Trials reveal our deep spiritual deficiencies -- fear, unbelief, rebellion, and hidden sin -- and bring us to a place of dependence on God.
 - Testing God means demanding that He perform on our terms and entering into unbelief when He does not. God will reveal Himself, but He will do it on His terms.
 - We are not fighting for victory. We are fighting from victory. Jesus has already won.
 - When we lift up the banner of Christ -- through prayer, intercession, the Word, and faith -- God goes to war on our behalf.
 - We cannot fight alone. We need community to hold our arms up when we grow weary.
 - Every act of persistent prayer, faith, and intercession is a hand placed upon the throne of the Lord.
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Icebreaker

Think of a time when something difficult turned out to produce something genuinely good in your life. Without going too deep yet, share a brief summary with the group. What did that experience teach you, if anything?

Discussion Questions

Section 1: The Wilderness and What It Reveals

1. The sermon describes the wilderness as a place of "diagnostic exposure" -- a season where God surfaces what is already inside us. What kinds of things tend to surface in you when life gets hard? Fear? Anger? Doubt? Self-reliance?
 2. The pastor made the statement: "In God's economy, your spiritual transformation is far more important than your physical provision." How does that land with you honestly? Is that easy or difficult to accept, and why?
 3. Israel witnessed miracle after miracle and still doubted God's presence and goodness. Have you ever found yourself doubting God even after seeing Him come through for you? What does that reveal about the human heart?
 4. The place in the story is called Massah and Meribah -- testing and quarreling. The sermon draws a distinction between God testing us and us testing God. What is the difference between those two things in practical, everyday terms?
 5. The sermon says, "The greatest danger of the wilderness is not that you lack water. It is that hardship causes you to doubt the God who has already proven Himself faithful." Where do you currently see that danger showing up in your own life or in the lives of people around you?
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Section 2: The Battle and Our Role In It

6. In the story, Joshua fights in the valley, Moses intercedes on the hill, and Aaron and Hur hold Moses up. Each role was essential to the victory. Which of these roles do you most naturally occupy in the body of Christ right now -- the one fighting on the front lines, the one interceding, or the one supporting and encouraging others? Which role do you find most difficult?
 7. The sermon notes that Israel never had to fight any battles while they were in bondage in Egypt. Battles only came when they started moving toward the promised land. Have you experienced something similar -- where following God more closely seemed to bring more resistance rather than less? How did you respond?
 8. The pastor said, "Most of the battles we face will be won through unceasing prayer, united together with faith in the victory of the cross." Do you genuinely believe that? What does your actual prayer life reflect about what you believe?
 9. Moses grew weary and his hands began to fall. Aaron and Hur came alongside him. Have you ever let someone know you were struggling and allowed them to hold you up? What made that easy or difficult? Is there something currently keeping you from asking for that kind of support?
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Section 3: The Banner and What It Means

10. A banner in battle was a rallying point -- it told the troops what they were fighting for and called them back together when they scattered. In what ways does Jesus function as that kind of banner in your daily life? In what moments do you find it hardest to keep your eyes fixed on Him?
11. The sermon closes with this idea: every time you pray persistently, intercede for someone, open the Word and hold onto a promise, fast, share the gospel, or lay hands on the sick in faith, you are placing a hand upon the throne of the Lord. Which of those practices is most alive in your life right now? Which one has grown cold?
12. George Mueller prayed for five friends for decades. One man came to faith at Mueller's funeral, more than fifty years after Mueller first began praying for him. What does that kind of perseverance in intercession require? Is there someone in your life you have stopped praying for? What would it look like to pick that back up?

Practical Applications

Choose at least one of the following to put into practice before your group meets again.

1. **Name Your Wilderness** Write down the specific trial or struggle you are currently in the middle of. Then write out one specific promise from Scripture that speaks directly to that situation. Carry it with you this week and read it every time doubt or discouragement surfaces.
2. **Build an Altar** Set aside a specific time this week -- even fifteen minutes -- to do nothing but pray. No agenda, no list of requests. Simply come before God and surrender the thing you have been trying to manage on your own. Acknowledge that He is your banner and that the battle belongs to Him.
3. **Hold Someone's Arms Up** Identify one person in your life who is in a hard season. Reach out to them this week -- not with advice, but with a simple word of encouragement, a prayer prayed over them in person or by phone, or a Scripture that came to mind when you thought of them. Be the Aaron or Hur for someone this week.
4. **Start or Restart an Intercession List** Write down the names of three to five people you are believing God to save, heal, or restore. Commit to praying for them by name every day for the next thirty days. Do not stop when it feels like nothing is happening.

5. Confess Isolation If you have been carrying something alone and keeping it hidden from your community, take a step this week to tell one trusted person what you are going through. Ask them to pray for you specifically. Isolation is not strength. Letting someone in is an act of faith.

Scripture

- Exodus 17:1-16 — the primary text of the sermon (Jehovah Nissi, the battle with the Amalekites, Moses holding up his staff)
- 1 Corinthians 10:4 — the rock in the wilderness identified as Christ
- 1 Corinthians 10:11 — these things written for our instruction upon whom the ends of the world have come
- James 1:2 — counting trials as joy (the extended commentary/paraphrase passage)
- Psalm 95:8 — do not harden your hearts as at Meribah
- Hebrews 3:7-11 — warning against hardening the heart, quoting Psalm 95
- Psalm 103:7 — God made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the people of Israel
- Psalm 60:4 — God has raised a banner for those who fear Him
- Isaiah 11:10 — the root of Jesse standing as a banner for the peoples
- Psalm 20:5 — shouting for joy over victory and lifting up banners in the name of God
- John 12:32 — Christ lifted up will draw all people to Himself
- Hebrews 7:25 — Christ always lives to intercede for those who come to God through Him
- Romans 8:26-27 — the Spirit intercedes through wordless groans for God's people
- Numbers 13 — the Amalekites among the giant clans in the land of Canaan
- Genesis 3 — the foundational enmity between the seed of the woman and the serpent
- Ephesians 2:6 — believers seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus