

1. Navigating the Culture of Cynicism (First let's define cynicism)
 - a. It is the loss of trust and support of goodness; the loss of faith in the possibility to change, improve or move forward; it is the loss of hope.
 - b. A cynic is a person disposed to rail and find fault who shows a disposition to disbelieve and develops an attitude of scornful or jaded negativity along with a general distrust of the professed motives of others. (It is interesting that when you look it up--cynicism is closely connected to politics. Me--I am cynical towards Ole Miss sports--total lost of trust in anything good happening there! ☺ Seriously though--it doesn't take much to recognize how overall our culture breeds cynicism--and how this spirit collides with the spirit of God. **Author Scott Sernau says--Cynicism kills in the manner of frostbite: the only symptom is a deadening numbness. And even Christians are often tinged with this frostbite. Callousness and doubt numb us to life and joy.** Have you been affected by it? *Let's consider these questions to see--ask questions*)
2. The Ten Spies--Numbers 13:26-14:45 (yes, there were 12, but it was the ten that returned extremely cynical about Israel's chances to take possession of the Promise Land. Recall the story and how their report created distrust and panic among the Hebrews--totally derailed God's plan for his people. This is the power of cynicism and why it is so dangerous. There is sin in cynicism and it is)
 - a. Breeds mistrust and disbelief
 - b. Creates an atmosphere of hopelessness
 - c. Dismisses the expectation of God to work
3. Remember Philippians 4:8? (call back to one of the prequel texts--whatever is good, lovely, true, etc.--cynicism promotes none of this--just the opposite in fact, so how can it possibly be beneficial to a kingdom approach to life? Indeed we need to be demonstrating an alternative to it--to a culture saturated with it. How--well consider this text)
4. Psalm 1:1-3 (beautiful beginning to a beautiful book--there is a contrast in this Psalm between those who follow God and those who do not--one of the characteristics of those who do not is that they become a "mockers," which is another name for a cynic. The way to avoid that and demonstrate the blessings of the kingdom are noted here)
 - a. Delight in God's will
 - b. Define ourselves by God's way (by doing so--God's way will become our natural default, which will shape the way we react, the way we interact, and the way we view life and the challenges it brings. In other words we will just naturally think on the things of God and not allow cynicism to erode our faith and steal our hope.)
5. (Conclude with one more text)--Philippians 2:13-16 (shining like stars in the universe is one of our calls--we might frame it as navigating our culture in such a way to vividly demonstrate the kingdom alternative to those lost in--among other things--the dark hopelessness of cynicism. So let's allow God that chance--no complaining like the ten spies--and let's get excited as we anticipate the amazing things God can do! How about it church?)