

LEAD SHEET

EXODUS: AFTER THE SEA WAS PARTED - WK 10

LIFE IN THE WILDERNESS

SEPTEMBER 11, 2016

THIS MONTH'S FAITH SKILL:

SHARE YOUR GRACE STORY

If you want to know God better, tell other people about Him!

GETTING STARTED

General Discussion:

- How often do you ask your parents for food and complain when you are hungry?
- How quickly do your parents provide you with food when you ask? How much food do you receive?

We are going to look at a story in Exodus where the people of Israel, after having just trusted God to lead them through the Red Sea, are grumbling and complaining about the lack of provisions. As we talk today, think of how often we complain when our perceived needs are not meet.

DIGGING IN

Read Exodus 15:22-27

Discussion Questions:

1. How many days passed since the Israelites left the Red Sea and traveled without water? (*Three days.*)
2. Why can't they drink the water in Marah?
(*The water is bitter. This area is called Marah because Marah means bitterness.*)

3. How do the people first react to the absence of drinkable water? (*They grumble.*)

The people are quick to complain and ask Moses for help when they are without water. Moses immediately turns to God for help. God then helps Moses and the Israelites by providing a log that sweetens the water.

We see that there is very little time between the people complaining, Moses talking to God, and God making the situation better and providing beyond their needs. But His help didn't calm the Israelites for long as they begin to complain once more.

Read Exodus 16:1-4

Discussion Questions:

1. What do we find the people doing once again?

(*Grumbling and complaining.*)

2. The people say that they would have much rather been back in Egypt, why? (*They claim that even if they would have died, they would have sat by "meat pots and ate bread" until they were full.*)

3. What did they accuse Moses of trying to do? (*They accuse him of bringing them all this way and then killing them due to hunger.*)

Once again, the Israelites complain. They say that they would rather be back in Egypt enslaved by the Egyptians and facing death daily rather than living free lives in the wilderness but threatened by starvation. How often do we let hunger get the best of us? Do we ever complain to be trapped rather than free because of a lack of food as the Israelites did?

As we continue in Exodus 16, we see that God does provide food, manna, and the occasional quail, but there are stipulations.

Read Exodus 16:4-30

Discussion Questions:

1. Why does God ration the amount of bread the people were able to collect? *(He was testing whether or not they would walk with His law and if they would be willing to trust Him day by day.)*
2. What does God prove to the Israelites by providing bread in the morning and meat in the evening? *(It is a sign that He is God and keeps His promises.)*
3. After the people of Israel realize that God, indeed, was providing their bread in the morning, they have to stick to guidelines and instructions. Name the specific instruction provided to them on the sixth day. *(They had to gather a double portion to ensure there were enough provisions for the Sabbath, as God would not provide food on the Sabbath.)*

The people were given very specific directions as to how much and how often they were to collect the manna. Those who tried to collect more than instructed found out that it would be rotten by morning. Some even tried to test the idea of whether or not there would be any on the Sabbath, and they found out that God was true to His promise. God heard the people's grumbling and He took care of it through His provision, but He made certain that they were given just what they needed. God does this as a gift—a reminder to His people that they complained about Him, but that He is the one who has continued to be there for them. From leading them out of Egypt, to sweetening the bitter water, to providing just enough manna and quail to sustain them, it is always God.

Read Exodus 17:1-7

Discussion Questions:

1. Once again, the people grumbled and complained that they needed drinkable water at their new location. Of what do they accuse Moses? *(They accuse him of bringing them out of Egypt only to kill them, their families, and their livestock from thirst.)*

2. What object does Moses use to obey God's command and provide water for the people? (*His staff, which was also used to strike the Nile.*)

3. What does Moses call this place and why? (*Massah and Meribah because of the quarreling of the people and their testing of the Lord.*)

The naming of this location is significant because the name means "Testing and quarreling," the exact thing that the people had been doing all along this journey. Because of these names, it served as a reminder for generations to come of the events that took place and the way in which God provided not only the water, but also the manna during this long journey.

God's patience is tested, but He puts up with their grumbling and complaining because He realizes that this group of people is still in the "infancy" of their faith. God's character is evident when He demonstrates His love for the people of Israel in the desert provision and guidance. This is not only an Old Testament story of God's character towards those who complain and grumble, but is a reminder for us today as well.

MAKING IT REAL

It would be easy for us to pass judgment on the Israelites for their continuous lack of faith and their lack of trust in God after He had obviously shown that His people were dear to Him. The key thing to realize is that through this desert journey they did not lack faith. They were struck with something that we all battle: being self-centered. In the midst of all their grumbling and complaining, their only focus was to satisfy their stomachs.

General Discussion:

- How hard is it to see our life circumstances beyond how we view them? (*It is very difficult, as we are typically self-centered.*)

- Are our needs and wants similar to those around us? (*Pretty much.*)

It is easy for us to follow how many around us live and let our “stomachs” dictate our lives, our desires, and wants. Yet, when we think back to the passage, how easy is it for us to live with being content in God’s presence?

Read Philippians 4:11-13

Discussion Questions:

1. Paul, the author, says he is not in need. What has he learned to do? (*Be content.*)
2. Have you experienced both need and plenty? (*Most students have not experienced dire needs, but in some sense, they will claim to have experienced both.*)
3. What is Paul’s “secret” to contentment? (*Knowing that the Lord strengthens him.*)
4. How is this unlike the attitude of the Israelites or our own attitudes? (*They forgot God. Have we?*)

The great news, as we saw in this passage, is that God does not let us go when we are in the wilderness, He has us on His mind, and He provides for us, despite our self-centeredness. The Israelites truly believed that they were going to die from starvation even after God had just saved them. Although we know God’s character and how He feels about His children, it becomes difficult to remember that when we live in a world that promotes the self.

Think about ways in which you have been like the Israelites. Did God provide for you in that situation? As you look ahead to the future, focus on the idea of contentment that we talked about in Philippians and the idea that God is with you in your wilderness wandering, just as He was with the Israelites.

CLOSING PRAYER

Pray that your students do not have the attitudes of the Israelites, but that they have Paul’s attitude instead.