

The Journey of Faith - The Life of Moses - Week 6

The Challenges

Life is always full of challenges. Just when we think that everything is going smoothly and according to God's plan, we are faced with a challenge, something that causes us to feel inadequate once again, something that causes us to seek His direction and strength. It didn't take very long for God to give Moses and the sons of Israel some challenges that would stretch their faith and patience. This week we will look at some of those challenges and the way Moses faced them.

Day 1: The Grumbling Begins

We ended last week with a high point in the lives of the sons of Israel and Moses. God had delivered them. They were free from bondage and ready for a new life in a new land. They were praising God and singing songs to Him...until there was a slight problem. There was no water to drink. Instead of continuing to praise God, they began to grumble. Today's lesson is short but packed with truth that needs to be applied to our lives. Ask God to speak to your heart as you go to His Word.

Looking To God's Word

[Exodus 15:22-27](#)

1. How would bringing the sons of Israel to a place with no drinking water be a form of testing?
2. What was God trying to communicate to them in 15:26?

[Deuteronomy 8:2](#)

3. What was the purpose of God's testing of Israel?

This section of Exodus is the description of the travels of the people from the Red (Reed) Sea to Mount Sinai, which was a three-month journey (19:1). The rest of Exodus describes God's dealings with the Israelites during their encampment at Mount Sinai.

Looking Upward

4. How would you define grumbling?
5. What causes someone to grumble? What is the root issue?
6. What is your typical response to adversity? Would people describe you as someone who grumbles?

Looking Deeper

In [Philippians 2:14-16](#), what are some results of not grumbling and complaining?

In [Exodus 15:26](#), God revealed Himself through another name, Yahweh-rophe, “I, the Lord, am your healer.” How do these verses encourage you to bring your problems and pain to your Healer, Yahweh-rophe?

[Deuteronomy 32:39](#)

[Psalm 103:1-3](#)

[Psalm 116:1-2](#)

[Psalm 147:3](#)

[Isaiah 30:18](#)

Looking Reflectively

God knows what your needs are and will provide in His way and in His timing.

If you have seen God provide and care for you in the past, why would you doubt that He would do it again?

How does adversity affect you? If you are currently facing a difficult situation, are you grumbling and complaining or trusting His hand? Think back to specific situations that were tough at the time, but in retrospect, you can see God’s hand in it for good. Thank Him for how He has worked in your life and trust His sovereignty as He continues to work in you today. Go to Him with your problems and allow Him to minister to you as Jehovah-rophe.

Day 2: The Wrong Perspective

The people had only been in the wilderness for three days when they began grumbling at Marah. God heard their cries and provided for their needs. Today we will look at another situation in a new location that caused the sons of Israel to grumble and complain. God once again heard their cries and once again provided for their needs. Moses soon realized what type of attitude he was up against in leading these people. There would certainly be challenges ahead.

Looking To God’s Word

[Exodus 16:1-31](#)

7. Where are they now, and how long had it been since they left Egypt (v. 1)?

8. Describe the attitude and perspective of the sons of Israel. How was their perspective distorted from the truth?

9. How did God test them here and how was it different from the testing in [Exodus 15:25](#)?

10. What are some possible reasons why God gave them such specific and detailed instructions concerning the manna?

The Hebrew word manna means “what?” – as if to say, “the what’s its name.”

The manna was “bread from heaven” (v. 4). It came six days each week and was absent on the Sabbath. Jesus presents manna as an antitype of Himself who is “the true bread out of heaven” ([John 6:32-35](#)). By a type is meant a picture or object lesson by which God taught His people concerning His grace and redemptive power (manna). An antitype is that which is represented by the type (Jesus).

Looking Deeper

[Deuteronomy 8:1-6](#)

Forty years later, as Moses gave a charge to the people, identify the different ways God was working in the lives of the sons of Israel in the wilderness.

[Deuteronomy 8:11-16](#)

Against what was Moses warning them?

In verse 16, Moses reminded them of the manna that God had fed them, “that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end.” How would the humbling and testing “do good” for them in the end?

Looking Upward

11. What causes your perspective to become distorted?

12. Read [James 1:2-4](#) concerning the value of testing in our lives. Give an example of how God has tested your faith and the effect it had on your spiritual growth.

Looking Reflectively

It is in the difficult times that we see just how strong our faith is.

Can you see God’s hand in the difficult times?

Our grumbling and complaining do not please God. Our trust and obedience do.

How much of your day is spent grumbling and complaining? Do you tend to lose perspective in the midst of difficult times? Ask God to strengthen your faith, to keep your focus on Him and not on your circumstances.

Day 3: Another Need Arises

The sons of Israel left the wilderness of Sin and camped in a new place called Rephidim. Once again, they were in need of water. Once again, they complained and grumbled. Are you beginning to see a trend in the attitude of the Israelites? Moses had to face one challenge after another with the sons of Israel, and it wouldn't get any easier.

Looking To God's Word

[Exodus 17:1-7](#)

13. Describe the relationship between the sons of Israel and Moses at this time.
14. How did Moses respond to the situation? Had you been Moses, what would you have been feeling at this time?
15. Why did God use Moses each time He provided water (15:25; 17:5-6), instead of just bringing forth water on His own?
16. How were the sons of Israel "testing" the Lord (v. 7)?

Looking Deeper

This place was named Massah (Test) and Meribah (Quarrel) because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the Lord (Ex 17:7). What other insights do you see from these passages?

[Deuteronomy 6:16](#)

[Deuteronomy 9:22](#)

[Psalms 95:7-8](#)

Looking Upward

17. How do you respond when you find yourself in need? What does your response show you about your faith and trust in God?
18. What effects do grumbling and complaining have on others around us, as well as on ourselves?

Looking Reflectively

Several years ago, I went to Inner Mongolia with a group of Americans to study the Chinese language (Mandarin). However, when we arrived by train on that cold wintry morning, we were not prepared mentally or emotionally for the conditions we were to live in. There was running water, but no hot water; no showers; and only holes in the ground for “toilets,” which we shared with some resident rats. There was no electricity in the “bathroom” for the first week, which made for an interesting situation with the rats until we “disposed” of them. The dorm they placed us in had actually been condemned and they reopened it for us American students. I vividly remember the first hours in our new “home.” We all were wondering, “What have I gotten myself into? Can I handle this?” The first evening, we gathered together to pray and ask God for grace, to not only endure, but to be thankful for our situation and to trust God’s sovereignty in our circumstances.

We were only in Inner Mongolia for six months, but when it was time to leave, none of us wanted to go. We had decorated our dorm rooms to make the most of a “bleak” situation, and it had truly become home to us. I still look back on those months in Inner Mongolia with fond memories. We had decided as a group to focus on the positives and not dwell on the negatives. The result was that we came to appreciate and enjoy where God had placed us, to the point that we didn’t want to leave. I’m thankful we made the choice to not grumble and complain, but to trust God’s hand instead. What a difference it made in my life.

However, having told this story, I have to confess that sometimes, in adverse situations, I choose to grumble and complain. I can honestly say, though, that contentment comes from choosing to focus on the positives and not the negatives. My grumbling and complaining never accomplish anything, but trusting God and giving thanks in the midst of tough circumstances pleases Him and builds my faith and character.

God does not delight in a complaining, demanding spirit. He does delight in a heart that trusts Him in all situations.

When life gets tough, God wants us to turn to prayer instead of complaining.

Are you more prone to pray or complain in a tough situation? Take some time to be honest with God about your feelings. If you’re unhappy with a situation in your life, make a conscious decision to take it to God in prayer, instead of complaining and grumbling. Confess any complaining attitude you may have in your heart.

Day 4: An Enemy Attacks

This has been a tough time for Moses in the wilderness. The people were hungry and thirsty and blamed Moses for their situation. They were constantly complaining and grumbling about something, and, yet, God always provided for their needs. Now a new challenge surfaced. Moses was faced with an enemy who wanted to destroy Israel. How would he handle this situation?

Looking To God’s Word

[Exodus 17:8-16](#)

19. In what ways did Moses show leadership here?
20. Who were the men who helped Moses in this battle?
21. What are some possible reasons why God secured this victory in the unique manner that He did?

The staff of God was a symbol of power; holding it was a sign of dependence and trust in God.¹

Looking Deeper

[Deuteronomy 25:17-19](#)

What observations can you make about the situation when Amalek attacked the Israelites?

What observations can you make about Amalek?

When are you most prone to attacks from the “enemy”?

Looking Upward

22. In what ways do you show your dependence on God?
23. Who are some people in your life whom God has brought to work alongside you, to encourage you and strengthen you?
24. Are you more of a team player or “lone ranger”? What are the dangers of being a “lone ranger”?

Looking Reflectively

God wants us to be dependent on Him and allow Him to work through us.

Know when it’s time to allow others to help you carry out your task.

Where are you in your spiritual journey? Are you feeling dependent on Him, knowing that He is the only One who can truly provide for all your needs? Do you have others in your life who walk alongside of you? If not, I encourage you to begin praying that God would bring some people into your life for that purpose.

Day 5: Overwhelmed And Overworked

Moses had his hands full as he led the sons of Israel in the wilderness. Just when he needed it, God brought someone to encourage and guide him, to help him be a better leader. He was willing to listen and implement the counsel he had received. As a result, he was able to focus on issues that were more important.

Looking To God's Word

[Exodus 18:1-27](#)

25. How did God use Jethro in Moses' life to encourage him and help him in the leadership of the people?
26. What was Jethro concerned about with Moses?
27. List the qualities that Moses was to look for in the leaders he would choose (v. 21). Why were these qualities necessary for the task?

Looking Deeper

What do these verses have to say about counsel from others?

[Proverbs 4:10-13](#)

[Proverbs 11:14](#)

[Proverbs 12:5](#)

[Proverbs 13:10](#)

[Proverbs 15:22](#)

[Proverbs 19:20-21](#)

Looking Upward

28. What are some warning signs that you are spreading yourself too thin and doing too much by yourself?
29. When is it hard for you to take counsel from others?
30. If you are trying to do too much, why are you? What are some other options for you? If you feel that you are balanced with your time and not doing too much, what are you doing that has helped you get to this point?

Looking Reflectively

God places people in your life for a season and for a specific purpose. Let God use them in your life.

Beware of trying to do too many things and not focusing on what is priority. Learn to delegate.

Are you doing too much? Are you too busy with your life? What do you need to do to cut back? How well do you delegate?

Is there someone in your life to whom you go for counsel?

We all go through “wilderness” times in our lives. These are times that are dry and difficult; times that we find ourselves in need and even desperate, sometimes questioning what God is doing. I never enjoy the “wilderness” times while I am in the midst of them, but I realize that it is in those times, that my faith deepens and I find myself coming to the place of total and desperate dependence on Him. Don’t run from them, but embrace them. Let God draw you closer to Him during these times.

1 Hannah, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 135.