

Tested Devotion
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Why do they give Tests in School? Why do they give a Drivers Test before you can get a drivers license?

- To discern what you've learned. To see if we've learned anything at all.

Why does God put "tests" in the lives of His children?

- To see if we've learned anything at all.

Also:

- To PROVE OUR DEVOTION TO HIM
- To STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH IN HIM

God TESTED the Children of Israel in the wilderness. Any idea how they did? We can learn from their experience how to deal with OUR OWN TESTS.

- Can you believe it's been three weeks since we had Sunday School?
- A lot has happened in Exodus since we last met:

When we last met, the Passover had happened and the Children of Israel were leaving Egypt.

Since we last met, in Chapter 14 of Exodus, that FAMOUS event at the Red Sea took place. The Israelites were trapped and God miraculously parted the waters so they could pass through. Then, as we all know, God destroyed Pharaoh's army as the waters crashed together on top of them.

Then in Chapter 15 the Children of Israel hold a GREAT PRAISE AND WORSHIP SERVICE giving glory to God for the miraculous deliverance they had just witnessed. For 21 verses they sang joyously with Miriam, Moses' sister concluding the song in verse 21 by singing:

21 Miriam sang to them:

"Sing to the LORD,
for he is highly exalted.
The horse and its rider
he has hurled into the sea."

- Can't you just hear 'em? God has been so unbelievably good to us...after a MIRACLE like that we'll NEVER FORGET HOW HE TOOK CARE OF US! They were singing "HOW GREAT THOU ART" and "OUR GOD IS AN AWESOME GOD" in a medley with "LEANING ON THE EVERLASTING ARMS!"

- Question: Did you ever experience one of those great worship services where the Spirit of God moved so tremendously that you just leave the church on such a HIGH you almost float out the door? And then, it's MONDAY! And that wonderful, exuberant, worship experience flew out your car window and is laying in shreds on the church parking lot.
- The children of Israel made it THREE DAYS before they "LOST THEIR RELIGION". Of course, the Red Sea was just parted for them so they SHOULD have lasted longer.
- Moses leads them on their journey into the wilderness and three days in the only water they can find to drink was BITTER.
- The people begin to focus on a "G" word and it wasn't G-O-D. It starts with "G" it sure ain't HUMBLE because the people all began to....GRUMBLE.
- But Moses didn't GRUMBLE...He got HUMBLE!

15:25 Then Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

There the LORD...said, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."

27 Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water.

- Another MIRACULOUS PROVISION from God!
- And they never GRUMBLED AGAIN...right? WRONG.
- Let's turn to Chapter 16 of Exodus:

Exodus 16:1-36 (New Living Translation)

Exodus 16

Manna and Quail from Heaven

1 Then the whole community of Israel set out from Elim and journeyed into the wilderness of Sin,[a] between Elim and Mount Sinai. They arrived there on the fifteenth day of the second month, one month after leaving the land of Egypt.[b] 2 There, too, the whole community of Israel complained about Moses and Aaron.

3 "If only the Lord had killed us back in Egypt," they moaned. "There we sat around pots filled with meat and ate all the bread we wanted. But now you have brought us into this wilderness to starve us all to death."

4 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Look, I’m going to rain down food from heaven for you. Each day the people can go out and pick up as much food as they need for that day. I will test them in this to see whether or not they will follow my instructions. 5 On the sixth day they will gather food, and when they prepare it, there will be twice as much as usual.”

6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, “By evening you will realize it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt. 7 In the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaints, which are against him, not against us. What have we done that you should complain about us?” 8 Then Moses added, “The Lord will give you meat to eat in the evening and bread to satisfy you in the morning, for he has heard all your complaints against him. What have we done? Yes, your complaints are against the Lord, not against us.”

9 Then Moses said to Aaron, “Announce this to the entire community of Israel: ‘Present yourselves before the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.’” 10 And as Aaron spoke to the whole community of Israel, they looked out toward the wilderness. There they could see the awesome glory of the Lord in the cloud.

11 Then the Lord said to Moses, 12 “I have heard the Israelites’ complaints. Now tell them, ‘In the evening you will have meat to eat, and in the morning you will have all the bread you want. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.’”

13 That evening vast numbers of quail flew in and covered the camp. And the next morning the area around the camp was wet with dew. 14 When the dew evaporated, a flaky substance as fine as frost blanketed the ground. 15 The Israelites were puzzled when they saw it. “What is it?” they asked each other. They had no idea what it was.

And Moses told them, “It is the food the Lord has given you to eat. 16 These are the Lord’s instructions: Each household should gather as much as it needs. Pick up two quarts[c] for each person in your tent.”

17 So the people of Israel did as they were told. Some gathered a lot, some only a little. 18 But when they measured it out,[d] everyone had just enough. Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough. Each family had just what it needed.

19 Then Moses told them, “Do not keep any of it until morning.” 20 But some of them didn’t listen and kept some of it until morning. But by then it was full of maggots and had a terrible smell. Moses was very angry with them.

21 After this the people gathered the food morning by morning, each family according to its need. And as the sun became hot, the flakes they had not picked up melted and disappeared. 22 On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much as usual—four quarts[e] for each person instead of two. Then all the leaders of the community came and asked Moses for an explanation. 23 He told them, “This is what the Lord commanded: Tomorrow will be a day of complete rest, a holy Sabbath day set apart for the Lord. So bake or boil as much as you want today, and set aside what is left for tomorrow.”

24 So they put some aside until morning, just as Moses had commanded. And in the morning the leftover food was wholesome and good, without maggots or odor. 25 Moses said, “Eat this food today, for today is a Sabbath day dedicated to the Lord. There will be no food on the ground today. 26 You may gather the food for six days, but the seventh day is the Sabbath. There will be no food on the ground that day.”

27 Some of the people went out anyway on the seventh day, but they found no food. 28 The Lord asked Moses, “How long will these people refuse to obey my commands and instructions? 29 They must realize that the Sabbath is the Lord’s gift to you. That is why he gives you a two-day supply on the sixth day, so there will be enough for two days. On the Sabbath day you must each stay in your place. Do not go out to pick up food on the seventh day.” 30 So the people did not gather any food on the seventh day.

31 The Israelites called the food manna.[f] It was white like coriander seed, and it tasted like honey wafers.

32 Then Moses said, “This is what the Lord has commanded: Fill a two-quart container with manna to preserve it for your descendants. Then later generations will be able to see the food I gave you in the wilderness when I set you free from Egypt.”

33 Moses said to Aaron, “Get a jar and fill it with two quarts of manna. Then put it in a sacred place before the Lord to preserve it for all future generations.” 34 Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded Moses. He eventually placed it in the Ark of the Covenant—in front of the stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant.[g] 35 So the people of Israel ate manna for forty years until they arrived at the land where they would settle. They ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

36 The container used to measure the manna was an omer, which was one tenth of an ephah; it held about two quarts.[h]

- They CAME TO THE DESERT OF SIN --- Ironic name isn’t it? It just happens to be the name of the place...not to be confused with our English word SIN...but it is IRONIC.
- And verse 2 says: “the whole community GRUMBLED.”

John MacArthur writes:

What characterizes them as a whole was this attitude of negativism. Faced with the scarcity of resources in the wilderness, they hankered after the abundant resources they had experienced in Egypt. The country which had enslaved them looked good in comparison to the wilderness. Again, their complaining so soon after benefiting from the miracles done by the Lord on their behalf points only to their short-term memory and self-centeredness.

- Question: When things get tough and we are tested, could you and I ever be accused of having a SHORT MEMORY of the things God has done for us in the past?
- Now in fairness to the Israelites, NO FOOD is a pretty serious thing to be upset about! Hungry can turn into GRUMPY real fast!

- Have you ever been a little late to a meal and everyone in the family (since they have no food to bite) is “BITING EACH OTHER’S HEADS OFF”? You turn to each other and say: “This family needs food --- FAST!”
- Here’s a question for you: Does it say they were OUT OF FOOD or RUNNING out of food? It doesn’t say they were dropping like flies. It doesn’t say God had let them down. It IMPLIES that they were AFRAID HE WOULD LET THEM DOWN.
- It’s not wrong that they are concerned...what IS WRONG about their response?
 - After the miracles God had done for them they should have TRUSTED Him to come through.
- So, are we saying God’s children should NEVER COMPLAIN?
- If that were true, what about all those PASSIONATE PASSAGES in the Psalms?
 - David wasn’t COMPLAINING ABOUT GOD, He was venting TO God
 - By the end of a Psalm what had the Psalmist almost always reminded us of? God is FAITHFUL!
- What did Jesus say about bringing our problems to God? Matthew 7:7&8:
7"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

- What did Paul tell us to do? Philippians 4:6&7:
6Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- What is the difference between COMPLAINING vs PETITIONING?
 - When we meet in CARE GROUP each week and talk about what’s going on in life, we write those down and pass them around. What do we call those things we write down? PRAYER REQUESTS or PRAYER NEEDS.
 - Ever notice we don’t call them PRAYER COMPLAINTS or PRAYER DEMANDS?
- What is the difference between how a SPOILED CHILD communicates NEEDS and WANTS to the parent versus the well behaved child?
- Not only do we need to know the difference between COMPLAINING vs PETITIONING, we need to know the difference between Casting vs Clutching ---
- In 1 Peter 5:7 Peter said: “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”
- Sometimes we don’t CAST our CARES we CLUTCH THEM!
 - If a squirrel jumped on you, would you clutch it to you and hold on to it like a “Build-A-Bear”? NO! You’d CAST that thing OFF as hard as you could.
 - Why do we CLUTCH our CARES like stuffed animals instead of CASTING them like a RABID SQUIRREL?
- By the way: If God already knows everything why does He tell us to tell Him what we NEED?
 - It’s good for us to VERBALLY and MENTALLY “CAST” our cares.

- Also...HE TOLD US TO DO IT.
- Question: What's the difference between a TEST from GOD and a TEMPTATION from SATAN?
 - God TESTS us to see if we will respond in OBEDIENCE
 - Satan TEMPTS us to see if we will respond in DISOBEDIENCE
- Look at verse 7...Moses and Aaron had called a meeting...what do they say to the Children of Israel about their complaints? Against God not just Moses and Aaron.

Woodrow Kroll said:

...we need to remember that when we complain, ultimately the person we're finding fault with is God. He is sovereign, so everything that comes into our lives must first meet His approval. When we complain, we are telling God, "You've made a mistake. You shouldn't have allowed this to happen to me." But God is too wise to make a mistake and too loving to permit unnecessary heartache.

On Twitter yesterday...Pastor Ken Whitten from Tampa:

If God were going to back out of a deal, it would have been Calvary.(Rom.8:32). I trusted Him eternally. Can I not trust Him daily?

- Thought: Our true LOYALTY to God is demonstrated by the MEASURE OF TRUST we have in Him when times are TOUGH.
- Another Thought: When times are TOUGH: Don't sit and GRUMBLE...Get on your knees and BE HUMBLE!
- God heard their complaints...and came through again.
- How did He provide?
 - Quail in the evening & bread (manna) in the morning.
- Once again, God was very specific in his instructions. Look at verse 16. How much were they to gather of the manna?
 - 1 "Omer" (2 quarts or basically 2 liters) per person per day...you can remember that manna came in the 2 liter container!
- Look at verses 17 & 18...someone read that.

17 The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. 18 And when they measured it by the omer, he who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little. Each one gathered as much as he needed.

- What do those verses say to you about HOW GOD PROVIDES?
 - Always THE RIGHT AMOUNT...just what we need.
- Verse 19: What did Moses tell the people God said about LEFT OVERS?
 - Do not keep any of it overnight.
- Verse 20: How did they respond to what Moses told them?
 - Kept some overnight.
 - What happened? Maggots and STINKY food

- Verse 22: What did God tell them about food on the sixth day?
 - There would be a double portion that would KEEP for the Sabbath.
- Verse 24: How were the leftovers?
- Verse 27: On the Sabbath what did some of the people do?
- Verses 28 & 29: What did God say?
- What did this whole thing about NO LEFTOVERS and ENOUGH FOR THE SABBATH say to you about how God provides?
 - He will meet our needs DAY BY DAY. Not need to try to HORD his blessings.
 - Not only does He want to meet our PHYSICAL needs, He wants to meet our SPIRITUAL needs...with time for rest and worship focused on Him.

In Matthew 4 where Jesus in tempted by the devil, He says:

Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, `MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"

Kay Arthur writes:

Go to the book. Don't grumble. God will give you food for your soul. Allow God's glory to be seen and live by every word that comes out of God's mouth! Make sure you get your manna in the morning. Feast on it! When you do, it will sustain you for the day.

Warren Wiersbe writes:

*When circumstances are difficult, we're prone to pray, "Lord, **how** can I get out of this?" when we ought to be praying, "Lord, **what** can I get out of this?" It isn't important that we get our way, but it is important that God accomplishes His purposes and receives all the glory (Matt. 6:33). God permits trials so that He can build godly character into His children and make us more like Jesus. Godliness isn't the automatic result of reading books and attending meetings; it also involves bearing burdens, fighting battles, and feeling pain*

So, what's the TAKEAWAY?

- God put "tests" in the lives of His children:
 - To PROVE OUR DEVOTION TO HIM
 - To STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH IN HIM
 - And, to see if we've learned anything at all.
- We need to know the difference between COMPLAINING & PETITIONING
 - Complaining implies that we don't TRUST GOD to do the right thing
 - Petitioning CONFIRMS we ALWAYS TRUST Him to do the right thing
 - We're not to CLUTCH our cares...we are to CAST our cares IN FAITH
- Remember: Our true LOYALTY to God is demonstrated by the MEASURE OF TRUST we have in Him when times are TOUGH.
- Also Remember: When times are TOUGH: Don't sit and GRUMBLE...Get on your knees and BE HUMBLE!