

Counting on God's Provision

Message 02 of the series, "Numbers: Counting on God"

I. God miraculously rescued his people from slavery in Egypt and provided for all of their needs as they began their journey to the promised land.

- *God sent 10 plagues on the Egyptians.* Exodus 6:6
- *God gave the Israelites the wealth of Egypt.* Exodus 12:33-36
- *God led the Israelites and protected them through a pillar of cloud/fire.* Exodus 13:21
- *God parted the Red Sea so the Israelites could cross on dry ground.* Exodus 14:21-22
- *God destroyed the Egyptian army pursuing the Israelites.* Exodus 14:28
- *God provided manna from heaven.* Exodus 16:14-31, Psalm 78:24-25
- *God provided water from a rock.* Exodus 17:6

Life Application: We can count on God to generously provide all we need if we seek him first.

"So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today."

Matthew 6:31-34 (NLT)

"And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19 (NLT)

Note: God NEVER promises to give us everything we want.

II. The Israelites were not content with God's provision and began to grumble and complain.

Then the foreign rabble who were traveling with the Israelites began to crave the good things of Egypt. And the people of Israel also began to complain. "Oh, for some meat!" they exclaimed. "We remember the fish we used to eat for free in Egypt. And we had all the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic we wanted. But now our appetites are gone. All we ever see is this manna!" The manna looked like small coriander seeds, and it was pale yellow like gum resin. The people would go out and gather it from the ground. They made flour by grinding it with hand mills or pounding it in mortars. Then they boiled it in a pot and made it into flat cakes. These cakes tasted like pastries baked with olive oil. The manna came down on the camp with the dew during the night. Moses heard all the families standing in the doorways of their tents whining, and the LORD became extremely angry. Moses was also very aggravated. Numbers 11:4-10 (NLT)

Life Application: If we hang around people who grumble and complain we will become like them.

"Do not be misled. 'Bad company corrupts good character.'" 1 Corinthians 15:33 (NIV)

(Then the LORD said to Moses) "And say to the people, 'Purify yourselves, for tomorrow you will have meat to eat. You were whining, and the LORD heard you when you cried, "Oh, for some meat! We were better off in Egypt!" Now the LORD will give you meat, and you will have to eat it. And it won't be for just a day or two, or for five or ten or even twenty. You will eat it for a whole month until you gag and are sick of it. For you have rejected the LORD, who is here among you, and you have whined to him, saying, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?" But Moses responded to the LORD, "There are 600,000 foot soldiers here with me, and yet you say, 'I will give them meat for a whole month!' Even if we butchered all our flocks and herds, would that satisfy them? Even if we caught all the fish in the sea, would that be enough?" Then the LORD said to Moses, "Has my arm lost its power? Now you will see whether or not my word comes true!"...Now the LORD sent a wind that brought quail from the sea and let them fall all around the camp. For miles in every direction there were quail flying about three feet above the ground. So the people went out and caught quail all that day and throughout the night and all the next day, too. No one gathered less than fifty bushels! They spread the quail all around the camp to dry. But while they were gorging themselves on the meat—while it was still in their mouths—the anger of the LORD blazed against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague. So that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah (which means "graves of gluttony") because there they buried the people who had craved meat from Egypt. Numbers 11:18-23, 31-34 (NLT)

Life Application: We must learn from the sins of the Israelites so we will not grumble and complain.

"We will not hide these truths from our children; we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the LORD, about his power and his mighty wonders...so the next generation might know them... and they in

turn will teach their own children... Then they will not be like their ancestors— stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful, refusing to give their hearts to God... They forgot what he had done— the great wonders he had shown them... they kept on sinning against him, rebelling against the Most High in the desert... They stubbornly tested God in their hearts, demanding the foods they craved. They even spoke against God himself, saying, “God can’t give us food in the wilderness... for they did not believe God or trust him to care for them.” Psalm 78:4-22 (NLT)

“I don’t want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago... God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did... don’t grumble as some of them did, and then were destroyed by the angel of death. These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age. If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall.” 1 Corinthians 10:1,3,5,6,10-12 (NLT)

III. Five things we can do to be more content and stop grumbling.

1. We can focus on God rather than our circumstances.

- *God is Good.* “Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! His faithful love endures forever.” Psalm 136:1 (NLT)
- *God is for me.* “If God is for us, who can be against us?” Romans 8:31 (NIV)
- *God can use even painful things for my good.* “We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love. Romans 5:3-5 (NLT)

2. We can pray instead of grumbling about how bad things are.

“Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.” 1 Peter 5:7 (NLT)

3. We can thank God for all that he has already provided for us.

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)

4. We can refuse to compare ourselves to others or dwell on how things “ought to be.”

“You must not covet your neighbor’s wife. You must not covet your neighbor’s house or land, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.” Deuteronomy 5:21 (NLT)

5. We can serve others.

“You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” Acts 20:35 (NLT)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. What was your biggest complaint from your last vacation? How much time did you focus on this missed expectation?

2. Since we know that God is a Good Father, who would not give to us something that would bring harm or difficulty into our lives (just like as a parent you would not give your child something they desperately wanted if you knew the impending danger), can you think of some things that you begged God for in prayer that never were granted? Was it due to God’s unwillingness to grant those requests and provide for you, or was God actually protecting you from harm and difficulty?

3. Read Matthew 6:25-34. How does worry impact your everyday life (relationships, health)? Have you ever realized that worry is actually a good measurement of your level of faith (like a thermometer)?

4. Read Numbers 11:4-10. It is real easy to point a finger at the Israelites for their grumbling and complaining. Have you ever been frustrated at God's provision in your life? Are there preferences, tendencies, or desires that you need to let go of?

5. Read Philippians 4:10-14. Have you ever considered that being content is actually learned? How are you doing at being content with your life, and why is being content important? Paul gave the secret to being content in verse 13; do you believe that to be true for you as well?

6. Read Philippians 4:4-9. What are some ways you see in the passage from Paul to live a joyful, stress-free, peaceful, and contented life? List some things you need to change in your life to obtain this level of peace? (This may be as simple as changing the influences in your daily life. like music, TV shows, movies, etc.)

Quotations to consider:

"Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth." The Apostle Paul (1 Timothy 6:6 NLT)

"Home is the place we love best and grumble the most." Billy Sunday

"The remarkable thing is, we have a choice everyday regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day." Chuck Swindoll

"Contentment makes poor men rich; discontent makes rich men poor." Benjamin Franklin

"God gave you a gift of 86,400 seconds today. Have you used one to say, 'Thank you?'" William Ward

"There is no such thing as gratitude unexpressed. If it is unexpressed, it is plain, old-fashioned ingratitude." Robert Brault