

GOD'S MIRACULOUS PRESENCE

CORE PASSAGE: EXODUS 17:1-7

CONTEXT

God is supremely patient. From almost the moment the Israelites left Egypt, they were a faithless people filled with fear. But God's people were called to trust their Almighty God and remember all His faithful deeds and steadfast love. The story of the exodus and its aftermath is not just a story of God's power. It is a story of His presence—a holy, magnificent God condescends to be with fickle, undeserving people. And this Old Testament history foretells the coming of Christ, who would dwell with His people and make a way for them to escape the bondage of sin.

KEY CONCEPT

Complaining shows our doubts about God's presence.

As you examine Exodus 17:1-7:

- Consider that we test the Lord when we complain to others about God.
- Recognize that God has given us the gift of His presence, which provides us with supernatural strength and help.



TIMELINE

God Leads Israel Out of Slavery in Egypt (Exodus 13–15)

Israel Grumbles, and God Provides Them with Manna and Quail (Exodus 16)

God Gives Israel the Law Through Moses at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19–31)

Israel Grumbles, and God Provides Them with Water (Exodus 15)

SESSION STUDY: Israel Grumbles, and God Provides Them with Water from a Rock (Exodus 17)

Daily Readings

- Day 1:** Exodus 17:1-7
- Day 2:** Exodus 17:8-16
- Day 3:** Exodus 18:1-8
- Day 4:** Exodus 18:9-12
- Day 5:** Exodus 18:13-27
- Day 6:** Psalm 65



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

EXODUS 17:1-4

OUR COMPLAINTS REVEAL OUR DOUBTS ABOUT GOD.

Underline all the references to “water,” “drink,” and “thirst.”

1 The entire Israelite community left the Wilderness of Sin, moving from one place to the next according to the LORD’s command. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. **2** So the people complained to Moses, “Give us water to drink.” “Why are you complaining to me?” Moses replied to them. “Why are you testing the LORD?” **3** But the people thirsted there for water and grumbled against Moses. They said, “Why did you ever bring us up from Egypt to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” **4** Then Moses cried out to the LORD, “What should I do with these people? In a little while they will stone me!”

VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

“Folk still tell God to prove His love. They will tell God that if He loves them then He should get them a job, or a house, or He should heal them. But God does not have to do those things to prove His love for them. He has already proven His love abundantly, beyond all doubt, at Calvary.”¹

–John G. Butler

Key Concept: Complaining shows our doubts about God's presence.

Once again, God led His people to a place without water. This was not their first test, but they failed yet again. This time, God's people tried God through their demands. Their impertinent impatience was a great disobedience. God is not on our timeline. His purpose and plan is perfect. Instead of giving into entitled grumbling, we must trust in God's omniscience and sovereignty and wait on Him to act at just the right moment in just the right way.

Not only did the Israelites get an "F" for faithlessness, they also floundered their delivery. From the onset of the exodus from Egypt, Moses was clear that he was merely a mouthpiece for God. He was the messenger, not the Master. Yet the Israelites dumped their demands on Moses—so much so that he feared for his life (v. 4)—instead of bringing their requests to God.

When frustrations arise within the church, are you quicker to take your concerns to God or to your human leadership? Why?

One would think that the Israelites would have learned their lesson by now—especially after all the mighty, miraculous works of God they had witnessed. If seeing is believing, then why did the Israelites have such a hard time trusting God? There is a reason why Paul prayed for spiritual enlightenment (Ephesians 1:18). The evil one has "blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:4). This is our default: blindness. Only through the gospel-gift of supernatural sight can we truly see, and though we are saved from our sin in an instant, we each have to grow in our use of our new spiritual sight.

There is a spiritual sight that we still struggle with even after salvation. It is a strategy of Satan to get us to forget who God is and all that He has done for us. We don't need to know all the details of the future in order to trust in a trustworthy God. Instead, we must look for the signs of His presence. When we demand more details before we move forward in faith, we join in the disobedience of the Israelites.

How are you depending on the Holy Spirit to remember the goodness of God?



PERSONAL PREPARATION

EXODUS 17:5-7

GOD IS ALWAYS FAITHFUL IN BEING PRESENT TO PROVIDE FOR US.

In verse 7, underline the phrases that describe what the Israelites did through their complaining.

5 The LORD answered Moses, “Go on ahead of the people and take some of the elders of Israel with you. Take the staff you struck the Nile with in your hand and go. **6** I am going to stand there in front of you on the rock at Horeb; when you hit the rock, water will come out of it and the people will drink.” Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. **7** He named the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites complained, and because they tested the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

CHRIST CONNECTION

God miraculously provided water from a rock when His people thirsted, revealing His presence. That rock foreshadowed Jesus, who came to give people living water so they would never thirst again (John 4:14; 1 Corinthians 10:4).

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Have you ever practiced keeping a gratitude journal in which you list out even the most minute gifts? The morning chirping of the birds, the laughter of a loved one, or the simple pleasure of a cup of coffee—there is great power in practicing gratitude, even for the smallest of things. As we learn to celebrate these seemingly insignificant and fleeting moments, the cumulation of them points us to a bigger truth about God—He is in every gift.

We also see God's presence through our trials. Yes, God gives us good, enjoyable, tangible gifts. But more importantly, He has given us the gift of His presence, which provides us with supernatural strength and help (Isaiah 41:10), revelation and joy (Psalm 16:11), goodness and faithful love (Psalm 23:6), and so much more. Through this provision of water from a rock at Horeb, the Lord gave us a picture of the gift of His Son, who gives us the gift of living water, the Holy Spirit (John 7:38-39; 1 Corinthians 10:4).

What are some ways you have experienced God's presence in your life?

"Is the Lord among us or not?" We may have never uttered this specific combination of words, but have we demonstrated the same doubt? It may sound like, "God, are You there?" or, "How could You let this happen?" It doesn't

help that we have the devil whispering his doubt-casting lie, "Did God really say . . . ?" (see Genesis 3:1). Note that Israel's complaining and questioning went hand in hand. Even if we don't ask such pointed questions, our complaints cast the same message: "I don't trust You, God." We must learn to recognize these groans for what they are—doubts that God exists, is present, is who He says He is, and will do what He says He will do.

How should you find hope from the fact that God is always present with you and willing to help in times of need?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD IS OMNIPRESENT: God's omnipresence refers to His presence in all time and all places simultaneously. Because God exists apart from and outside of time and space, He is not limited by their constraints (1 Kings 8:27; Acts 17:24). He is present with us wherever we are and sees all that occurs; nothing escapes His attention (Psalms 33:14; 139:7-10; Isaiah 57:15; Jeremiah 23:23-24; Matthew 18:20). God's omnipresence is a deterrent for sin and a source of great comfort and hope for believers.

GROUP EXPERIENCE



SINFUL QUESTIONS

Identify the Israelites' questions in Exodus 17:1-7, and record the sin issues at the heart of their questions in the space provided.

THEIR QUESTIONS

THEIR SINS

Why do our complaints reveal the presence of doubts and unbelief regarding God's presence in our lives?



Key Concept: Complaining shows our doubts about God's presence.



HEAD

What are some verses you can turn to this week to enjoy more of God's presence no matter the circumstances?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read Psalm 95, noting the blessings of His presence with His people. Then pray through the psalm, expressing your praise for God's greatness, His care, and His salvation. Repent of any hardness of heart toward your good and great God.



HEART

What complaints and grumbling, and the sins underneath, do you need to repent of today?

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HANDS

How will you encourage your fellow believers and unbelieving friends and family to turn from sin and live by faith in Jesus Christ?

