

HOW TO MOVE FROM GRUMBLING TO INSPIRATION

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SCRIPTURE

Exodus 16:1-7

v1 “On the fifteenth day of the second month after the Israelites had escaped from Egypt, they left Elim and started through the western edge of the Sinai Desert in the direction of Mount Sinai.

v2 There in the desert they started complaining to Moses and Aaron,

v3 ‘We wish the LORD had killed us in Egypt. When we lived there, we could at least sit down and eat all the bread and meat we wanted. But you have brought us out here into this desert, where we are going to starve.’

v4 The LORD said to Moses, ‘I will send bread down from heaven like rain. Each day the people can go out and gather only enough for that day. That's how I will see if they obey me.

v5 But on the sixth day of each week they must gather and cook twice as much.’

v6 Moses and Aaron told the people, ‘This evening you will know that the LORD was the one who rescued you from Egypt.

v7 And in the morning you will see his glorious power, because he has heard your complaints against him. Why should you grumble to us? Who are we?’” (CEV).

INTRODUCTION

Have you noticed that people in general, are typically dissatisfied with something? Dissatisfaction in itself can either be a motivator to create something new or a better way, or it can result in grumbling.

Do we grumble because it is part of our nature? Do we grumble because we are looking for something to grumble about, meaning that grumbling is part of our nature? Or is it because our world is not “just so?”

Come to think of it, an important question that we need to answer is, “what is the relationship between grumbling and inspiration?”

BODY

First, join me for a quick history lesson. A long time ago, a group of people left their own country because of drought and famine. They were welcomed in their new land and even given some of the land. Then, they were made slaves.

And although their masters took their freedom away, they could not take away the fact the enslaved people were a special people set apart by God. Nor could their masters change their belief in God, nor could they take away their trust in God, that He would one day, notice their trouble, hear their prayers and deliver them.

God heard their prayers and sent Moses to the King of Egypt with the demand that His people be freed. It took a while. God had to visit Egypt with a plague or two, actually 10: water turned to blood, frogs, gnats, flies, diseased livestock, boils, thunder and hail, locusts, darkness, and the death of all firstborn. Finally, the king got the message and allowed God’s people to go free.

Now you would think that a nation whose prayers were answered who are now on their way to the Promised Land might be excited and positive. They were on their way toward the promised land (Genesis 12:7) – situation of happiness.

But instead of rejoicing they were grumbling in the desert.

v2 There in the desert they started complaining to Moses and Aaron,

v3 "We wish the LORD had killed us in Egypt. When we lived there, we could at least sit down and eat all the bread and meat we wanted. But you have brought us out here into this desert, where we are going to starve."

They were in the desert and things were not “just so.” Things are seldom “just so” in the desert, even though the desert links point A to point B.

So what is really going on, why are they grumbling and where is God? How can we relate?

The Desert is Unpleasant

A desert is a large dry area with very little rain. It is a really harsh environment – usually very hot – that is hostile for humans, animals and plants. Essentially, the desert leaves you exposed.

The desert is not quite a place overflowing with milk and honey. The desert is unlikely to bring forth luscious vegetation and fruit trees. So the desert did not meet their desires because it was not “just so.” So I can understand how it is that when the heat rises, patience reduces.

But was the journey to the Promised Land supposed to be pleasant?

Deserts can be literal or representational, but in the Bible we learn that deserts are sometimes the very places where God finds us and calls us back to Him. The account of Elijah and Paul immediately come to mind. But let’s use the example of Jesus. After overcoming temptation in the desert, the same desert became the place of renewal, as angels came to minister to him there (Matthew 3:13–4:11).

Being in a desert is also an opportunity to reflect on your relationship with God. Think about it, in a desert, the luxuries of life are stripped away by our senses as we face a harsh environment. In this time, we can turn our undistracted hearts to God to find out what is truly important in our lives.

Yes, so our time in the desert has little comfort, pleasure and charity to it. We also live in a tired and fallen world, in in the midst of suffering and the craziness, we have the peace of Christ (John 16:33). More good news is that God will make sure that we are provided for while we are in the desert.

May your “unpleasant” time in the desert bring forth fruit as you reflect on your relationship with Him, knowing that God is right there with you in the desert.

The Desert is Unfamiliar

The Israelites knew Egypt as their home for about 400 years. They would not have been familiar with either the Promised Land or the desert. So here they were, after 400 years of captivity, their way to the Promised Land and they were doubting God even though they had seen God plague Egypt with frogs, lice, locusts, they saw the river turn to blood, even

though the angel of death passed over their own homes and spared their children, even though they saw the Red Sea open and their own feet walk across on dry ground. Even though they saw an army trying to kill them be blocked by a pillar of fire, and then flooded by the same water God held open for them, it still wasn't enough to convince the Israelites to trust in God.

Why? They were on an unfamiliar journey in an unfamiliar place for an unknown time, and this overshadowed their trust in God.

Trust is something you believe to be true and reliable because of evidence and experience. Trust is also something we quickly forget. Standing out about trust through, is Jeremiah 17:7-8, “But I will bless those who trust me. They will be like trees growing beside a stream— trees with roots that reach down to the water, and with leaves that are always green. They bear fruit every year and are never worried by a lack of rain.”

Not trusting God takes on a new dimension after reading Jeremiah 17:7-8. An absence of trees, water and fruit might be described as a desert.

Let me ask you, what evidence will it take for you to trust God? What about your past experiences with God, do they point to trust or grumbling?

May your time in an unfamiliar desert bring forth trust, faith, belief and hope. Although the desert may be unfamiliar, know that God is there with you. Look up, not around.

The same God who creates the trees, water and fruit also creates the desert. But the God of grace will meet us even in the desert. Missionary Amy Carmichael knew this truth: “Bare heights of loneliness . . . a wilderness whose burning winds sweep over glowing sands, what are they to Him? Even there He can refresh us, even there He can renew us.”

CONCLUSION

The Israelites wanted food. Obviously, they needed it to live. But instead of trusting God for provisions, they grumbled and blamed God who delivered them from slavery. And when they did get manna, it was a dead thing. It lasted one night and then went off.

I am reminded of John 6:35, “Then Jesus declared I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.” Jesus cannot expire, gather mould or become stale.

Bread may cause us to live on earth , but the Bread of Life causes us to live forever!

When you face a harsh environment or a difficult challenge, you can either look around or look up. The choice is yours.

Amen.