

November 18, 2012
From Failure to Correction

Have you ever had your criticism criticized?

MONDAY STUDY

1. Acknowledge God's Leadership

Read Exodus 15:19-21 and then try to answer the following questions.

- What do you think it was like to witness the parting of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh's army?
- Does it seem that Miriam's song was planned or impromptu?
- Should worship be planned, or should it be an impromptu response to God's work and character? (There are appropriate times for both. Miriam's tambourine band may well have been spontaneous, similar to David's dancing before the Lord with all his might in 2 Samuel 6. But there are numerous examples in Scripture of carefully planned services of worship. See for example the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 8; Elijah's showdown with the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18, and the rededication of the temple in Ezra 6.)
- How does Miriam's song praise God for His character?
- How does it praise Him for His actions?
- Is it important to do both? Why or why not?
- Which part of Miriam's song speaks about God's nature? Which part of Miriam's song speaks about God's work?
- How did Miriam fulfill her role as prophetess in this passage?
- Given the definition of a prophet as someone who speaks for God and proclaims His word under the inspiration of His Spirit, what types of people fill the prophetic role today?
- In the next passage of this lesson, Miriam is punished for rebelling against God and His appointed leader, Moses. What does that say about the ability of prophets to fail?

TUESDAY STUDY

2. Avoid a Critical Spirit

Read Numbers 12:1-3 and then try to answer the following questions.

- Not much is said about Miriam between Exodus 15 and Numbers 12. What do you think happened to make her complain against Moses?
- After verse 1, does the issue of Moses' wife ever come up? What does this say about the real issue?
- How does verse 2 indicate Miriam and Aaron's jealousy?
- Obviously, the Lord hears everything. So why does the text specify that the Lord heard Miriam's and Aaron's criticism?
- Given that Moses wrote the book of Numbers, what do you think about verse 3? (Note: It is possible, though not for certain, that this was an editorial comment added after Moses was dead and before the book took its final form)
- How should you balance confidence and humility in the positions God places you?
- Do you think it really matters who the Cushite woman was, or what the basis of the criticism was? Why or why not?
- In your opinion, why did Miriam and Aaron complain about her?
- Miriam and Aaron asked what, in another context, could have been a sincere question: Does the Lord speak only through Moses?

- Is it possible in a local congregation for God to speak through multiple members of the congregation or staff, and yet still have one clear leader?
- Which factor is the most important for determining if a pastor has been sent to a church by God? Why?
- Can any of these be absent if a pastor is truly called to a church?
- How do you define fruitful ministry in reference to a pastor?

WEDNESDAY STUDY

3. Accept God's Correction

Read Numbers 12:8-13,15 and then try to answer the following questions.

- How did God speak to Moses? Are there other people in Scripture to whom God did not speak directly? Or to whom He spoke in riddles?
- How did God manifest His presence among them?
- Judging by Aaron's statement in verse 11, how severe was Miriam's skin disease?
- Why do you think Aaron got off the hook? Was his sin less severe than Miriam's?
- Just because God does not punish us every time we sin, does that mean it is acceptable for us to sin?
- Do you think we often confuse God's grace for His acceptance of our sin?
- Is the circumstantial evidence enough to convince you that Miriam repented and was fully restored?
- If she was restored, what does that say about God's grace?
- If she was not restored, what do you think kept her from it?
- What factors affect the amount of time needed for restoration?
- God's grace is available for all who are willing to repent and accept forgiveness. What keeps people from experiencing repentance and restoration today?

THURSDAY – SATURDAY

Read through the following articles in preparation for Pastor's Jim's Preaching and Teaching.

1. The Egyptian Army;
2. Songs in the Old Testament;
3. Miriam;
4. Aaron's Role in the Exodus;

SUNDAY – November 18, 2012 Be Ready to Really Grow in God's Word.