

Week of November 20, 2011
Respond to Difficult Situations

Outline of Passages:

1. **Don't Idolize the Past** (Num. 20:1-5)
2. **Don't Lose Your Temper** (Num. 20:6-11; Ps. 106:32-33)
3. **Don't Fail to Trust the Lord** (Num. 20:12-13)

Bible Passages:

Numbers 20:1-13; Psalm 106:32-33

What is Study about?

We will look at Israelites' complaint of the lack of water and how Moses responded to that complaint in a way that dishonored God.



How will this study impact your life?

We will look at how we respond to difficult situations. Will we trust the Lord and do things His way? Or will we trust in ourselves and do things our way?

1. Don't Idolize the Past - Num. 20:1-5

A. Setting the Scene:

- i. The Israelites had come to the beginning of their 40th year in the wilderness. They could see the end in sight, when they would finally enter the Promised Land.
- ii. They came to the southern boundary of the Promised Land, at Kadesh. Normally, Kadesh had plenty of water, but they must have arrived during a drought.
- iii. The Israelites had been in this predicament before. Then the Lord told Moses to strike a rock so water would flow out. Israel did not learn from this past experience.
- iv. The Israelites gathered and quarreled with Moses and Aaron. This was more than just whining or complaining, since the Hebrew says "to fight with" or "contend with."

B. Essentially the people were saying they longed for the "good old days" in Egypt.

- i. The Israelites argued that death was better than life. How self-centeredness they had become, to consider it better to die in the wilderness than to be temporarily without water.
- ii. They accuse Moses, "Why have you brought the LORD'S assembly into this wilderness...?" Wasn't God who had been leading them all along. They were in the wilderness precisely because they had disobeyed God and failed to trust God to provide.
- iii. They believe the past slavery in Egypt was better the future promises of God. Kadesh was only a temporary stop on the way to a land flowing with "milk and honey."

C. Spiritual Insight #1: Scripture encourages us to learn from the past.

- i. **Romans 15:4** For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.
- ii. **1 Corinthians 10:11** These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.

Unfortunately, the Israelites did not do so. They had not learned from the earlier miracle of receiving

water from the rock (in Exodus 17:1-7) to trust God. Instead, they idolized the past, and it crippled them.

D. **Spiritual Insight #2:** Scripture encourages us to view troubles in life as only temporary.

- i. **2 Corinthians 4:17** For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.
- ii. **Romans 8:18** I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

How Do You Remember God's Faithfulness?

What helps you to remember the faithfulness of God in your past, so that you can trust Him more fully in future crisis?

- Keeping a journal of answered prayer;
- Religious holidays, i.e. the coming Thanksgiving Day;
- Studying Scripture to see how God provided for others in their crisis;
- Sharing how God has blessed me;
- Listening to others' testimonies of God's blessings to them;
- Participation in the Lord's Supper, to be reminded of how much Jesus loves you;
- Focusing on God's character i.e. trustworthiness, faithfulness, keeps His promises;

2. **Don't Lose Your Temper** - Num. 20:6-11; Ps. 106:32-33

A. God gave Moses specific instructions on how to handle this problem:

- i. Take your staff to the rock;
- ii. Speak to the Rock;
- iii. Water will come out of the rock.

B. Instead, Moses lost his temper;

- i. Took his staff as directed by God;
- ii. But Moses spoke to the people, not the rock; and then hit the rock twice with his staff.
- iii. Water came out of the rock.

C. We can all feel for Moses' anger and frustration with these rebellious people.

- i. But in disobeying God's specific command, Moses had also become a rebel.
- ii. Does this mean we can never get angry or that we have to hold in our anger at all cost? **NO!**
- iii. Psalm 106 tells us that Moses' anger and wrath overcame him. The sinful stubbornness of the people embittered his spirit.
- iv. Moses lost his self-control and patience, and his anger led him to act contrary to God's command.

D. Dealing with anger is never easy, but appropriate ways to express anger do exist.

E. We fail to trust God when we lose our tempers and take matters into our own hands.

F. God has the perfect solution for every one of our needs. **Do you believe that?**

How do you Handle Your Anger?

Moses' anger got the best of him at Kadesh. Check any item below that tempts you to lose your temper:

- When I'm disrespected; Traffic! Injustice against others;
 My child's disobedience Bad Service Being unappreciated;
 Other _____

Next time one of those situations arises, reply on God's help to give patience, gentleness and self-control.

3. Don't Fail to Trust the Lord - Num. 20:12-13

A. Moses and Aaron did not trust God.

- i. By their lack of belief in God's faithfulness, Moses and Aaron failed to show God's holiness.
- ii. Literally they failed to "consecrate" God at the rock in the presence of the people.
- iii. Their failure to follow God's specific commands did not allow the Israelites to see God's caring and benevolent character.

B. So why did Moses and Aaron fail to trust God?

- i. In calling the Israelites "rebels" and saying, "Must we bring water out of this rock," Moses put himself in the role of God to judge Israel and declare them guilty.
- ii. In the past, Moses had pleaded with God to pardon Israel.
- iii. Now he appeared to act as judge and jury.
- iv. Believers can also fall into this trap. We can mistakenly become angry with the sinner instead of the sin. When we condemn sinners, we forget that Jesus died on the cross for their sins too.

C. The sentence for disobeying God: Moses and Aaron would not be allowed to bring the new generation into the Promised Land.

- i. Moses would be allowed to see the land from the peak of Mount Nebo on the northeastern side of Canaan.
- ii. Both Moses and Aaron died before the Israelites crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land.

Can you complete this quote?

God told Moses to _____ the rock (verse 8). Instead, Moses spoke to the _____ (verse 10) and _____ the rock (verse 11). As a result, Moses did not honor God as _____ (verse 12).

Biblical Truths from Our Study:

1. God's strategy for handling difficult situations might not be what we expect or desire but will accomplish His purposes.
2. It's OK to remember the past, but don't dwell on it in such a way as to fail to live in the present.
3. Frustration with other people is no excuse for disobeying God.
4. Losing control of yourself and your temper can have long-term consequences.
5. Believers are to follow God's instructions regardless of the circumstances.
6. Even when we fail to trust God, He still is willing to forgive us.