

WATER•FIRE•STONE

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MOSES

Session 7 – Sticks and Stones, Part One | Exodus Chapters 15-16

Sunrise on the Red Sea. Moses climbed the nearest ridge for a wide-angle vision just to take it all in. With the sun warm on his back, he studied the sea for traces of the miracle they walked through. Gentle waves crested and broke in undulating rhythm as usual. Broken chariot wheels and lifeless Egyptians littered the shore. The tide was commencing to wash away millions of sandy footprints, evidence that God’s people had indeed walked through the sea. Daybreak and dry ground. Moses saw it with his eyes but he felt it with his soul.



Life. Some days you just want to wrap it in caution tape and declare a stress-free zone. Escape the pressure, avoid the conflict. Moses sure did. Faced with fierce opposition and immense frustration, Moses held it together and led well. How did he deal with the mounting stress in the wilderness?

This two-part series, Sticks and Stones, will show us how praise restores perspective and God transforms panic into provision.

Icebreaker

What is your (current or all time) favorite praise song?

Goals for this Session

- Discover the vital connection between praise as an act of worship and war.
- Consider why God uses wilderness tests to bring out the best in us.
- Pray honest prayers that relinquish conflicted fears to embrace gratitude.

1 Read Exodus 15:1-21 | When Pharaoh belligerently said *who is the Lord that I should obey Him*, God answered with the plagues. This section contains the first song of Moses, recorded live on the waterfront.* If anyone was asking *who is the Lord that I should praise Him*, this rousing anthem is the answer!

- a. Reading through the lyrics of this song, circle the words/phrases that Moses used to describe the Lord's character and actions. Put yourself in that awestruck multitude—from these verses, what would you know about the Lord your God through this experience?

- b. If you were to write your own praise song to God for bringing you through a “Red Sea” experience, which lines would you borrow from Moses' song, and why?

2 Why is a consistent habit of praise important? Going into the wilderness, we will see that grumbling was the default response for Israel most of the time. What about us? Take a few minutes to consider what the power of praise can do.

- a. Worship is a lifestyle of actively trusting God. What effect can this have on how we feel?

Habakkuk 3:17-19

Philippians 4:6-7

- b. Praise is an act of war against the enemy of our soul. What can it accomplish?

2 Chronicles 20:21-22

Acts 16:22-30

* Moses recorded on papyrus only. Unfortunately, no YouTube is available...but wouldn't that be amazing?

3 Read Exodus 15:22-27 | Singing by the sea was wonderful, but now it was time to start walking. What is happening? Describe the situation in your own words.

- a. This episode was the first of many that Moses would endure with the *children* of Israel. But it's too soon in the story to get all judgy and put on airs about how ungrateful and immature they were. We wouldn't do that with a toddler (would we?) and they were definitely spiritual toddlers.

It's easy to see the *let-that-be-a-warning-to-you* lesson, but stay five minutes longer and discover what else we can learn from them.

Think of the last time you hiked in the desert for three days without water. Describe how you felt when the only water you found smelled so putrid it made you sick! No answer? (You see what we did there.)

- b. Verse 25 | How did Moses deal with their grumbling? Would you say his response was more effective and compassionate than lecturing them? In what way?

“

Love Him in the morning when you
see the sun arising,
Love Him in the evening
cause He took you through the day.
In the in-between time when you
feel the pressure coming,
remember that He loves you and
He promises to stay.

John Fischer
All Day Song
(*Love Him in the Morning*)

- c. Verse 26 | How did God deal with their grumbling? Like any loving father would do with a thirsty, exasperated child, He gave them a drink and time to settle down. Moses points out that this is where God gave them a statute to test (prove) them. God knew their heart, but they were still pretty conflicted.

Like a blood test reveals what's going on in our body, spiritual tests reveal what is going on in our heart. The Lord tests us to grow our faith and bring out the best in us. But our attitude makes all the difference.

When you become anxious or frustrated with circumstances (or people!) what steps do you take to cooperate with God in order to grow through it? Be practical and specific.

Memory Verse

Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness,
and for His wonderful works to the children of men!

Psalm 107:8 NKJV

Which part of this verse resonates most with you today? How or in what way?

4 By now, they have been gone from Egypt for nearly two months. After Marah, Elim was much more to their liking, with freshwater springs and a luxurious grove of date palms. We don't know exactly how long they stayed there, but apparently it was long enough to get used to 5-star travel accommodations.

- a. Read Exodus 16:1-7 | What started this bout of complaining? In your observation, who or what is causing their complaints to get out of hand?

- b. Read Exodus 16:8-21 | How did the Lord respond? From what you read here, would you say the people were completely satisfied and grateful? Why or why not?

- c. Read Exodus 16:22-36 | God gave specific and detailed instructions concerning manna. Do your best to explain how these instructions were designed by God to take care of His people, body and soul.

- d. God fed His people with manna for forty years. He never failed to provide it, even when they took it for granted (and sometimes complained about it). Manna was bread from heaven that points to the *true* bread of heaven. Please explain in your own words.

Deuteronomy 8:2-3

John 6:32-35

5 Wilderness experiences can bring out the worst in us or they can develop the best in us. We decide. In Exodus 16:9, Moses told the people to “Come near to God. He’s heard your complaints.” Give that some thought.

“

- a. **A Command.** “Come near...” This describes intimate closeness with unhindered access. God not only commands us, He *permits* us to come near. How do we do this? Use the verses below for help with your answer.

Don’t try to get out of the desert.
Try to get as much out of the desert as you can.
Levi Lusko

Psalms 119:145-148

Psalms 145:18

Hebrews 4:16

James 4:7-8

- b. **A Promise.** Moses assured them that God *heard* them. God listens to us with undivided attention (1 Chronicles 28:9) and with perfect wisdom which He will gladly pass on to us (James 1:5). Knowing this, what should our attitude be?

Psalms 139:23-24

Ecclesiastes 5:2

Psalms 56:8-9

Isaiah 57:15

- c. **A Warning.** God heard their complaints. Grumbling was a relentless habit they indulged to the point of testing God and exasperating Moses. What keeps our perspective clear?

Proverbs 18:2

Proverbs 19:3

Lamentations 3:38-40

Philippians 2:13-14

6 In answer to their complaints, Moses reminded the people that they had daily evidence of God’s power and provision in their life (Exodus 16:6-7). Truth be told, complaining seems to come more naturally than contentment—especially when we find ourselves in a wilderness experience.

Even the apostle Paul said, “I have *learned* how to be content.” It didn’t come naturally. Through all the ups and downs of life, Paul came to realize that God would always take care of him. He could look on past experiences and confidently say, “My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

What daily reminders do you have that God is taking care of you? Why not take a moment to write a *thank-you* note to the Lord.

Action Steps ►► As you think through this part of Moses’ story, what is the most important takeaway point for you personally? How will you put what you’ve learned into action?

Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. —Ephesians 6:18 NIV

Adoration – Giving praise and honor to God for who He is and what He does.

Confession – Honestly deal with sin; acknowledge to God the ways (and whys) you fall short.

Thanksgiving – Verbalize your gratitude; express your praise and a thankful heart.

Supplication – Pray specifically for the needs of others, ourselves, our church, our nation.



Close your discussion time by praying together. Use the A·C·T·S pattern as a group focus and keep it simple. No need to be lengthy or profound, just authentic.

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