

THE GOSPEL PROJECT

UNIT 06

HUMANITY'S SELFISHNESS



NUMBERS; DEUTERONOMY



MEMORY VERSES

“Just as Moses lifted up the snake
in the wilderness, so the Son of Man
must be lifted up, so that everyone who
believes in him may have eternal life.”

—John 3:14-15



COMPLAINTS OF THE UNGRATEFUL

CORE PASSAGES: NUMBERS 11:4-6,10-23

CONTEXT

After Moses finished setting up the tabernacle and consecrating all that was needed per God's instructions, the Israelites celebrated their second Passover, the anniversary of their deliverance from Egypt. Perhaps as they celebrated the Passover, instead of remembering all that God had done, their spirit and their appetite led them to think about what they were missing. They had been eating manna daily through God's provision. But now in Numbers 11, the people complained to Moses that they were tired of manna and wanted meat.

KEY CONCEPT

Complaining shows our ungratefulness about God's provision.

As you examine Numbers 11:4-6,10-23:

- Note that our complaints against God provoke Him to anger.
- Contemplate ways we can show our gratitude to the God who provides for our daily needs and our greatest need in sending His Son to be our Savior.



TIMELINE

Moses Receives the Law; the People Build the Tabernacle (Exodus 20–Leviticus 27)

Moses Sets up the Tabernacle and
Consecrates Everything (Numbers 7–8)

**SESSION STUDY: The Israelites Complain Again
About Not Having Meat (Numbers 11)**

The Lord Calls for a Census and Gives Instructions
to Organize the Camp by Tribe (Numbers 1–4)

Israel Celebrates Their Second Passover
in the Wilderness (Numbers 9)

Israel Rebels; the Generation Is Condemned to Die in the Wilderness (Numbers 14)

Daily Readings

- Day 1:** Numbers 1:1–4:49
- Day 2:** Numbers 5:1–6:27
- Day 3:** Numbers 7:1–9:14
- Day 4:** Numbers 9:15–10:36
- Day 5:** Numbers 11:1–12:16
- Day 6:** Psalm 78



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

PERSONAL PREPARATION

NUMBERS 11:4-6,10-15

OUR COMPLAINTS REVEAL OUR UNGRATEFULNESS ABOUT GOD'S PROVISION.

Circle what the people were complaining about in verses 4-6.

Then underline what Moses was complaining about in verses 10-15. Note all the questions.

4 The rirraff among them had a strong craving for other food. The Israelites wept again and said, "Who will feed us meat? **5** We remember the free fish we ate in Egypt, along with the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. **6** But now our appetite is gone; there's nothing to look at but this manna!" . . . **10** Moses heard the people, family after family, weeping at the entrance of their tents. The LORD was very angry; Moses was also provoked. **11** So Moses asked the LORD, "Why have you brought such trouble on your servant? Why are you angry with me, and why do you burden me with all these people? **12** Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth so you should tell me, 'Carry them at your breast, as a nursing mother carries a baby,' to the land that you swore to give their ancestors? **13** Where can I get meat to give all these people? For they are weeping to me, 'Give us meat to eat!' **14** I can't carry all these people by myself. They are too much for me. **15** If you are going to treat me like this, please kill me right now if I have found favor with you, and don't let me see my misery anymore."

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Though we sometime don't believe it, God is able to provide for all of our needs according to His riches in glory (Philippians 4:19). And this bears witness to God's power to save sinners, providing for our ultimate need of salvation from sin and death through His gift of Jesus. With God, all things are possible (Matthew 19:26).

Key Concept: Complaining shows our ungratefulness about God's provision.



The Lord had been supplying the Israelites with a daily ration of manna from heaven almost from the time they crossed the Red Sea (see Exodus 16:1). A year later, they were getting tired of the same old thing day in and day out. While they complained that there was “nothing but manna” for them to eat, that wasn’t precisely the case. On at least one occasion, God had also caused quail to cover the camp (Exodus 16:13). And while they may have had their fill of fish, fruit, and vegetables while they were in Egypt, they seemed quick to gloss over the fact that they were slaves in Egypt.

Why do you think we struggle to find contentment with the good gifts the Lord provides?

Our complaining has a way of minimizing what is good about our present situation, making us think that the grass is greener on any other side than our own. This is what was happening with the Israelites in Numbers 11. But it was also the strategy Satan used with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Satan led Eve to minimize the fact that God had given them free rein to eat from all but one tree in the garden by focusing her attention on that one tree (Genesis 3:1-3). Once Satan got her to that point, getting her to rebel against God’s instructions was easy.

Notice that the Israelites “remember” (v. 5) the free fish and food items in Egypt from a few years ago or more, but they didn’t mention remembering all that God had done for them even in the last year. This lack of remembrance was what led to their grumblings and disobedience as they continued in the wilderness.

Thus, the “riffraff,” also meaning “mixed multitudes” referring to those who had left with the Israelites during the exodus (Exodus 12:38), complained to Moses, and in turn, Moses complained to God. Moses accused God of bringing trouble on him. He wondered what he had done to make God so angry that God would burden Moses with “all these people” (v. 12). He was so burdened with the people’s complaining that he asked God to take his life. Yet for all this, Moses never once asked God for help. During his rant, Moses lost sight of the fact that God could provide a solution, for the people and for himself.

How can having an attitude of gratitude keep us from falling into sin?



PERSONAL PREPARATION

NUMBERS 11:16-23

GOD IS ALL-POWERFUL AND ABLE TO PROVIDE FOR ALL OF OUR NEEDS.

Highlight the ways God planned to address both Moses's discouragement and the people's complaint.

16 The LORD answered Moses, “Bring me seventy men from Israel known to you as elders and officers of the people. Take them to the tent of meeting and have them stand there with you. **17** Then I will come down and speak with you there. I will take some of the Spirit who is on you and put the Spirit on them. They will help you bear the burden of the people, so that you do not have to bear it by yourself. **18** Tell the people: Consecrate yourselves in readiness for tomorrow, and you will eat meat because you wept in the LORD’s hearing, ‘Who will feed us meat? We were better off in Egypt.’ The LORD will give you meat and you will eat. **19** You will eat, not for one day, or two days, or five days, or ten days, or twenty days, **20** but for a whole month—until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes nauseating to you—because you have rejected the LORD who is among you, and wept before him, ‘Why did we ever leave Egypt?’” **21** But Moses replied, “I’m in the middle of a people with six hundred thousand foot soldiers, yet you say, ‘I will give them meat, and they will eat for a month.’ **22** If flocks and herds were slaughtered for them, would they have enough? Or if all the fish in the sea were caught for them, would they have enough?” **23** The LORD answered Moses, “Is the LORD’s arm weak? Now you will see whether or not what I have promised will happen to you.”

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT: The Holy Spirit cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church.

Key Concept: Complaining shows our ungratefulness about God's provision.

Before God dealt with the people's complaint, He first dealt with Moses's. Moses's complaint was the result of exhaustion and the burden of leading such a massive group of people. God told to Moses gather seventy men from the elders of Israel to stand before the tent of meeting. God confirmed Moses's authority by speaking to Moses in the presence of these seventy men. Then, God distributed a portion of the Spirit that He had given Moses to the seventy. Now they were equipped to help Moses bear the burden of leadership. With the help of the Spirit, the people of God can support each other in God's kingdom.

How do the Lord's actions in verses 16-17 display His compassion?

God then addressed the people's complaint. In His response, we are reminded that God was "very angry" at the riffraff (v. 10). God would give them what they wanted, but they also would regret ever bringing it up in the first place. They would have so much meat that it would become nauseating to them. At the end of Numbers 11, we read that with the quail God provided became a great plague, and many people died while the meat was still between their teeth (v. 33). According to verse 20, this wasn't just because the people complained. It was because they had rejected the Lord. God takes our sin seriously.

When God told Moses His plan, Moses didn't believe Him. Moses had already told God how hard it was to lead so many people; now he felt the need to tell God how hard it would be to feed them. God responded with a poignant reminder of His ability to do all things, His omnipotence: "Is the LORD's arm weak?" (v. 23). An alternate translation is "Is the Lord's arm too short?" Of course, the answer is no! We can be assured of God's omnipotence. He is strong enough and close enough to meet our needs.

Is it more difficult for you to believe that God is all powerful than it is to believe that He is all knowing, and if so, why do you think that is?

VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

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"God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. The fight of faith is a fight to feast on all that God is for us in Christ. What we hunger for most, we worship."¹

—John Piper

THE HEART OF THE COMPLAINT

Read Numbers 11:4-6 and write in the boxes below how each of these elements led to the Israelites' complaining.

"RIFFRAFF"

"STRONG CRAVING"

"OTHER FOOD"

"REMEMBER"

"GONE"

How did Moses respond to the people's complaints?
How did God respond?

Key Concept: Complaining shows our ungratefulness about God's provision.



HEAD

How does remembering God's blessings help you in difficult times?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read Psalm 78, noting God's merciful and just actions toward Israel. Then pray through verses respond to this Psalm by praising God for the ways He provides for our tangible needs—as well as for His extension of mercy and grace for when we get it all wrong.



HEART

To whom do you need to apologize for your grumbling this week?

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HANDS

How can we help one another be content with what God has given us?

