

GETTING STARTED

We are Better Together/Opening question: Welcome to LIFEgroup. Well, we are better together, but just not together right now; I pray you were able to worship online with us during one of the live weekend services and that you are connecting together online with your group leader and members. Over 350 connected last week through online programs!

What happens when you hit a wall?

Our Subject Today: We are studying what Pastor Daniel shared in his message this past weekend from the Old Testament book of Exodus right after the Lord parted the waters and people were rejoicing over the victory. Now in chapter 15:22-27, the people are thirsty, they hit a wall.

INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

OBSERVATION: Moses recorded this even to demonstrate God's care for his people in spite of their lack of belief.

INTERPRETATION: Please see the commentary on pages 5-6.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS: Please see the following 6 application questions. (You do not have to cover all 6, choose the best ones for your group; plus the DIG DEEPER questions are also optional)

Read *Exodus 15:22-23* - No Water

1) When we hit a wall, we have options – We can complain, we can forget what God has done, we can grow bitter, we can grumble. Which one would you say is the most common among people right now and which phrase best represents you?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS: "Hitting a Wall" can make people scared, worried, impatient and anxious. Some may try to keep a positive attitude, share encouraging things, and keep their trust in God. Some people may be judgmental of others who do not agree with their attitudes and decide to place blame on God or their circumstances for how they are feeling about the situation.

DIG DEEPER: Read *Psalms 55:4-8*. What emotions did David express to the Lord? (We will discuss his requests in Question 3.) How honest should we be with ourselves and with God about our feelings? Should our feelings determine our thoughts, words and actions?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS (cont.)**Read *Exodus 15:24* - People complained**

2) Why are Jesus followers often quick to complain like the Hebrews did in this verse? How can we allow the Lord to redirect our complaining? How can we encourage someone who is complaining about our current condition?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS: They forget what God had done for them. They forget who God is. We can acknowledge difficulty in light of who God is and what he has done in the past. As brothers and sisters, we can help remind each other of these things by pointing them to God's Word.

DIG DEEPER: Scan *Ex 14*. What had happened three days earlier? According to *Ex 15: 1-18*, how was God described? How can remembering these things change our thoughts, words, and actions? Read *Job 1:20-21*. How did Job respond after losing his children and possessions? What did he know about God that we need to remember?

Read *Exodus 15:25* - Crying out to the Lord

3) What was the first action taken by Moses? Is this your first action when you hit a wall or in Moses' case, maybe a million complaining voices? Do you think God did not allow them to find water on purpose; if so, why?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS: Moses prayed. Many believers do pray first when they hit a wall, but may get discouraged when the answer does not come quickly. Moses prayed until he got an answer. Then he obeyed.

DIG DEEPER: Read *Psalms 55:2, 16, 22*. How was David an example of what to do during tough times? What did he expect from God? Read *1 Thess 5:17* and *Luke 18:1*. What does God want us to do? What does he NOT want us to do?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS (cont.)**Read *Exodus 15:26* - Keep His commands**

4) As we apply this verse to our lives, what are the three steps we must take when we hit a wall?

- a) _____
 b) _____
 c) _____

If we follow these steps, what does God promise?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS: 1. Trust that God's best is yet to come. 2. Remember what God has done. 3. Understand that God will provide even in the detours and deserts of life.

DIG DEEPER: Read *1 Cor 10:1-13*. Focus on verses 6 and 10. What does Paul want us to learn as we see what the Israelites did in the desert? Read *1 Cor 10:14*. Is there an idol you need to flee from? Is any idol worthy of our trust? Can idols be faithful to us? Can idols provide for us in the deserts of life? Who will you trust?"

Read *Exodus 15:27* - Blessing will come

5) As we study this verse, we see how the Hebrews were greatly blessed after they overcame the trial or wall. How could the Lord bless us after we overcome our wall? How will you live differently after this trial?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS: We can expect to have a new understanding about God. It is our choice to grow in our love relationship with Him or to become more bitter. Faith makes the difference. Will we believe that God is good and merciful regardless of the events. We should expect to see stories of God's faithfulness to sustain us and save our souls.

DIG DEEPER: Read *Job 42:1-3*. How did Job's view of God change because of his trials? Review the things we learned from *James 1:2-4* and *Acts 17:16-34*. How can these Scriptures guide us to use this time so that when the trial is over we will live differently?

MY TAKE-AWAY**POSSIBLE TAKE-AWAY:**

- I need to stop worrying and complaining, and start trusting God by crying out to Him
- God has got great days ahead for me because I trust Him

BE A DOER (“...be a doer of the word, not merely a hearer...” - James 1:20)

- Find a secluded place at your home and cry out to God
- Talk with your family how this virus has change you for the good, and discuss how the future will be better

MY NEXT STEPS (from the weekend worship service)

This week:

1. I am going to look for a small stone to keep with me to remind of something specific that God has brought me through.
2. When I am at the end of myself, I am going to go to God
3. I’ll invite a friend or neighbor to our online Easter services.

HOW MY GROUP CAN PRAY FOR ME THIS WEEK

> Record Group Prayer Requests Here:

COMMENTARY

Exodus 15:22-27 After the first great victory came the first big test. The Israelites did not pass it easily. When circumstances seemed threatening, they quickly forgot the significance of the deliverances they had recently experienced (ten plagues and the drowning of the Egyptians at the sea) and complained. God used the occasion of their complaining to test them and teach them about trusting him enough to obey him and thus enjoy his benefits. The degree to which they failed to accept and learn from that testing and teaching is not described in the present passage but has its outworking in the immediately following episodes in the narrative (16:1-30; 17:1-7).

Ex 15:22-24 Once across the Red Sea, the Israelites went to Shur. It was past the boundary fortifications the Egyptians had built to protect Egypt proper and thus represented freedom from the likelihood of any further Egyptian pursuit. One of the demands the Israelites had all along sought from the Egyptians, to go “into the wilderness,” was now a reality. Much remained, however, before the second part of their demand, to serve Yahweh, would be accomplished.

From a human point of view, it is entirely understandable that the Israelites would have begun to worry about water by the third day without finding any. They and their animals probably had consumed nearly all the water they had carried with them in skins, and it is not inconceivable that as they approached Marah in expectation of being able to drink all they wanted, many of them drank their last water and/or gave it to the animals. Accordingly, finding foul water at Marah was not merely a disappointment but a cause of panic.

The Israelites may not yet have been at the delirious stage, but they certainly were not happy about what they encountered at Marah. This represented a test of faith of a sort they had not before experienced. It bore some resemblance to what the Egyptians had to deal with when the Nile was turned to blood (7:14-24), but that was a problem alleviated by digging temporary wells. Some Israelites may even have tried to dig around the edges of the water at Marah, presumably without success.

Their question, “What are we to drink?” was not in itself outrageous or even unfair. Their sin manifested itself rather in their *attitude*, which is suggested in the statement at the beginning of v. 24, “So the people grumbled against Moses.” Moses was, of course, God’s human representative among them and a likely target for blame. What is noteworthy, however, is that the people were following the pillar of cloud and therefore knew perfectly well that it was Yahweh who had led them to this location. But since Moses was the Lord’s spokesman, they expected the answer to their complaint to come from him. The people did not have what they had expected and failed to trust God to provide it.

Ex 15:25a Yet another miraculous sign is described here, and in just half a verse. This supernatural demonstration of God’s presence and provision is not notably different in kind from the demonstrations earlier used by Moses to convince the elders of Israel and then the people in general that he had been sent from God. Moses needed something to assure the people that all was well; God told him what to do, and when he did it, God’s care was demonstrated. Speculation about how a tree [NIV: *piece of wood*] could eliminate mineral salts from a large body of water is just as fruitless as speculation about how the Nile could turn to blood or how a staff could turn into a snake and back again: it was a supernatural, not a natural event; a miracle, not a prescientific application of a natural remedy. Nothing in the text suggests that the tree symbolized anything in particular (such as the tree of life or the like). Rather, Moses’ faith in being willing to do what God commanded him, without understanding why or how it would work, is what is implicitly commended here.

Ex 15:25b-26 Verse 25b is both predictive of what was coming and presumptive of what had occurred. What v. 26 called for was loyalty and obedience: loyalty in the sense of a willingness to pay close attention to what God’s will was and to want above all else to please him by doing what he thinks is right and obedience by not failing to “pay attention to all his commands and keep all his decrees”. God’s expectation was sweeping. His people must give him full, not partial, loyalty and obedience. If he wanted it, they were to do it.

What advantage came from such loyalty and obedience? Perfect divine protection. The promise of v. 26, however, often has been misunderstood, taken as if it were a general guarantee that faithful believers cannot get sick or that if they do, they will always be healed in this life. Part of the tendency to misunderstanding comes from translation choices. The best translation of these sentences probably would be: “Any illness I brought on the Egyptians, I will not bring on you. For I am Yahweh, your doctor.” The promise here was not that Yahweh would never allow those who place their faith in him to get sick. It was that the Israelites would be free from having to worry

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about the plagues. God averred that he would not become angry at them in such a way as to subject them to the miseries he had subjected the Egyptians to—if they were indeed loyal and obedient. His promise to serve as their doctor/healer also was not a promise that if anyone among them ever got sick he would immediately heal that person. It was instead an assertion that it was to him they must turn for healing if they found themselves afflicted as a result of sin. The story of the healing from snakebites in *Num 21:1-9* is exactly the sort of situation envisioned in these words.

Ex 15:27. *Marah* was a place to drink but not to encamp. The Israelites actually camped further on, at Elim, which is described as having abundant water (“twelve springs”) and being wooded (“seventy palm trees”). Any groundwater source other than a dug well may be called a “spring” (‘*ayin*), so the twelve springs mentioned here may have been twelve separate “water holes” available for drinking and drawing water and watering herds at that time of year—even if all twelve holes were fed by one main source when the Israelites found the place over three thousand years ago (Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, The New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006]).

Ex 15:22. *So Moses brought.* Moses now relates that, from the time of their passage through the sea, they had been suffering for three days from the want of water, that the first they discovered was bitter, and that thence the name was given to the place. This was indeed no light temptation, to suffer thirst for three days in a dry land, and nowhere to meet with relief or remedy. In such an emergency, they should have directed their prayers to God; whereas they not only neglected to pray, but violently assailed Moses, and demanded of him the drink which they knew could only be given them by God. But because they had not yet learnt to trust in Him, they fly not to Him for aid, except by imperiously commanding Him, in the person of His servant, to obey their wishes; for this interrogation, “What shall we drink?” is as much as to say, “Arrange with God to supply us with drink.” But they do not directly address God, of whose assistance they feel that they have need, because unbelief is ever proud.

Ex 15:25. *And he cried.* Hence we gather that Moses alone duly prayed when the people tumultuously rose against him, and that they who were not worthy of the common air itself were abundantly supplied with sweet water. Herein shone forth the inestimable mercy of God, who deigned to change the nature of the water for the purpose of supplying such wicked, and rebellious, and ungrateful men. He might have given them sweet water to drink at first, but He wished by the bitter to make prominent the bitterness which lurked in their hearts. He might, too, have corrected by His mere will the evil in the waters, so that they should have grown sweet spontaneously. It is not certain why He preferred to apply the tree, except to reprove their foolish impiety by shewing that He has many remedies in His power for every evil.

Ex 15:26. *If thou wilt diligently hearken.* Moses now unfolds what was the statute or ordinance which God promulgated. For here the reference is not to the whole law which was afterwards given on mount Sinai, but to the special admonition which served to chastise the wickedness of the people. The sum of it is, that if the Israelites were tractable and obedient to God, He on the other hand would be kind and bountiful to them. And it is an implied rebuke, that they might know whatever troubles they experienced to be brought upon them by their sins. He proposes the Egyptians to them as an example, whose rebellion they had seen punished by God with such severe and heavy calamities. “I am the Lord that healeth thee,” is immediately added in confirmation, as if he had said, that the Israelites were liable to the same plagues which had been inflicted on the Egyptians, and were only exempt from them because God performed the office of a healer. And truly whatsoever diseases afflict the human race, we may see in them, as in so many mirrors, our own miseries, that we may perceive that there is no health in us, except in so far as God spares us. We are also taught in this verse that this is the rule of a good life, when we obey God’s voice and study to please Him. But because the will of God was soon after to be proclaimed in the law, He expressly commands them to “give ear to His commandments, and to keep His statutes.”

Ex 15:27. *And they came to Elim.* Moses here relates that a more pleasant station was granted to the people, when they were led to a well-watered spot, even planted with palm-trees, which do not usually grow in a dry soil (John Calvin and Charles William Bingham, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, vol. 1 [Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010]).

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