

Family Bible Series for July 23: God's provision is bountiful and continuous

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God's provision is bountiful and continuous

- Exodus 15:22-26; 16:2-4, 31-35

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Fairy tale stories often conclude with the phrase "and they lived happily ever after." Unfortunately, the Christian life is not lived out like a fairy tale. After major victories in our life, it would be nice to simply conclude we will "live happily ever after."

Perhaps the Israelites felt the same after the Red Sea experience. How do you top the parting of the Red Sea? They must have felt life would be smooth sailing afterward. However, they immediately encountered another difficulty in Exodus 15.



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Why does God test those who belong to him? Some answers to this question are revealed in Exodus 15 and 16.

Tests have godly purposes (Exodus 15:22-26)

After the Red Sea parted and God's people crossed over, Moses led them into the Desert of Shur (v. 22). They traveled for three days but could find no water. Finally, they arrived at Marah and found water, but it was bitter and undrinkable (v. 23). The bitter-water experience angered the Israelites, and they grumbled against Moses and the Lord (v. 24).

Isn't it amazing that it took only three verses for God's people to go from singing his praises to complaining against him? You would think if you witnessed God's provision through the Red Sea parting that you would never question the Lord again. But the Israelites began complaining about the Lord's provision almost immediately.

Moses cried out to God on behalf of the people. God showed the leader a piece of wood. He threw the wood into the water, and the water became sweet and drinkable. God tested the Israelites to show them again that he could be trusted (v. 25).

God still tests his children today as well. These tests are not designed to produce evil, like a temptation. They are designed with godly purposes. Our

heavenly Father wants us to know he can be trusted. The avenue he often chooses comes to us in the form of a test.

Andrew Murray served faithfully as a missionary to a remote region of South Africa during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He experienced many tests as he served in a 50,000-square-mile area. Yet he saw God's hand in each test he encountered. Murray lived by the motto: "By God's appointment, in his keeping, under his training, for his time."

Tests reveal loyalty (Exodus 16:1-4)

You would think the Red Sea miracle, coupled now with the Marah experience of the water made drinkable, would convince the Israelites to trust God completely. However, three verses later, the Israelites were complaining again.

Moses led God's people to another desert. It had been about 45 days since the Red Sea parted (v. 1). Again, the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron because they had no food or water. "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt," they complained (v. 3).

Once again, God provided for his people. He showered down bread from heaven for them (v. 4). But there was only enough provision for one day. The people had to be loyal to God and trust him daily for that day's provision.

If a sponge is filled with a liquid and you place your finger firmly upon it, the liquid will pour out of the sponge. In much the same way, God often places his hand upon us to reveal what is within our heart. Our loyalty will be revealed. God desires to be the primary obsession of our life. This is why he later commanded his people to have no other gods before him (Exodus 20:3).

Tests show God's provision (Exodus 16:31-35)

The Israelites called God's provision of bread "manna" (v. 31). In order to show the following generations God would provide, Moses commanded Aaron to take some of the manna and preserve it in a jar (vv. 33-34). Generations to come would know God could be trusted to provide for them. The Israelites ate manna daily for 40 years in the wilderness, until they reached the border of Canaan (v. 35).

God often places us in situations today in which we must trust totally in his provision. You may find yourself today in a circumstance in which you are struggling. The situation may involve difficulties with your children, your health, financial matters, relationship problems or other issues. Whatever your situation, you can trust God's provision.

Horatio Spafford was a man who remained loyal to God. He lost many of his possessions in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Later, Spafford's infant son died of disease. In 1873, he lost four daughters in a ship wreck with his wife being the lone survivor. In his deep grief, Spafford penned the wonderful hymn, "It is Well With My Soul." He knew God provided, although he experienced loss and tragedy. Regardless of the testing you may endure, God will provide all you need.

Discussion questions

- Describe a time when you experienced a great trial.
- Is God truly the prime obsession of your life?
- In what specific ways has God provided for you?



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