



SUFFICIENT

God provides for the needs of His people.

EXODUS 16:1-5,11-20

Life is full of ups and downs, victories and adversities. However, one of the truths that we hold on to as Christians is that God is always God. He never changes. In light of this truth, we can accept the circumstances that come our way—even when they are difficult. Moreover, in understanding that God often moves us from times of triumph and victory to places of trial and testing, we learn that God can use every circumstance for our sanctification.

When is adversity a good thing? How does adversity shape people?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

EXODUS 15:22–18:27

The first half of the Book of Exodus centers on God’s deliverance of His people out of Egypt. In this exodus event, the Israelites journeyed from Egypt to the edge of the promised land. Along the way they faced many difficulties and tests. More specifically, each difficulty—at Marah (water), in the wilderness of Sin (food), and at Rephidim (water)—involved trials and tests of their faith in God to sustain them on their journey (Ex. 15:25; 16:4; 17:2).

As God’s people faced difficulties, they complained against Moses about the lack of food. In response to their cries, God graciously provided both manna and quail. Moreover, God’s provision of manna graciously included careful instructions about gathering their food. Embedded in these instructions is a pattern that would shape Israel’s life of work and rest. Throughout this section of Exodus, God tested His people to see whether they would trust and obey Him during their journey.

Implicit in these instructions was the need to learn how to walk in a way characterized by godly wisdom. Therefore, the exodus was not only a departure from their past story, it was also the beginning of a new one. Redemption is always an act of re-creation. In many ways, Exodus gives us a picture of the Israelites as children growing in their understanding and identity. In the wilderness journey, God’s people had to learn new ways of living. In other words, they had to learn what it meant to live as God’s people, completely reliant on Him for all of their needs.

Read Exodus 16:1-5,11-20 in your Bible. How did God provide for His people? What was the purpose behind God’s provisions? (See v. 4.)

How can something be both a provision and a test?



EXPLORE THE TEXT

QUESTIONING THE FUTURE (EX. 16:1-3)

¹ And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. ² And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: ³ And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

VERSES 1-3

As God's people *took their journey from •Elim* to travel further toward the promised land, they *murmured against Moses and Aaron*. They were only a little over a month into their journey, and already the entire community was complaining. In verses 7-8, Moses made it clear that their complaining was really against God. Grumbling against God is a serious sin (see 1 Cor. 10:1-12). Paul told the church in Philippi to do everything without grumbling or arguing (see Phil. 2:14).

Moreover, Moses reminded the people that God had heard their complaints (Ex. 16:8-12). In questioning God's power to sustain them, the people were actually questioning His character. In response, Moses and Aaron told the people, "In the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD" (v. 7). Throughout Exodus, God's glory is shorthand for a manifestation of His presence (see 24:16-17; 40:34-35). God would answer Israel's doubt by revealing Himself.

The reality is that we, like Israel, often fail the test of trusting God, and we often find ourselves grumbling and wanting something other than what God has provided. Thankfully, Jesus was faithful in His wilderness testing. Israel was tested for forty years; Jesus was tested for forty days. Remember that Jesus' first test involved bread (Matt. 4:3). The tempter tried to convince Jesus to betray His trust in the Father's provision and turn stones into bread. Where Israel failed, and where you and I often fail, Jesus succeeded.

Throughout the Bible, the words ***the hand of the LORD*** refer to His power. It was by God's power that Israel had been delivered from Egypt (6:1; 7:4-5; 13:3). That the Israelites voiced their wish to have died at His hand rather than be delivered by it shows that they had not understood God's purposes and power, nor did they fully believe the promises that God had made to their forefathers.

It is important to note that this was not the only instance where God's people doubted Him and longed for what they had in Egypt (see 14:12), and it would not be the last time of doubt during their wilderness wanderings (see Num. 20:3-5). They had only been in the wilderness for over a month, and already they were complaining about not having food like what they ate in Egypt. The Israelites faced genuine adversity and had genuine concerns, yet ultimately they failed to trust God's provision for these concerns. The Israelites doubted that God would provide; their hearts were revealed in their complaints, and they thought that God had brought them into the wilderness to die. Though He had saved them from slavery, they now doubted that He would sustain them.

Why do people sometimes prefer the old to the new? How is accepting God's provision for today an act of trust and faith?

QUESTIONING THEIR OBEDIENCE (EX. 16:4-5,11-12)

⁴ Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. ⁵ And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily. [...] ¹¹ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ¹² I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God.

VERSES 4-5

God's provision of manna from heaven not only met the people's immediate physical needs, it was also meant to signify that God



would sustain their whole lives. Moreover, it was meant to teach His people that their whole lives were to be governed by God’s word and promise.

Once again, this was a trial to teach them that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. The question was whether they would walk in God’s *law*.

Jesus pointed to the manna-like sign after He fed the five thousand (see John 6:41,43-58). He applied this principle to Himself by declaring that He was “the bread which came down from heaven” (v. 41). The bread provided in the feeding of the five thousand was nothing more than a sign to show that Jesus would provide Himself, the bread from heaven that would never perish, the bread from heaven that would meet their deepest needs. The Israelites ate the manna and still died; however, those who feast on Christ will live forever (see John 6:44-51). As Christians, we must understand that in Christ, God has provided a way to meet our deepest needs in this life and in the eternal life to come.

VERSES 11-12

God *heard the murmurings* of the people, just as He had heard their cries in Egypt (Ex. 3:7). Just as He had provided a miraculous deliverance out of Egypt, He would now provide them quail at twilight and fresh manna each morning. These miraculous provisions were given so that the Israelites would know that He was their God.

Throughout the Bible—even in the ministry of Jesus—God’s miraculous works are not an end in themselves but a means to point people to His glory. These provisions should have reminded Israel that God was not a distant deity and that He loved and cared for them intimately. Even when they complained, God’s response was to provide for them and give them another chance to be obedient.

What is the connection between obedience and trust? Can you have trust without obedience? How is obedience without trust different from obedience with trust?

QUESTIONING THE PROVISION (EX. 16:13-18)

¹³ And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. ¹⁴ And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. ¹⁵ And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat. ¹⁶ This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents. ¹⁷ And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. ¹⁸ And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.

VERSES 13-15

Moses made it clear that it was God alone who provided what they needed. The *quails* were provided in such abundance that they covered the camp. As the morning dew evaporated, manna covered the ground to reveal that God had provided what they needed for their nourishment. Despite their complaints and faithlessness, God revealed the truth expressed in Lamentations 3:22-23: “It is of the LORD’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.” Even so, God’s people did not understand what He had done. ***They said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was.*** Moses had to explain that this was food that God had graciously provided.

VERSES 16-18

Not only did God miraculously provide quail in the evening and manna in the morning, He also provided instructions that the people were to collect ***an omer for every man.*** An omer was equal to about two quarts. After all was collected, no one had more or less than what was needed. In fact, each person in the camp could gather as much as he or she needed.

Note that God’s provision was strictly according to the people’s needs, no more and no less. This is a theme common in the Bible.



God's provision is always enough. We are reminded in 2 Corinthians 12:9 that God's grace is sufficient for us and His power is perfected in our weakness.

Not only does God's act of provision remind us that He is the God of creation, His commands for collection also remind us that He is the God who lovingly sustains His people as they dwell in His creation.

How can not knowing what something is or how it was provided cause a person to question that provision? How can a person's focus on what was provided get in the way of being thankful for that provision?

KEY DOCTRINE: Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him.

QUESTIONING THE NEXT MEAL (EX. 16:19-20)

¹⁹ And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning.

²⁰ Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them.

VERSES 19-20

Moses was very clear that God's people were to collect all of the manna and not leave any of it until the next day. There was a test implicit in this command not to hoard God's provisions; they must be collected as gifts for each day. God would provide bread daily. In this sense, Exodus 16 is paradigmatic, presenting a real-life example of what it means to rely on God to "give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11).

Even after being warned by Moses, some people disobediently left part of the manna uneaten overnight. Since they ignored Moses, the remaining manna ruined. It ***bred worms, and stank***. Note that Israel's failure to heed God's warning justly angered Moses.

The command not to allow any manna to remain overnight was meant to be an expression of trust in God for each day's provisions. Clearly, Israel failed the test time and time again. Obeying God's specific instructions was an integral aspect of the Israelites' showing they would walk in trust and obedience according to the law of the Lord. We learn from this passage that God not only provides for our needs but also provides the instructions we need to live in a way that honors Him by trusting Him each day.

God permitted one break in their daily pattern for the Sabbath rest. On the night before the Sabbath, double portions could be collected and stored (vv. 22-30). Moreover, some of the manna was to be solemnly preserved. It would be a reminder for future generations of the lesson learned in the wilderness and of God's provision, even when manna was no longer needed once they had reached the promised land (vv. 31-36).

How does God's daily provision foster dependence on and trust in God?

BIBLE SKILL: *Compare the teachings of Jesus to an Old Testament event.*

Review Jesus' teachings from the Sermon on the Mount about prayer and God's provisions (Matt. 6:5-14,25-34; 7:7-12). Look for teachings of Jesus that could have been shared with the Israelites in Exodus 16. In what ways do the teachings of Jesus intersect with the experience of the Israelites?



IN MY CONTEXT

- Believers must guard themselves against the pessimism of doubt.
- God designs tests that require His followers to depend on Him in greater ways to strengthen their trust in Him.
- Believers should show gratitude when God provides for their daily needs.
- Believers express trust in God through obedience to His commands.

In what areas of your life do you have the most difficulty obeying God? How does that challenge relate to your willingness to trust God? For what do you need to trust God as the next step in your obedience to Him?

With others in your Bible study group, share how God has provided for your needs over the past three months. Celebrate God's provisions by thanking Him as a group.

How can being reminded that God hears our prayers for our daily needs encourage us? Memorize Exodus 16:12 as a means of reminding yourself that God hears and provides for your needs.

Prayer Needs
