LESSONS LEARNED IN THE WILDERNESS

Lesson 2: God’s Provision and Daily Grace to Battle Worry (Exodus 16)

Background (Exodus 12-15)

- God delivered them from 400 years of slavery (Ex. 13).
- God guided them, led them through the Red Sea, and powerfully defeated their enemies (Ex. 13-14).
- Israel rejoices in God’s power and gives thanks for his faithfulness to his promises (Ex. 15:1-21).

But they quickly shift from gratitude to grumbling. From 15:22–17:7, the story retells three incidents where they murmured against God. God teaches Israel to counter worry and grumbling with living by faith daily in his providence over us and his provision for us.

1. Worry in the Wilderness (Exodus 16:1–3)
   1) Worry can begin as reasonable caution or concern, and yet it can quickly escalate to worry and anxiety.
      - We will have many concerns in life, including problems that arise, threats we face, and a shortage of resources we need. Concern is normal and natural, as is seeking a solution.
      - Where concern becomes worry is when we don’t trust in or turn to God to be our provider but seek to figure out or find solutions apart from him. If we doubt his ability or desire to provide, or if we fail to trust his sovereign providence over our life, then we will worry about the solution.
      - Worry must be put in check by God’s Word rather than given free reign. We speak God’s truths and promises to our worries rather than listening to the whispers, doubts, and fears of our worries.
   2) Worry increases when we fail to remember what God has done and said in the past and we become fixated on the problems and concerns ahead of us.
      - Israel’s failure to remember, or how they remember incorrectly (16:3), robs them of gratitude and results in grumbling and unbelief.
      - If they had remembered all God had said and done (Ex. 12-15), they would have found strength to fight their worries. Rather than be tossed around by worries and fears on the horizon, we anchor ourselves in how God has been good and faithful in the past.
   3) Worry is rooted in lies about God and so must be fought with the truth of who he is.
      - Lies: God won’t provide for me, doesn’t care about me, has abandoned me, isn’t good, doesn’t have my best interest in mind, or isn’t trustworthy.
      - Truths: God will never leave me nor forsake me. God provides for us and takes care of our needs. God loves me and is for me. God is good, true, faithful, and kind. God’s timing is perfect and he has good plans and purposes for me.

2. The Wilderness as an Opportunity to Choose Trust Over Worry (Exodus 16)
   - We worry because there are real trials and threats in our life. Wilderness seasons expose our lack and dependence, which creates a fork in the road to look upward in trust or look elsewhere in worry.
   - Trials intensify temptation. Israel’s physical hunger weakens their resolve and makes them even more prone to complaining and doubting. Temptation under the surface grows stronger as frustrations mount on the surface. As frustrations and trials increase, we have to lean on God more, not less.
• These gaps in the wilderness between our needs and our resources is the place God wants to fill by his power, provision, and presence. This opportunity is the wilderness's “teaching moment” (see Deut. 8:3).
• Worry reveals our need to increase trust in God in specific areas. It can expose idols of control, comfort, security, safety, autonomy, or ease. As we try to act wisely with caution but avoid worry, we have to bring our concerns to God in dependence rather than seek to solve them apart from God.
• The wilderness isn't a waste if our trials provide a place where God gives us his presence and provision.

3. Manna in the Wilderness (Exodus 16:4–36)

1) God stretches our faith and provides for our needs in ways we don't foresee.
   • God miraculously provides, and not just a bare minimum but plenty for everyone (16:8).
   • God again proves himself to Israel, showing his power and his trustworthiness to provide for us. This is another proof by which God tells them “you shall know” that God delivered them from Egypt and will sustain them along the way (16:6, 12). Through this act they see God's glory (16:7, 10).
   • God also wants to use this to test and train them (16:4). He wants to reveal whether they will live by faith and teach them what living by faith looks like. Rather than providing food in bulk, he provides enough for that day. They must go out and collect it each day. They must trust that more will come tomorrow. They must rest in God's Word and promises, as well as provision for us (16:4-7).

2) Though we think independence is a position of strength, it's a dependence on God that does us the most spiritual good. We need reminded we're dependent on God for everything, and every day we receive his promises, blessings, provision, and grace.

3) If worry believes that God isn't providing or protecting us like we need, we feed worry by trying to take over for God and provide for or protect ourselves. To fight worry, we embrace our dependence on God and choose to rest in his provision, his timing, and his plan. This is only possible if we see God as trustworthy and we remember that the God who saved us plans on sustaining us.

4) When God brings us into the wilderness and a place of desperation, it's so he can reveal his desire and ability to provide for us, sustain us, and satisfy us. If he lets us get hungry and strips us of resources by which to feed ourselves, it's so he can be the one we turn to feed us.

   "And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” (Deut. 8:3).

5) To be fed by faith we still have to receive what God's provided. Living by faith means they have to step out of their houses and go fill their baskets with what God provided. God provides, but are we receiving it? Are we looking in faith for ways he's providing? Do we expect God to zap us with faith, or do we open his Word and receive the spiritual food he has for us?
4. Our Daily Bread (Matt. 6:11, 25-34)

1) Jesus taught us to pray for daily bread (Matt. 6:11).
   Though we want a Christian walk where faith isn’t all that necessary, God wants us to have the kind of Christian walk where trusting faith is essential and ongoing. He doesn’t want to fill our pantry with loaves of bread so we never have to think of. He wants us to turn to him and trust in him daily.

2) Our faith is fed through feeling hunger, not by avoiding it.
   Weakness, dependence, and limits open doors to living by faith in God and seeing him be faithful to you.
   “You see, once you start walking in daily dependence on God, you have to keep walking in it. God’s desire is to be in fellowship with us, and one way he draws us into that fellowship is by meeting our needs one day at a time. He doesn’t just give us what we need; he wants to give us himself. He gives us himself through his Word. The trials that make us crave the life-giving sustenance of the daily nourishment of Scripture are like the hunger pains that drive us to the daily food our bodies need to survive.”

3) Like a loving Father, God knows what’s best for us, and when, how, and in what measure to give it to us.
   Jesus tells us part of why we shouldn’t worry or be anxious is because God cares for us and provides for us as Father who loves us (31-32). We are on his mind and in his hands. Our provision and care is part of his good plan for us. If he gave us his son and saved us from sin, he will give us anything else we need to sustain us until the end (Rom. 8:32).

4) The call to live on God’s daily grace and provision shrinks our big worries into manageable chunks.
   Rather than worrying about how you’ll eat for the next week, ask God to provide for you today. Rather than worrying about what is or could be down the road, trust in God for the next step.
   “Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matt. 6:34).
   “Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strength.” C. H. Spurgeon
   “If you feel like you don’t have enough fortitude for the future, that’s because God doesn’t give grace in a lifetime supply. He provides it one day at a time. If you doubt God has given you the capacity to endure your trial for a lifetime, you can rest assured he hasn’t. But he has given you exactly what you need to flourish today.”

NT Connections

1) Matthew 4: Jesus models for us how to trust in the provision of the Father when tempted. Fight the temptation to worry or try to take control from God by believing God’s promises and resting in his provision for you and care of you.

2) John 6: Jesus shows himself to be the true manna from heaven that sustains and satisfies us. Don’t look only to the things of this world but feed yourself daily and find life in the true manna, Jesus Christ.

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1 Betsy Childs Howard, “You Can’t Buy Manna from Costco,” at thegospelcoalition.org.
**Additional Resources**

**Daily Manna & God’s Provision**

- **Manna**: Num. 11:1-5; Ps. 78:24-25; Dt. 8:3; Neh. 9:20; Matt. 4:4; John 6; Rev. 2:17.
- **God’s Provision**: Ex. 15:25; Job 38:31; Ps. 23:1; 34:10; 37:25; Matt. 6:31-34; 7:11; Rom. 8:32; 2 Cor. 9:8; Phil. 4:19; Heb. 13:5.
- **Daily or Today**: Prov. 27:1; Matt. 6:11, 31-34; Luke 11:3; Heb. 3:15 (Ps. 95:7); 4:7; James 4:13-14.
- “You Can’t Buy Manna at Costco” by Betsy Childs Howard at thegospelcoalition.org.
- “The Daily Manna in Unplanned Singleness” by Lucy Crabtree at ftc.co.

**Battling Worry**

- **Worry**: Matt. 6:25-34; Phil. 4:5-7; 1 Peter 5:7; John 14:1, 27.
- “7 Reasons Not to Worry” by Kevin DeYoung at thegospelcoalition.org.
- “10 Ways to Battle Worry” by Dustin Crowe at indycrowe.com.
- *Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety* by Elyse Fitzpatrick; *A Small Book for the Anxious Heart* by Ed Welch; *Running Scared: Fear, Worry, and the God of Rest* by Ed Welch; *Living Without Worry* by Tim Lane; *Fear and Faith* by Trillia Newbell.

**Jesus as the Living Bread**

- “How is Jesus the ‘Living Bread?’” by Trevin Wax at thegospelcoalition.org.
- “Lessons from the Manna” sermon by Charles Spurgeon at spurgeon.org.

**Grumbling**

- **Grumbling**: Ex. 14:10-12; 15:22-27; 16:2, 7; Num. 11:1-15; 20:2-5; Ps. 95:7-11; Phil. 2:14.
- “Grumbling vs Gratitude” by Dustin Crowe at indycrowe.com.
- “Grumbling” sermon by Mark Vroegop at yourchurch.com.

**Parents & Kids**

- Watch the Bible project video on Exodus 1-18 at bibleproject.com.
- Sing “Do Not Worry” from Ellie Holcomb.