

Grumbling and Gratitude

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We miss the forest for the trees when we allow minor inconveniences to make us grumble

- You sprain your ankle.
- Your kids interrupt you and won't settle down.
- Your favorite team loses.
- Your medium rare steak comes out well done.

We're all in some kind of wilderness.

- The story of Exodus is the story of us. We have been rescued from slavery to sin and death through Jesus Christ. We are awaiting the Promised Land of heaven or when Jesus returns.
- Maybe you're in between jobs, praying for a child, praying for a child to come back home, waiting for more positive health outcomes.
- "Our journey in the wilderness is not a wandering or a waiting time, unproductive except as a way to pass the time. The wilderness is a place of dependence, learning, struggle, blessing, and purification." Paul S. Williams, *Exiles on Mission*.
- The Israelites were enslaved in Egypt for over 400 years. They cry out to God from their pain, God hears their prayer, and sends Moses to rescue them. Pharaoh lets them go, and they begin their journey to the Promised Land via the wilderness.

Exodus 14:10-12: Grumbling about being rescued.

- Immediately after being rescued from slavery, the Israelites begin to grumble about being rescued from slavery (this is not a typo!).
- How many of your complaints today are the answered prayers of yesterday?

Exodus 15:22-24: Grumbling about water

- The Israelites were thirsty, and that makes sense. They've been walking, running away from the Egyptians. This time, God has provided water, but it's bitter.
- How many of our complaints are because God has provided, but His provision isn't good enough?

Exodus 16:1-3: Grumbling about food

- Now, the Israelites are starving. They grumble against Moses and Aaron, wishing that they had died in Egypt because there, they had pots of meat.
- But they didn't have pots of meat. Grumbling is rooted in forgetfulness.
- Christians should be the most joyful, grateful, optimistic people on the planet. This is part of our witness to an unbelieving world.
- At the same time, there is a place for real, deep, Biblical lament. It's holy and right to cry out to God in the midst of your legitimate suffering. But for many of us, our complaints do not rise to the level of lament.

The Good News: Even when we grumble, God provides and shows mercy.

- Exodus 14:13-16: When we grumble, God fights for us.
- Exodus 15:25: When we grumble, God works miracles.
- Exodus 16:4: When we grumble, God provides everything we need, not everything we want.

Our response: Fight grumbling with gratitude.

- 1 Thessalonians 5: 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
- The antidote to grumbling is gratitude.
- Science is finally catching up to the Bible here. When you show gratitude, your hypothalamus loves when you show gratitude. One study found that regular acts of gratitude can flood the brain with dopamine. Gratitude improves heart health, strengthens your immune system, reduces depression and anxiety, improves sleep.
- Instead of grumbling, thank God for what you have.
- **My Application:** This week, when you are tempted to complain about something, list three things you are grateful for.