

God said to Moses, "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." (Exodus 17:6a)

Merciful Father, your goodness pours forth like water from the rock at Horeb. Forgive us when we complain against you, and take all your good gifts for granted. Help us to call to mind your blessings each day. With grateful hearts we pray. Amen.

Introduction

God had saved his people from slavery in Egypt and had brought them through the Red Sea and into the wilderness, where he took care of their daily needs. But the people still murmured and complained. God responded to their sin in a unique and powerful way.

Read: Exodus 17:1-17

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

The Biblical Context

The first five books of the Bible are called the **Torah** (meaning "teaching" or "instruction"). This word is often translated as "the Law." These books do contain many legal regulations and ordinances, but they also teach God's requirements through narrative case studies.

The time period of the Wilderness Wanderings follows the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. It was a time of disobedience and rebelliousness. It was in the wilderness at Mount Sinai (Horeb) that God gave his people the Law to serve as the unifying center for their identity as Israelites.

Though they never seemed satisfied and they took God for granted, God still provided for the people on their journey through the wilderness. God does the same for us, even though his grace is unearned and undeserved.

Discussion Questions

1. Count how many times in this lesson you find forms of the words *quarrel*, *grumble*, or *test*. With whom were the Israelites quarreling? Was it true that God wasn't taking care of them?
2. The people expressed anger toward Moses, but in what way were they really angry with God? Do you ever take out your everyday frustrations on people who don't deserve it? How might you change this bad habit for the better?
3. In response to his prayer, what did God tell Moses to do? What "tool" did Moses use? How might you say that God used Moses himself as a "tool" to get his job done? By whose power was the water provided?
4. What do the names Massah and Meribah mean? Why did Moses want the people to remember what happened in this place? Why is it a good thing to remember past mistakes we have made?
5. Jesus alluded to this story in John 4:14 (or at least, he used the same imagery). What do you think he meant here? How does this "living water" relate in our lives to God's Word and to faith?
6. The Apostle Paul also makes reference to this story in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 as an allegory for Christ. In what sense does the story of Moses serve as a warning to us as Christians? How does it also show us the same basis we have for confidence in faith?
7. Read Philippians 2:12-18. What sort of attitude does the Apostle Paul tell us we should have? In what way does this advice assume we still have a ways to go in our journey of faith?
8. Do you believe that trusting in Jesus gives us a better attitude in dealing with others? Why or why not?