

That The World May Know: Fire on the Mountain – Session 1: The Lord Who Heals You

Humbled and Tested to Fulfill God's Purpose

From the time he created Adam, God desired to partner with his people in caring for the earth and “increasing” their numbers and influence. They disobeyed the command of God and strayed from his purpose. But God never gave up on his redemptive plan. Once he freed the Hebrews from slavery under Pharaoh, it was a new beginning—a new chapter in God's plan to restore shalom to his creation. What was in their hearts?

1. What might prevent the Israelites from “increasing” and fulfilling their role as God's partners in the land he had promised to their forefathers?
Deuteronomy 8:1
2. What process did God use to know whether or not the Israelites would keep his commands?
Deuteronomy 8:2
3. God apparently wanted to humble his people to know whether or not they would obey him. How did the response of humble people to God's commands might differ from that of people who trust in their own strength and capabilities?
Deuteronomy 8:2

The same Hebrew word for “humble” is translated as “oppress” in the NIV. How did the Egyptians' intent in humbling the Hebrews differ from God's intent?
Exodus 1:11

Thirst in the Desert

So much had changed for the Hebrew former slaves in a short period of time. As a community, they danced for joy before their majestic God. But once they journeyed into the desert and found themselves helpless even to find good water to drink, they quickly forgot God's goodness and faithfulness.

1. What incomparable miracle had God accomplished on behalf of his people at the Red Sea?
Exodus 14:10
Exodus 14:21 – 30

How had they responded to him?
Exodus 14:31
Exodus 15:20 – 21

What did they expect their God to do for them in the future?
Exodus 15:13 – 18
2. How far had the Hebrews expected to travel into the desert? How soon after crossing the Red Sea did they reach the well in Marah?
Exodus 3:18
Exodus 5:3
Exodus 8:27
Exodus 15:22 – 25

What might they have expected to find at Marah?

Did they expect a crisis at this point in their journey?

Israel Discovers the Meaning of Marah

Biblical names are often laden with meaning, and “Marah” is no exception. God guided the thirsty Hebrews to the well at Marah. Finally they would have life-giving water! But what a disappointment the water was too bitter to drink! What were they going to do? What would happen to them?

1. When the Israelites learned that the water of Marah was bitter and unfit to drink, what attitude did they exhibit toward Moses and God?
Exodus 15:23 – 24

God, through Moses, clearly had led his people to Marah. What was God's reason for leading them to bitter water—water that was unfit for its intended purpose?
2. After the people grumbled against Moses, what did God do to meet their need?
Exodus 15:25 – 26

What did God want the Israelites to learn from this “bitter” experience that became “sweet?”

Why did God provide commands for the Hebrews immediately after their complaints and the miracle of the sweetened water?

What was the connection between this “bitter” experience and the openness of the Israelites' hearts and minds to obeying God's commands?

The Power of That Stick

The Bible records many examples of God's spectacular, miraculous acts. The situation God's people faced at Marah certainly required God's miraculous intervention. Even Moses may have been surprised by what God did and learned something new as a result.

1. What symbol did God instruct Moses and Aaron to use to display God's power before Pharaoh? Why did God chose it?

Exodus 4:1 – 20
Exodus 7:14 – 21
Exodus 9:22 – 26
Exodus 10:12 – 15
Exodus 14:15 – 28

How much confidence might Moses have placed in himself and this symbol when he arrived at Marah?

How important was it for Moses to recognize his total dependence on God and to wholeheartedly obey every command God gave?

2. After Moses cried out to God, what did God tell him to pick up?
Exodus 15:22 – 26

Why might Moses have been surprised to learn that he was not to use the staff that God had used previously in doing miracles?

Do you think Moses might have wondered what God could be saying to him through this unusual command?

3. Jesus also used ordinary things to accomplish the miracle of giving sight to a blind man.
John 9:1 – 7

God Strengthens the Community of His People at Elim

The experience of the Israelites at Marah initiated a new level of participation in their partnership with God. From Marah, God's people moved on to Elim, where there were twelve spring, and from there they set out into the desert.

1. The exact commands God gave to the Israelites after he sweetened the water are a mystery. What do you think the commands might have been?
Exodus 15:25 – 26

How important to God were these commands, and how important was the Israelites' obedience to them?

What did God promise would result if the Israelites obeyed him?

2. After God sweetened the water at Marah, where did he lead the Israelites, and why would they go there when the water at Marah was drinkable?
Exodus 15:27
3. What role did God desire his people to have in the world, and why would functioning as a community be important in fulfilling that role?
Exodus 19:1 – 6

Scripture References

Genesis 2	Deuteronomy 11
Genesis 3	Deuteronomy 21
Genesis 26	Joshua 24
Genesis 38	1 Samuel 17
Genesis 41	Psalms 119
Genesis 45	Isaiah 40
Exodus 1	Isaiah 42
Exodus 3	Jeremiah 2
Exodus 4	Hosea 14
Exodus 5	Matthew 1
Exodus 7	Matthew 4
Exodus 8	Matthew 28
Exodus 9	Mark 16
Exodus 10	Luke 1
Exodus 12	Luke 2
Exodus 13	Luke 8
Exodus 14	John 9
Exodus 15	Romans 5
Exodus 19	1 Corinthians 1
Leviticus 23	2 Corinthians 12
Numbers 20	James 1
Deuteronomy 1	1 John 2
Deuteronomy 8	1 John 3
Deuteronomy 9	

Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you.

Deuteronomy 8:2 – 5

Map of the Exodus

