

God's Gift of Daily Bread:
Remembering that Enough is Enough

Text: Exodus 15 and 16

Main Themes:

God is the source of all we need to survive

God provides for us according to our needs, not for us to take in excess

Taking more than we need of the resources available to us is a failure to trust God

Take a moment to remember the Exodus story. Ask the group to collectively retell the story.

The Israelites had been living in Egypt, where the Pharaoh had made them slaves. Moses and his brother Aaron had demanded that the Pharaoh let the Israelites go, but he had refused. To convince Pharaoh, God sent ten plagues. The Israelites were set free after the tenth plague when the first born of every Egyptian family died. The Israelites fled Egypt but the Pharaoh questioned his decision and chased after them. They escaped when Moses parted the Red Sea and the Egyptians were drowned in the sea. As soon as they finish celebrating God's goodness in delivering them from their captors (see the Song of Moses and the Song of Miriam in Exodus 15:1-21), the journey into the wilderness begins.

Reflect on the how you might feel if you and your family found yourselves in the midst of a great wilderness (you might remember camping trips) with hundreds of other families and very little camping equipment, food, or clean water.

Within three days of entering the wilderness, the Israelites begin to complain. In Exodus 15:23-25, the people complain that the water is too bitter to drink, and the Lord meets their needs by giving Moses a way to make the water sweet and drinkable.

Anticipating that this will not be the last time that the Israelites will complain, God makes a deal with the Israelites in Exodus 15:25-26. God "puts them to the test," telling the Israelites that they must "listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in his sight, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes." If they do this, God promises "I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord who heals you." God's requirements are made clear. The Israelites must listen carefully to God's instructions and commandments. Likewise, the benefits of doing so are quite clear. Life in abundance belongs to those who obey God.

You have been camping in the wilderness for over a week now. The excitement of the adventure is beginning to wear off. You realize that this is not a vacation, but a new way of life. What anxieties would you feel?

Just a few verses later, as expected, the Israelites are back to complaining (Exodus 16:2-3). They have not yet learned to trust that God will provide what they need if only they will remain faithful. These complaints, these endless worries about where their next meal

will come from, sound all too familiar. They are understandably nervous about their fragile situation, but God wants them to *turn their focus away from worrying and toward obedience*.

In Exodus 16:4-5, God lays out a plan for meeting the needs of the Israelites. In verses 6-12, the message is delivered to the Israelites, reassuring them that God has heard their complaints and will meet their needs, day by day. In verses 13-19 demonstrates God's faithfulness and wisdom. Each person has what they need, with no one having excess and no one facing a shortage. God designed the gift of manna in this way, so that all would have enough and no more. Trusting in God's promise to provide them with *daily* bread, no one needed to possess more than a day's supply.

Wow. What a relief to have bread. But there was only just enough today. Who knows if there will be enough tomorrow? Perhaps it would be prudent to save a little to the side for an emergency. While everyone else is resting on the Sabbath, I will go and gather a little extra. I will give my children an extra serving, to see the smiles on their faces and pad their bellies in case times get tough again. In what ways do you take more than you need from God's bounty?

Unfortunately, some of the Israelites did not trust God's promise nor take seriously God's commands. They thought that they would be wise to save some of the manna for the next day in case there was not more to be gathered. But their wisdom was foolishness. God kept the promise of daily bread, and the manna they had foolishly saved "bred worms and became foul" (Ex.16:20). Likewise, on the seventh day, some of the Israelites desired more manna than that which God had already provided, so they went out to gather more, despite Moses' instruction that they were not to gather on the seventh day, the day of rest. Their greed, their desire for more-than-enough, led them to disobey God's commands.

But eventually, the people did learn. They learned how to be obedient and trust in God's daily provisions. For forty years, then, the Israelites lived on manna, the bread of heaven. Their ability to survive from day to day was entirely dependent on God, on the promise that each sunrise would bring enough manna for the day to come. The Israelites understood where their food came from. Their relationship with God and their daily bread were one and the same. They must have been distinctly aware of their own fragility and dependence, but also distinctly aware of God's faithfulness and glory.

Exodus 16:10 is the first time in the Bible when the people *actually see* the glory of the Lord. What does it mean that the glory of God first appears when God tells the people that they are to trust the Lord to provide food? Does it seem strange to you that the first time God appears in glory, it is to talk about meat and bread?

The Israelites did eventually settle in a new land. They no longer relied on manna, but grew crops and raised animals. The relationship between obedience to God and having enough to eat remained strong. New commandments were given to the Israelites to fit their new circumstances. They were commanded to till the land for only six years and to let the land rest in the seventh year (Leviticus 25:1-7). The law required that they not harvest the corners of their fields, but instead leave this part for the poor and for travelers

who would be allowed to glean food from these places to sustain them on their journey (Leviticus 19:9-10). In this way, God continued to provide enough food for everyone.

Closing discussion questions:

Where does your food come from? Do you know? How could you find out?

Do you wake up in the morning and look outside to see if the Lord has once again blessed you with enough to eat? How would that change your attitude toward waking up each morning?

Do you know if the crop was good this year? Do you know where your food was harvested?

What is your relationship to the food you eat? How is God a part of that relationship?

Take-Home Activity:

Plant some herbs in your backyard or in a windowsill. Create a family ritual of waking up each morning and checking on the progress of your plants. Say a simple prayer together. Use this one or write one of your own.

Creator God, Thank you for the blessing of daily bread. Enough is enough. Amen.

Commit as a family to only seasoning your food with these herbs, so that you can taste God's blessing in every meal and learn to be a part of the ebbs and flows of God's creation.

You could also commit to a day or a week when you keep track of where all your food came from. Not the name of the grocery store, but the location of the farm where the food was grown or the animal was raised. It may be difficult at first, but will be a fun family activity. Farmer's markets are a great Saturday morning family activity that will help you stay connected to the miraculous provision of daily bread. To find a local farmer's market, go to <http://www.localharvest.org/>