

Exodus: What We Mean When We Say God
Part 10: Trusting God with Our Daily Needs

By Pastor Jill Enns

Exodus 16

I. God Leads Us into the Wilderness.

Six weeks have passed since the Israelites left everything behind to follow God to the promised land. Instead of finding themselves in the promised land, they find themselves wandering in the desert, hot, weary, and running out of food. And the Israelites complain, *“If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”* God has led them into the wilderness.

Perhaps you can relate? Perhaps there have been times when you have found yourself in your own sort of wilderness? When you look around at your life and think, how did I get here, and God where are you and what are you doing?

We all go through wilderness times, times of testing, times of doubting, times of suffering, times where we wonder what God is up to and if he’s abandoned us. Sometimes God leads us into the wilderness.

II. In the Wilderness, We Learn to Trust God with our Daily Needs.

God is calling the Israelites out of Egypt and into the promised land, but they are not yet ready to reign and rule as God’s chosen people. They have some learning and growing to do, and it is in the wilderness that they learn to trust God daily for the things that they need.

When the Israelites complain to Moses and Aaron about their food situation, God responds to them with grace and provides food for them to eat. In doing so, he reminds them that he is the God who brought them out of Egypt. He teaches them who he is, and they learn to trust him. Trust does not just happen overnight though. It is a process. The Israelites continually make mistakes, but God is patient with them and gracious to them.

In the Lord’s prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray *“Give us this day our daily bread.”* In the wilderness, the Israelites learn to trust God, literally, for their daily bread, but it is more than that. They learn to trust God to supply all their daily needs, not just physical needs, but spiritual and emotional needs as well. When we pray, as Jesus did, *“Give us today our daily bread.”* We are showing that we too, are placing our trust in God to give us what we need for each day.

III. It Feels like God has Abandoned Me.

The wilderness may be the place where God is teaching us to trust him for our daily needs and where he is shaping our character, but often when we are in the wilderness that can be hard to see. It can feel as though God has abandoned us. That certainly seems to be how the Israelites felt when they said, "if only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt!" They are saying, where are you Lord? Have you abandoned us?

I also have felt at times like God has abandoned me. I have kept a journal off and on over the years, and here are some of my recorded thoughts over the years, at times when I have felt like I am in the wilderness:

"In the moment when I needed you, you seemed so far away."

"I find myself, Lord, in this place, not knowing where you are."

"How can I trust you God when I can't see you; when I can't feel your presence? How can I follow when I don't know where you're going? God, I know you're faithful and your promises are true, but I honestly don't know what to do."

Have you ever felt like this? Like God has abandoned you. It is often hard to feel God's presence when we are in the wilderness. So, what do we do when we feel abandoned?

IV. We Need to Practice the Virtue of Hope.

As Pastor Dave said in his sermon last week, and in his Easter sermon, we need to practice the virtue of hope. He reminded us, that hope is not a feeling, not simply 'optimism' that things will get 'better'. It is a virtue to be practiced, an act of trust that the God who has acted in the past will act again, to fulfill his great promises. We need to practice the virtue of hope.

This is what the Israelites are doing at the end of Chapter 16, they take some manna and preserve it in a jar as a reminder for generations to come. So that in the future, the Israelites can look back and remember who God is and what he has done. This is a way of practicing hope.

One of my favourite chapters in the Bible is 2 Corinthians 4. 2 Corinthians 4:16-17 says, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." Even when we can't see him, when we can't feel his presence, God is still at work in our lives. He is the one who renews us day, by day, who provides for our daily needs.

Hope reminds us that God is with us today, working in and through us, even when we don't feel it, but it also reminds us of the glorious future that awaits us. We have hope, that God is who he says he is and will do what he says he will do, that means that we have hope that a day is coming when Jesus will return for the final time, when evil will be vanquished, and we will get to reign with Jesus forever, as his children. We need to remind each other of this hope.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

Open Up

Describe a wilderness time in your own life, a time where you felt like God had abandoned you or you have struggled to see God at work in your life.

Dig In

1. In what ways can you relate to what the Israelites were going through in Exodus 16?
2. In what ways are you learning to trust God with your daily needs?
3. Read **2 Corinthians 4**. How can this passage of Scripture encourage us when we feel like we are in the wilderness? Do you have a favourite passage of Scripture that encourages you when you are in the wilderness?
4. Read **Revelation 22:3-4**. How can these verses help us practice the virtue of hope?
5. God tells the Israelites to take an omer of manna and put it in a jar, to be kept for future generations. This is a way of practicing hope, of looking back and remembering what God has done for us in the past. What are some practical ways that you can practice hope?

Prayer

Take some time to pray for individuals in your group or in your life who feel like they are in the wilderness right now. Through your prayer time, remind each other of who God is and of the hope we have in him. Prayer is another way that we can practice the virtue of hope.