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- Tests are also necessary in your Christian faith.
- God tests our faith in a variety of ways. Maybe you're experiencing testing right now: trials and hardships ([James 1:2-3](#)), delaying to fulfill His plan in your life ([Gen. 15-21](#)), a specific call to obedience can also be a test ([Gen. 22](#)).
- Maybe you feel like you are in a season of testing in your faith. Why does God test your faith, and how should you respond when your faith is tested?
- In [Exodus 14](#), the people of Israel had come through the Red Sea on dry ground. Now they are beginning to make their journey to the Promised Land through the wilderness.
- The journey would be difficult, and the wilderness was a place of constant testing. Would the Hebrews trust God? Or, would they turn from God?
- The Hebrews had been delivered from Egypt (salvation), but now God would use the wilderness for their sanctification.

- What about you? When testing comes, will you trust God? Or, will you turn from God?
- This morning looking at three successive stories about God testing His people. I want to show you two truths you need to understand from these stories.

Story:

- The Hebrews had just experienced a tremendous victory - now a tremendous test as they travel through the wilderness. All they have is what they left Egypt with. They left Egypt with lots of wealth, but when traveling through the wilderness, food and water only last so long.
- Sinai Peninsula - a barren land devoid of water and vegetation. Water from winter floods, but summer months were harsh ([Deuteronomy 8:15](#)). 600,000 people traveling, plus their animals. They need lots of water.
- **Story 1:** Three days into their journey and can't find water (vs. 22) - a life threatening situation. See water in the distance - hopeful - but when they get to the water, it's bitter and undrinkable - Marah.
- vs. 24 - the people grumble - a pattern for the people of Israel. Whenever a challenge arises, first reaction is to grumble. Certainly, after an amazing victory, God had not brought the people into the wilderness to die of thirst? People likely thought so...
- Amazing - pillar of cloud - God's presence - was with them. The visible presence of God Himself had led them to Marah, and yet they are complaining. God doesn't make mistakes. He doesn't get lost in the wilderness. All they needed to do was look up and be reminded that the Great I Am was with them.
- vs. 25 - Instead of grumbling back to the people, Moses turns to God in prayer, and then he does what God says. A miracle - God leads Moses to throw a tree into the water, and it becomes drinkable. Moses obeys.

Marah was a test. Would the people turn to God or turn from God? So far, they're failing the test. Instead of trusting God who has already proven Himself faithful, they complain. When life is bitter, it doesn't need to make us bitter. God is with us.

- vs. 26 - Going forward, what would the people choose? To be like Pharaoh, and not listen to the voice of the Lord? Or, would they be careful to keep His commands and statutes? The wilderness was Israel's teacher. Disobedience to God's commands would make their lives bitter. Sin makes you bitter.
- vs. 26 - "I am the Lord who heals you..." If they obeyed, God would spare them from plagues and illnesses. God is able to cure the bitter.
- Ultimately, God cures the bitterness that sin causes at the cross. Sin makes us bitter - A tree made bitter waters clean in [Ex. 15](#) - Jesus death on a tree made our bitter lives clean. Jesus is our healer.
- **Story 2:** 16:1 Weeks later after camping by the refreshing waters, the journey continues. Now, food is scarce. Where would they find food in the vast wilderness? No sign of vegetation anywhere.
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- 16:4 - the test - when God brings food - will they follow His instructions?
- AND... a distorted view of Egypt - "We sat by pots of meat." Probably an exaggeration. Life was not that good in Egypt.
- In spite of complaining, God is gracious. Promises to "rain down bread from heaven." Think of Sodom and Gomorrah where God "rained down judgment." Now, God is going to rain down grace on His people. He's going to miraculously provide food. They would eat from the hand of

God twice a day - manna in the morning and quail in the evening. They would eat until they were full (vs. 11-15).

- 11-26 - Specific instructions for how they would gather food. Would they obey? Would they pass the test? Would they hoard? Would they trust God's provision? Would they listen and do what God said? Would they abide by God's word? On the seventh day, they would rest from gathering food (vs. 27), but on the sixth day, they would gather enough for the Sabbath.
- Exacting but simple instructions. Would the people trust God or turn from God? Some Hebrews did not follow God's instructions (vs. 17-20). Some fail yet another test.
- [Deuteronomy 8:3](#) - Man does not live by bread alone, but by the Word of God. The people need something more than food. They needed to trust the Lord.
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- vs. 7 - the people keep asking, “Is the Lord among us?” God keeps showing that He is definitely among them. He is faithful even when the people are faithless.

You need to know why God tests you.

- The testing is intentional - part of God’s plan.
- **God tests you to discipline you.** Not necessarily the case in these stories, but at times God will test you to discipline you. He will let you experience challenges as a result of your own sin. He will let you experience the consequences of your sin ([Hebrews 12:7-11](#)). Testing is always an opportunity to examine your heart. Is there sin to repent of? Maybe God is using a season of testing in your life to wake you up and keep you from going further into sin.
- **God tests you to teach you.** The tests you go through are not a waste, they are purposeful, designed by God to teach you about Himself. To teach you that He is your provider, that you can trust Him. Ultimately, you need the tests. They are for your sanctification ([James 1:2-3](#)).
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- If you are in a season of testing right now - what do you see about you? Are you asking the right question? Instead of “Why are you causing me to suffer, God?” Are you asking, “What do you want to teach me?” What is God trying to put to death in your life? Idolatry? A specific sin?

You need to know what's in your heart.

- God uses testing to reveal your heart. If you feel like you are in a season of testing right now, what is it revealing about you?
- **Are you greedy?** Greed is a heart that is unsatisfied with the provisions of God. If you think about the Hebrews were greedy. They complained about a lack of food, when they had livestock! They simply weren't satisfied with what God had already given them. Do you have a greedy heart?
- **Are you a grumbler?** Constant grumbling is shortsighted - fails to see what God has already provided. Constant grumbling demonstrates ingratitude. Constant grumbling distorts the facts. People who constantly complain hardly every get the facts straight. They're one-sided and not open to the "whole story." Constant grumbling shapes you. It makes you bitter. It makes you a life sucker rather than a joy giver.
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- If you do find yourself turning away from God instead of trusting God in your tests, how do you pass the tests?
- **Look to Jesus.** Jesus passed the test for us. He went to the wilderness, He was tested for 40 days. In the wilderness, when tempted by Satan, He said, "Man does not live by bread alone ([Matt. 4:3](#)). Where we have failed the tests, Jesus has passed for us. Praise God that failing a test does not cause you to lose your salvation. You can continue to rely on

the life that Jesus lived for you. Jesus is the Bread of Life who when you understand what He has done for you through His death and resurrection, causes you to finally understand that you have all you really need in Him. He is the cure for your greed. Jesus is the living water who cures our bitter souls by dying the death we deserve and rising from the dead victorious. His death and resurrection is like fresh, cleansing waters for our souls that remove all bitterness. If you find yourself struggling with the trials of life, keep reminding yourself of the Gospel. If you are not a follower of Jesus, turn to Him today.

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Exodus 15:22-17:7: Testing in the Wilderness

Tommy Meador / General Adult

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