

**Numbers 11:10-13**

10 Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, all at the entrances of their tents. Then the LORD became very angry, and Moses was displeased. 11 So Moses said to the LORD, "Why have you treated your servant so badly? Why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? 12 Did I conceive all this people? Did I give birth to them, that you should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a sucking child,' to the land that you promised on oath to their ancestors? 13 Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they come weeping to me and say, 'Give us meat to eat!'

You know the biblical story. The Hebrews were slaves in Egypt until God intervened and allowed them to escape in a mass exodus. Then they ended up in the wilderness where God sustained them by providing manna, or bread from heaven. Well, while they were there in the wilderness, a problem developed where the people want more than bread to eat; they wanted some meat, and demanded to have it. In today's Scripture there are two different complaints. The people complain about a lack of meat to eat and Moses complains of the burden of his leadership.

Let's take a look at the different viewpoints that are relative to today's Scripture. I originally thought that the complaint of the Hebrews was that they were hungry. But upon a little reflection I realized they were not hungry. They had manna provided to them on a daily basis to eat. No, they were not hungry; the problem is that they wanted more and they wanted it right away. So, they complained and made their demands known. Moses, as you know, is a great Bible hero. He is unique; he is set apart from all of the others - he is filled with divine Spirit, speaks for God to the community, and intercedes on behalf of people. Moses is a living legend that has led them to victory. Now Moses is caught in the middle between the people and God. On this particular occasion, Moses is overwhelmed. He has done all he can to serve the Lord. I imagine being God's intermediary can be quite stressful especially now that he is faced with the burden of feeding all of these people. When the people complained to Moses, instead of seeking a remedy through intercession as he has been known to do in the past, Moses complained to God about the burdens of leadership. Then there is God's point of view. God is angry. The Bible tells us that the Lord's anger was kindled. God's anger was aroused. God got mad! Why would God get mad? God has been sustaining them all along. God loves them, cares for them, and provides for their every need. Well, instead of "thank you Lord for all you have done for us, you have given us life, freedom, and bread." Instead of appreciation God receives their discontentment. Wanting more and craving for meat is a rejection of the manna.

Imagine the biblical story from within the realm of a marriage. One day while they are on their way to their new home, the wife (Israel) accuses the husband (God) of not providing enough and demands more. It is easy to see the dispute developing within the relationship. At first you might be tempted to think that the problem comes from a basic need not being met. However, the real problem is not a lack of food or provision, the real problem is the desire to want more. Hypothetically a marriage counselor would ask Israel "What is your marriage like?" Israel would say something like "If I only had

more, then I would be happy. While I was in Egypt I had meat, vegetables, and fruit, but I lost it all for this promise that has not been fulfilled. Now all I have is this imitation bread, I don't even get real bread to eat, I want real food. Now here I am, stranded out here in middle of nowhere, I was better off in Egypt." Israel tells her story from the perspective of desire. It is her desire that shapes her viewpoint. Israel's desire for more skewed her perception to where she failed to see the abundant provisional care that the Lord has provided.

I recently became familiar with a story about a new counselor that was counseling a married couple. He was perplexed because the story that each spouse told was radically different as if from separate marriages. He could not understand the discrepancy between the two stories. He knew he had to find out more about the relationship and he asked key questions and listened. In time, with more experience he learned that our desires distort what we perceive. We view our relationships from the vantage point of our own wants. The craving of the individual heart skews perception. The attention of the individual person is concentrated on their own desire which causes them to fail to see the whole picture. This is true of all relationships. We view our personal relationships from the vantage point of our wants. We view family, career, and faith, from the view point of our own wants. We view our relationship with the Lord from the perspective of our wants.

The Bible validates our identity as people of God. We tend to crave things more than nourishment from God. It is what we crave that puts us in conflict with God. We crave money, prestige, entertainment, and possessions, etc. When dealing with people in conflict whether it is in regards to marriage, relatives, friends, job, or church, what is missing the most from their stories is their relationship with God. When you are focused on your own wants, you are not focused on the Lord. What was absent from the Hebrews in the Scripture was thanksgiving, confession, and seeking forgiveness. Their focus was on their wants. Their focus was not on their relationship with God.

Today's Scripture provides us with a valuable lesson on complaints and conflict. There is the disparity between the points of view of each party which is shaped according to the desires of each party and then there is the divine point of view. In most situations it is the divine point of view that is overlooked. We are to understand that our desires distort our own individual perception of reality. Whenever we notice conflict, complaints, arguments, or anger, we can help others by pointing them to the Bible, to God, and to Jesus where the good news is a life changing reality.