

Chapter 20: Trouble for Miriam, Moses, and Aaron

1. The Israelites arrive in the desert of Zin, in Kadesh, where 40 years earlier the 10 spies had discouraged the community into disobeying God.
2. Miriam dies.
3. How do you respond to the loss of loved one?
4. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that there is NO WATER!
5. Then why are they here if there is no water?
6. Because God led them there! They were following the pillar of cloud by day, and fire by night.

Application

1. In our own lives we may arrive in desert-like circumstances where it seems there is little to satisfy us.
2. Did we get there? By going our own way or by following God?
3. What is your typical response? How does it affect the situation?

The Human Response

1. The Israelites began to QUARREL with Moses and Aaron. (Human nature turns on other people when it is in distress.)
2. They are filled with SELF-PITY: “If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the LORD!” 20:3 (Like in the plague of chpt. 16 when they opposed Moses and Aaron because of the death of the rebel leaders.)
3. Suffering can bring out the worst in us. This can damage marriages, parent-child relationships, friendships, partnerships, etc.

The Facts

1. Was this place really all that bad for the Israelites?
2. Yes, no grain, no figs, no grapevines, no pomegranates, NO WATER. Lack of basic necessities of life!
3. How often do we complain because of non-essentials: too hot, too cold, nothing to watch on TV, “nothing” to wear, etc.?
4. We need to tune into our own complaining hearts and DEEPLY repent of this heinous, offensive sin to God!

The Right Way and the Wrong Way

1. The Israelites truly had a significant need, but there is a right way and wrong way to address it.
2. What is the right way to handle a truly difficult time, a true need? (Fight with people? Self-pity? Despair of life? Complain?)
3. (See “With the Word” p. 96 and Benware p. 73?)
4. Moses and Aaron went to God and fell facedown in humility and desperation.
5. The RESULT: “The glory of the LORD appeared to them.”
6. God had the answer/solution and he freely provided it!
7. Sometimes he calms the storm and sometimes he calms our hearts in the storm.

Moses and Aaron Fail

1. Read Numbers 20:7-13.
2. What did Moses do wrong?
3. His anger led to great grief and loss in his life!
4. What has your anger cost you?
5. What may your anger cost you if you don't find a way to deal with it appropriately?
6. What is the appropriate way to deal with anger?
7. How do you know when you need help?
8. Who can offer that help?
9. How can trusting God help diffuse anger in your life?

Misrepresenting God

1. God said to Moses, “Because you did not trust me enough to *honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites*, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.” 20:12
2. When we are called to represent God to others, it is a very serious offense to MISrepresent Him. Moses was told to speak to the rock this second time (which represented Christ (1 Cor 10:4) who was “struck/killed” only once, at the cross)
3. How can we as Christians end up misrepresenting God to others today?

Requesting Passage Through Edom

Numbers 20:14-21

1. Edom was the land of Esau (Israel's brother).
2. Passage of the Israelites through the land was denied twice, under the threat of military attack by Edom.
3. What did Israel do? Attack Edom?
4. NO, they turned away from there. God was calling them to bring judgment on the Canaanites whose sin had reach its fulfillment (Genesis 15:16) (Not on Edom.)
5. What do you do when you don't get your way?
Fight with others? Or trust God to work things out?

A Time for Mourning:

Numbers 20:22-29

1. God revealed to Aaron that he would be “gathered to his people” (God’s description of death.)
2. To avoid a rush and conflict to fill the leadership void (remember Korah’s rebellion?), God had Aaron transfer the priesthood/leadership to his son Eleazar in the sight of all the people.
3. Israel mourned his death for 30 days.

Scripture About Mourning

1. “There is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.”
Ecclesiastes 3:4
2. “Sing to the LORD, you saints of his; praise his holy name. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.” Ps 30:4-5

Application

1. Mourning is a natural human response to loss. God made us to mourn, He gets it; Jesus mourned with others at death of Lazarus.
2. But there comes a time to move forward in God's plan.
3. We cannot allow ourselves to become handicapped, incapacitated, distracted, disillusioned, disconnected, bitter.
4. Why is excessive mourning over ANY loss, inappropriate for the believer?
→ Excessive mourning can show our deep-seated self-centeredness. (What does it say about our Savior?)
6. How can God use loss in our lives? How would Satan like to us it?

PRAY for ALL Your Leaders (1 Tim 2)

1. Leaders can experience:
 - A. Discouragement—like death of Miriam
 - B. Disobedience—like striking the rock, not speaking to it
 - C. Discipline from God—like not being allowed to go into Promised land
 - D. Disappointment—like Edom not letting them pass
2. Pray for them (not just that they would get a clue and do it “your way”) but that God would help them do it “His way.”