

# Lessons From the Wilderness Journey

by Chuck Smith

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*Pastor Chuck Smith explores the lessons learned from the Israelites' complaints during their wilderness journey and God's faithful provision amidst their struggles.*

**Duration:** 25:05

**Topics:** "Lessons"

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## Description

In this sermon, Pastor Chuck Smith discusses the complaints of the children of Israel during their wilderness journey towards the promised land. The people's complaints displeased the Lord and His anger was aroused, resulting in the fire of the Lord burning among them. Moses, like Abraham, should have trusted in the promise of God without considering human difficulties. However, Moses also staggered at the promise of God and questioned how God would provide enough meat for the people. The Lord reminded Moses that His arm is not shortened and He is able to provide for His people.

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## Transcript

Oh, let the Son of God enfold you With His Spirit and His love Let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul  
Oh, let Him have the things that mold you And His Spirit like a dove Will descend upon your life And make you whole  
We turn in our Bibles to Numbers, chapter 11, verse 1. And now, here's Pastor Chuck Smith with today's lesson. They have broken camp, they have left the area of Sinai, they are now moving towards the promised land. But, the people have begun their complaints.

And now when the people complained, it displeased the Lord, for the Lord heard it. And His anger was aroused. So the fire of the Lord burned among them and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp.

And then the people cried out to Moses, and when Moses prayed to the Lord, the fire was quenched. So they called the name of the place Tebera, or burning, the place of burning. Because the fire of the Lord had burned among them.

So, we find now a pattern is going to start to develop. As the people begin to complain against the Lord. I think that complaining is almost a disease.

That once you get started with it, it is something that just grows and grows. When people start complaining about things, I quite often suggest that they just move on. Because once you start finding something to complain about, that's just the beginning.

There's a lot to complain about if you want to complain. And when a person begins to complain, it's usually a sign that maybe God is moving them on. However, God never seems to be too happy with complainers.

You see, if I really believe that God is in sovereign control over my life, and I start complaining about my life, then I'm really complaining about God. And He's sensitive in that area. He doesn't like us complaining about Him.

I'm complaining about, oh, this is not good, or that's bad, or whatever. And really, the Lord is the one that has brought or allowed these things in my life for instruction, for purging out some of the dross or whatever. And I start to complain about that work of God.

How often, how often I've been guilty of complaining about something that God has brought into my life that later on, when there was the full cycle, I realized, oh, the Lord intended that for good. Look what the Lord did through that. Isn't the Lord wonderful? Man, you know.

And then I feel so horrible about having complained about it earlier. Because it was just the thing the Lord knew I needed. And I wonder how often that is not true, that at the moment as I'm complaining about the situation, it is exactly that which God is working to bring forth a good purpose in my life.

And so God is bringing them into a good land, but here they're complaining against the Lord. God was displeased. He sent His fire.

Some of the complainers in the outskirts of the camp were devoured. And so they called the name of the place Burning and they moved on. Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense cravings or desires or lust.

When the children of Israel left Egypt, there went with them this mixed multitude. That is, they were not full Jews, half Jews, part Jews. And some of them not even Jews at all, just a multitude of people that went along for the ride.

Life in Egypt wasn't easy for anybody unless you were among the upper echelon. And there are always those who think that they can find greener grass on the other side of the fence. And so there are always those who are dissatisfied with their current situation and think that they could be better off if they were someplace else.

And they're always trying to move on to find that place of happiness or contentment. Nomadism is still today a very common thing among people. There are those people who just move from one place to another around the country trying to find the place of perfection or the Shangri-La.

And so there were these people not totally committed to God, not totally committed to the things of God. The mixed multitude, they were along for the ride. You know, it looks interesting.

They're going someplace new. It's going to be different. Oh, this ought to be an exciting journey, you know.

Understand the land up there is nice. They've got a lot of rivers and woods and oh, it's pretty up there. I think, you know, I'd like to move up there.

Let's go along. Now, they've been over a year out in the wilderness, beginning of the second year. And so these people began to have intense cravings for some of the things of the life of Egypt.

And so they began to talk about that old life. Oh, we remember in Egypt. Oh, man, so nice.

Who's going to give us meat to eat out here? You know, we're in this wilderness place. And man, I haven't had a good steak in such a long time. And the fish that we used to have.

Man, we had all the fish we could eat when we were in Egypt, you know. And the cucumbers, the melons, the onions and the leeks and the garlic. Oh, boy.

But now, you know, we just, our whole being is dried up. All we've got is this manna every day. Manna for breakfast, manna for lunch, manna for dinner, you know.

We only had a little onions, you know, to cook it with and spice it up a bit. Now, it explains the manna again. It's like a coriander seed, color like the color of the dillium.

And the people went about and gathered it and ground it in the millstones or they beat it in the mortar and they cooked it in pans and made little cakes out of it, sort of pastries. And the taste was like the taste of pastry that's been prepared with oil. And when the dew fell in the camp in the night, the manna fell on it.

Now, again, it's amazing how that griping is contagious. Complaining is contagious. The mixed multitude began to say, Oh, man, remember how it was in Egypt with those cucumbers and onions? Man, what I wouldn't do for a good onion sandwich, you know.

Began to have the Big Mac attacks out in the wilderness, you know. And soon, the whole camp was weeping, you know, in the tents. The people were crying, Oh, you know, wish we were back in Egypt.

Sick of this manna. Our souls loathe this manna. Now Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, everyone at the door of his tent.

The anger of the Lord was aroused and Moses also was displeased. So Moses said to the Lord, Lord, why have you afflicted your servant? And why did I not find favor in your sight, that you laid the burden of all of these people on me? Lord, did I conceive all of these people? Did I beget them that you should say to me, carry them in your bosom as a guardian carries a nursing child to the land which you swore to their fathers? Where in the world am I to get meat to give to all these people? As Moses passed by, the people would be crying from their tents, Give us some meat to eat. And he was angry and he came to the Lord and he said, Lord, what have I done wrong? What have you got against me? That you laid on me the burden of all these people.

I didn't father them. I'm not their father that you say to me, carry them like a nursing child into the land I promised to their fathers. Where in the world, Lord, am I going to get meat to give to these crying people? I'm not able to bear all of these people alone because the burden is just too heavy for me.

And if you treat me like this, then kill me, Lord. I'd rather be dead than red. I don't want to go on any further.

I'd be better off dead, Lord, than to listen to this complaining and griping all the time. If you really like me, Lord, wipe me out. Do me a favor.

So the Lord said to Moses, gather unto me 70 men of the elders of Israel who you know are the elders of the people and officers over them and bring them to the tabernacle of meeting that they may stand there with you. Then I will come down and talk with you there and I will take up the spirit that is upon you and will

put the same upon them and they shall bear the burden of the people with you that you may not bear it yourself alone. And then you shall say to the people, Sanctify yourselves tomorrow and you shall eat meat.

For you have wept in the hearing of the Lord, saying, Who will give us meat to eat? For it was well for us in Egypt, we were better off in Egypt. Therefore the Lord will give you meat and you shall eat. And you shall eat meat not for one day or two or five or ten or twenty, but for a whole month until it comes out of your nostrils and it becomes loathsome to you because you have despised the Lord who is among you and have wept before him, saying, Why did we ever come up out of Egypt? Boy, the complaints of the people, how it can just eat right through to the core.

The horrible thing, why did we ever come out of Egypt? Why did we ever listen? Why did you ever lead us out? You brought us out here to kill us, you know. We would have been better off to die in Egypt. Start laying all these heavy things on Moses.

He just couldn't take it. And so he did what we should do with those burdens that are too heavy for us, take them to the Lord. Moses went before the Lord.

Now, Moses is first of all saying, Lord, I can't take it anymore. It's too much for me to bear. I didn't conceive all these people and I just can't take it anymore.

The responsibility and everything is just too heavy for me. I can't bear it. And secondly, he took before them the desire of the people.

Lord, they want meat, but where in the world can I get meat? They cry to meat. Every time I go by their tents, they're crying and asking for meat. Now, what can I do? And so the Lord answered both issues.

In the first case, the Lord said, First of all, gather 70 elders, men that you know are leaders among the people, and bring them to the tent of meeting. And I will take the spirit that is upon you and I will put it upon them. So you'll have help.

You won't have to bear the whole burden alone. But secondly, I'll give them meat. Not enough for just one day, two, five, ten, twenty.

For a whole month. Now, Moses said, Lord, do you realize there are over 600,000 men? And of course, that compounds out to about three and a half million people. Lord, where in the world will you give them meat that they might eat for a whole month? Shall the flocks and the herds be slaughtered for them? Do you want us to wipe out all of these flocks and herds that we have? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them to provide enough for them? Lord, how are you going to do it? How do you propose to give them so much meat? And the Lord said to Moses, Has the Lord's arm been shortened? We read concerning Abraham that the keys to his faith, first of all, he considered not his own age, about a hundred years old, nor yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.

He did not take into consideration the natural circumstances of impossibility. It was really a physical impossibility that he and Sarah could have a child at this point. She had gone through the change of life.

He was a hundred years old, she was ninety. They had never been able to have children. But he didn't consider that.

He didn't consider his own age, about a hundred, nor yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. One of the first things we are always doing when faced with a problem or a situation or even a promise of God is that we start considering the human possibilities for that to come to pass. I start figuring out humanly how I might be able to work that out.

If we just did this and this, then it could happen that that would slip in there, you know. And I start looking for the possibilities by which this thing might work. Not so with Abraham.

He didn't even take into consideration those human difficulties. Secondly, he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief. Now that's exactly what Moses is doing here.

He is staggering at the promise of God. Lord, how in the world? If I go out and tell them God is going to give you enough meat for a whole month, you know, where do you plan to do that? How do you plan to do it, God? Shall I order them to kill all the flocks and herds? Or are you going to gather all the fish in the sea and dump them? How? The Lord said, is my arm shortened? You see, Moses, your problem is that you haven't considered into your equation the most dominant factor that is God. And that's one of our problems as we're trying to figure out life's problems.

We are figuring them only with the human equations, and we do not equate God into the problem or into the situation. But the moment you equate God into it, the problem disappears. We say, oh, that's difficult.

All right, equate God into it. Not into it. That's impossible.

Equate God into it. Simple. What a difference it makes when we begin to equate God into the problems of life, into the situations of our life.

And it's interesting how that so often we forget the most important factor of the equation. And so God said, wait a minute, Moses, you forget who you're talking to? Is my arm shortened? Is there any lack of my ability? We read in the prophecy of Isaiah that the hand of the Lord is not shortened that he cannot save, neither is his ear heavy that he cannot hear. No problem with God.

He can do it. The problem always lies on our side. So God is saying, Moses, you've forgotten this factor, or you've forgotten this equation, the main factor.

You didn't consider me. Is my arm shortened? You'll just see whether or not my word comes to pass. So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord, and he gathered the 70 men of the elders of the people, and he placed them around the tabernacle.

And so the two issues that are involved, number one, the meat for the people, the second one is the 70 men who are to be filled with the Spirit to assist Moses in this task. And so he takes care of, first of all, the 70 men, gathered them, placed them around the tabernacle. Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him and took of the Spirit that was upon him and placed the same upon the 70 elders.

And it happened when the Spirit rested upon them that they prophesied and did not cease, is the way the Targum and Vulgate reads. They've translated it here, and they never did so again. I don't think that this is a proper translation.

One of the weaknesses of the new King James. I think that it is really that God's Spirit rested upon them and they began to prophesy. They received the gift of prophecy.

Sort of as an indication or a sign that indeed the Spirit of God was upon them. But two of the men had remained in the camp. The name of the one was Eldad and the other was Medad.

And the Spirit rested upon them. And they were among those that were listed. Somehow they didn't show up.

But they hadn't gone to the tabernacle and yet they were prophesying in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses and said, Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp. And Joshua, the son of Nun said, Moses, my Lord forbid them.

Then Moses said to him, Are you zealous for my sake, Joshua? Oh, that all of the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them all. So the report comes. Two of the guys are out in the camp prophesying and Joshua is ready to defend Moses.

Oh, Moses, you know, stop them. And Moses said, hey, no, Joshua, this is great. I wish God would put his Spirit on everybody.

How glorious it would be. How much easier my job would be if they were all walking in the Spirit. You know, that's really the answer.

And that's the glorious thing about the church age is that the promise was that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh. Spirit was upon them all. And what a glorious thing if all of God's people were walking in the Spirit and all of God's people were filled with the Spirit.

We'll return next time with more valuable lessons as we continue to follow the children of Israel's wilderness journey. And we do hope you'll make plans to join us. But right now, I'd like to remind you that if you missed any part of today's message or perhaps you'd like to order a copy for that special friend or loved one, you can do so by simply contacting one of our customer service representatives and they'd be more than happy to assist you with the ordering details.

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And be sure to join us again next time as Pastor Chuck Smith continues his verse-by-verse study through the book of Numbers. That's right here on the next edition of The Word for Today. And now, once again, here's Pastor Chuck Smith.

May God be with you and may God bring you real victories in your walk this week. Victories over those areas of the flesh that have dominated and defeated you. May you begin to know the life and the walk in the Spirit as you yield and submit yourself unto the Spirit of God to live after the Spirit, to walk after the Spirit.

And may you begin to really develop and grow in your relationship with Him as God draws you unto Himself and into that inheritance that is yours in Christ Jesus, in His name. As I think about the many choices of which church to attend, I've asked myself, how do I know my church is teaching the Bible as the uncompromising Word of God? Is it possible to really know church pastors are teaching the Bible as inerrant? With this in mind, Pastor Paul Smith has written a book entitled, *New Evangelicalism, The New World Order*. Hi, this is Pastor Chuck.

Our Lord Jesus Christ warned the believers that Satan would mount a massive strategy of deception in the last days and that many would be fooled. This book will help the reader to understand the subtle and not-so-subtle spiritual battles and the tactics of Satan. My brother Paul has clearly examined the documents and exposes the alarming degenerative process happening in the churches today.

Every believer who seriously considers the importance of the inerrant Word of God will benefit from this book. For more information about Pastor Paul Smith's book and to read a sample, please visit us online at [thewordfortoday.org](http://thewordfortoday.org) or call us at 800-272-WORD. That's 800-272-9673.

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