



RESPONDING TO HARD TIMES

June 2020

[Moses] asked the LORD, “Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? . . . Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, ‘Give us meat to eat!’ I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me.”

Numbers 11:11,13-14

In his book, *The Land Between*, author Jeff Manion uses the story of the Israelites’ forty-year journey through the Sinai Desert as a metaphor for being in a time of testing, a trial. After generations of slavery in Egypt, the Israelites travel through the wilderness (the land between) toward the Promised Land. They crave the food of their former home and despise their present environment.

They were unable to go back and incapable of moving forward. They felt trapped. Stuck. Similar—I’m sure—to the way we felt during the COVID pandemic. I think most of us will agree

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that we too seemed to have gone through a wilderness experience. We couldn't move forward and couldn't go back.

The Israelites did a lot of complaining. Yet God intended them to grow during their years in the desert. He wanted to transform them from people of slavery to people of God.

When we go through our trials, I believe God has a purpose for them as well. He wants us to grow and be reshaped. During such episodes we can develop a relationship of growing trust with God. But it doesn't happen automatically. It depends on how we respond to God during those troubled times. Do we complain or will we cry out to him, knowing he's there, knowing he's concerned?

As we cry out in pain we can be transformed, secure in the knowledge that God is listening. We can even rejoice in him in the midst of troubles. He will provide us with strength, encouragement from others, contentment in spite of our needs, solutions to our problems . . . peace.

Too often we allow ourselves to become victims, allowing life to control us. We don't trust God to help us improve our situation. But when we're passing through a wilderness experience, more than anything, God wants to be there for us.

Are you going through a hard time? Like Moses, you too can tell God how you feel about it. Tell him:

"I'm tired of this, Lord! I can't do this by myself anymore!"

And then . . . trust that he will hear.

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