



Our God of Mercy and Grace

VOLUME 3
1st-6th Grade Guide Book

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts
to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6



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Semester 1: Mercy and Grace Amid Failure

In these four units, we study how God shows His amazing mercy and grace to His children, even though they are often unfaithful to Him.

UNIT 1

MERCY TO THE ISRAELITES

God is faithful even when we are not—what a wonderful truth! We see this play out especially in the story of the Exodus. Amid the Israelites' continued grumbling and rebellion, God showed His boundless mercy. Israel turned on Moses and God, but God remained compassionate to His people.



GOD'S GREAT PROVISION

 Memory Verse: *Philippians 4:19*



What is the hardest test you have ever taken?

Taste test! Does your mother ever let you taste test her cookies? Testing a cookie will tell you what is in it. In a similar way, testing a person will tell you what is in his heart. God tested more than just one person—He tested the people of an *entire* nation. This was not a test to see how well Israel could survive on its own. It was the opposite! God's test for Israel was this: Would His people trust Him to provide for their needs?

There were no restaurants, microwaves, or grocery stores for Israel to use. Normally, gardens had to be planted. Wheat had to be picked and ground into flour. Animals had to be tended for milk and meat. But after Israel escaped from Egypt into the wilderness, they could do little of that. Israel did not know where their next meal would come from; but God did. He let them struggle at first, though, because He wanted to test their hearts: Would His people's hearts fill with trust in Him as He filled their bellies with His **provision**?



Hangry! Have you ever been so hungry that you begged your parents for food? Perhaps they said to wait, and perhaps then you complained that they did not care about you! Did you forget about the hundreds of meals your parents had already provided? Complaining is easy (especially when you are hungry!), but it is sinful (Phil. 2:14).

The Israelites complained a *lot*. They complained at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:11-12) and at Marah (15:23-24). Now they complained about Moses and Aaron for not feeding them fast enough. Although Israel complained against their leaders, their complaint was really against God (16:8). The Israelites were so angry about being hungry that they forgot God had provided before. He had saved them from Pharaoh, brought them through the Red Sea, and made bitter water sweet! Just as your parents feed you even if you complain, God fed Israel even though they grumbled. The God the Israelites complained against was the one who saved and fed them.

A feast! How would you feel if you opened a bag of crackers and got a cupcake instead? You got more than you had hoped for! And God was doing more than just feeding Israel. He was also teaching them about Himself! God showed them that He works miracles. Instead of growing fields of food for them, God poured food from the sky! God showed them that He is generous. He gave His people all they wanted to eat. God would also provide even more when they kept the Sabbath. The manna itself was so special that Moses kept some in a jar in the ark of the covenant. The next time God's people complained, they could remember the manna. God could be trusted. He provided a feast even in the wilderness.

Prayer Point

Pray for help to trust God and to not complain.

Christ Focus

Jesus was content with the Father's provision; He wanted only the bread His Father chose to provide (Matt. 4:1-4).

A SINFUL WILDERNESS?

After the people of Israel left Egypt, they traveled through the Wilderness of Sin (Ex. 16). (That seems like a strange name for a wilderness!) The name *Sin* probably comes from the name of the moon god worshipped by the people in the area. The name has nothing to do with the English word we know, which means to disobey God. The Hebrew word translated *wilderness* means a wide area that has no crops and where few, if any, people live. It can refer to a green area with many plants and trees, but here it means a desert. Many Bible historians believe the Wilderness of Sin was located along the western part of the Sinai Peninsula. It was a dry and hot route for Israel to travel.



QUAIL—*It's What's For Dinner*

The quail that God provided most likely were small, plump birds about the size of pigeons. They are known for their delicious meat (some say they taste like chicken!). They often migrate in very large flocks like geese across the Sinai region on their way north from the Sudan in Africa to Europe. This happens around the months of March and April. They often fly at night, which is when God told the people He would give them meat (Ex. 16:8). Quail fly with the wind not against it. If they get caught in a crosswind, they may get driven to the ground. Quail get so tired from flying that it is not unusual for them to fly so low that they can be easily caught. Flocks of quail looking for a place to land and rest have been known to sink small boats. In the area of Sinai, flocks have been seen to cover the ground in such large numbers that some land on top of each other.



Seek First the Kingdom of God

Perhaps it was not wrong for the children of Israel to ask for meat to eat, but they should not have complained against God. God had been good to them, and they were being ungrateful. God wanted them to trust Him for all their needs. Instead of trusting Him, they panicked.

There is a song you can learn to help you remember that God will provide your needs. The words are taken from Matthew 6:33. You can find the melody online.

Seek Ye First

*Seek ye first the kingdom of God
And His righteousness;
And all these things shall be added unto you.
Hallelu, Hallelujah!*

*Ask, and it shall be given unto you;
Seek, and you shall find.
Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.
Hallelu, Hallelujah*

—Karen Lafferty

GOD'S GREAT PROVISION

 *Memory Verse: Philippians 4:19*

A gift is more than a gift. It is like an arrow! It points us back to the loving gift-giver, who is more precious than the gift. The Hebrews cared more about their empty bellies than God or His loving provision. Their love for the gift of food instead of the Giver only brought them trouble.

WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

Manna was something like a grain. The Israelites could grind it and boil it or bake it into cakes. Its name probably comes from the Israelites' question when they first saw it: "What is it?" In Numbers 11:7, Moses wrote that manna was like coriander seed. He said it was the color of bdellium, probably a very pale orangish yellow. Psalm 78:25 calls manna "angel's food" (probably because it came from heaven). God's people ate manna for forty years until they entered Canaan (Josh. 5:12).



Coriander Seeds

KISS THE OASIS GOODBYE

Elim was an oasis. It was one of Israel's early camping stops after escaping Pharaoh. It had plenty of water and palm trees. Wadi Ghurundel in western Sinai, Egypt, is thought to be located where Elim was. (A *wadi* is a riverbed that remains dry except after rainfall.) Going from Elim's water and shade to the desert wilderness would have been a challenging test of Israel's trust in God's merciful provision.





PROFESSIONAL WHINERS

Israel's Complaint	God's Response	Scripture
being pursued by Pharaoh	parted the Red Sea	Ex. 14:10-12, 21-29
thirst	made bitter water drinkable	15:23-25
hunger	sent manna and quail	16:2-3, 13-14
thirst	gave water from a rock	17:3-6
hardships	sent fire to the camp	Num. 11:1
fear of the Canaanites' strength	declared anyone over twenty would never see the Promised Land; sent plague to the faithless spies	14:2, 28-30, 36-37
unhappy with God's judgment	sent a plague that killed 14,700	16:41-49

HIGH-FIVE!

"The hand of God" does not mean God really has hands—He is a Spirit. It is a word-picture used in the Bible. It helps us understand God's power. Four times in Exodus 13 the hand of God is said to have brought Israel out of Egypt (vss. 3, 9, 14, 16). At other places in Scripture, God's hand is described as mighty (see Isa. 59:1), strong (Ps. 89:13), and creative (95:5). The Israelites wrongly complained that the same hand that had brought them out of slavery was also bringing them to their death (Ex. 16:3).

WHO WAS TESTING WHOM?

After rescuing the Israelites from Egypt, God tested them to see whether they would trust Him. The author of Psalm 78 looks deeper into this account. He pointed out that Israel, in turn, was also testing God. Their grumbling and complaining tested His love, patience, and mercy for His people (Deut. 6:16).



Prayer Point

Pray for faith not to doubt God's provision for you!

Christ Focus

More than food, we need Jesus. He is the Bread of Life (John 6:41). Only through Him can we be spiritually satisfied and full.

GOD'S GREAT PROVISION

 Memory Verse: *Philippians 4:19*


Scripture Connections: Ex. 15:22-27; 17:1-2; Deut. 7:1-11; John 4:9-14; 6:30-35

You are mine! Sometimes Fluffy the cat sits with you and purrs. And sometimes she rips apart your favorite shirt. So why do you even feed her? Because she is *your* cat. The Hebrews did not always do the right thing, but they were the nation God Himself had created. So He always provided.

But God tested Israel. He saw how bad they were when they were hungry. God also tested them with thirst. God parted the Red Sea, showing Israel that water answered to Him alone (Ps. 78:13). But then God's people traveled across the desert for three days. When they camped at an oasis called Marah, the water was bitter. It was undrinkable! Without water, the people *and* all their livestock would die. Israel thought God was not keeping His promises to them. Instead of trusting that God could make water do whatever He commanded, they complained. Because of His love, He told Moses to throw a tree into the water, and the water was miraculously made drinkable!

People might survive up to a week without water. In hotter weather, though, that time is shorter.

This was not the last time the Israelites complained. Once out in the desert, they complained about their thirst again (Ex. 17:1-2)! The people had forgotten all about God's provision and power at Marah. Yet another time, they complained about how hard things were, and God disciplined them with fire (Num. 11:1). Israel even complained when they were ready to enter the long-awaited Promised Land (13:26-33)!

God says His name is "the Lord who heals you" (Ex. 15:26). God wanted His people to remember this. He told them that as long as they obeyed Him, they would not suffer from the diseases He had sent upon the Egyptians.

The Israelites' nasty attitude certainly did not please God. Yet God provided what they needed, not because they deserved it, but because they belonged to Him.

You are not theirs. Since Israel was God's covenant people, no other "god" could choose Israel, and Israel could not choose any other god. God's people also were not to blend in with other nations. They were to stand out because of their trust in the one true God. God would use Israel to bring blessing to the world (Gen. 12:3), but Israel needed

to keep itself set apart from the sinful ways of the world. In Deuteronomy 7:1-11, God reminded the Israelites that they were His chosen people, bound to Him in worship and obedience.

I am yours. Do you ask God for a miracle when you need water? No, we normally can get all the water we need. While you may not see a miracle as Israel did, you still have God's **covenant love**. The greatest proof of this love was Jesus dying on the cross. Because of God's covenant love, Israel escaped from slavery, death, hunger, and thirst. Through Jesus, God's children escape from sin and death. Jesus called Himself the Bread of Life (John 6:35), and He gives us Living Water—the Holy Spirit (4:10). Jesus promised that He will satisfy us forever and give us eternal life (vs. 14). When you put your faith in Him, you become one of His chosen people!

Prayer Point

Thank God for clean water to drink as well as for Jesus, the true Living Water.

Christ Focus

God's covenant with Israel was good. But through Jesus' death on the cross, God invites us all into a new and better covenant (Heb. 7:22).

GOD'S GREAT PROVISION

 Memory Verse: *Philippians 4:19*
**Doctrine:** God Provides for His People

Pizza and scorpions. Dad comes home and sets the pizza box on the table. But surprise! Inside is filthy trash. No good father would do that, would he? When Dad says he's getting pizza, he's getting pizza. You can trust a good dad to provide for your needs, but you can trust God even more.

People always seem to be worried about money: *Do I have enough? How can I get more? Why does she have so much?* People who are always focused on money cannot truly serve God (Matt. 6:24). Jesus told listeners several times not to worry about their needs. If we can trust God for eternal life, we can certainly trust Him to provide for our needs! A normal father would never give his son a stone if he asked for bread. If the son asked for an egg, would he get a scorpion (Luke 11:11-13)? Of course not! If human fathers can be trusted to provide for their kids, God can be trusted *more!*

People and sparrows. There are no worm restaurants where birds can get lunch! Yet God gives birds enough to eat. You are more important than birds because you are made in God's image, and birds are not (Gen. 1:26; see 2:20). This difference means God's relationship to you is special. If God provides for birds, He *surely* will provide for you since He linked you to Himself at Creation! If a sparrow is never worried about where it will live or what it will eat, you should not worry either. We should still work, go to the store, and cook, but while we do all that, we must trust God to provide what we need.

A need is something you must have to live. A want is something you would like but can live without. God does not promise to give us everything we want. And though He will provide, we will still have hard times.

Pancakes and spoiled manna. When you get hungry, do you ever find your yard covered in pancakes? No! But when Israel ran out of food, God rained manna all over the ground. God was teaching them a lesson: He would always provide their needs. They simply needed to trust Him. Israel was to gather only enough bread for that day because God would give fresh manna every morning. But some people worried. They gathered more than they were told, and the extra food became rotten and stinky (Ex. 16:20).

If we keep on worrying that things might not work out, it shows we are not trusting God. We are trusting more in the things of this world. That is not good! When we do not trust God, we dishonor Him. We spoil everything when we trust someone or something else. *That* is a stinky situation! So how do we stay away from stinky? Love God first. Trust Him to provide what you need. Make His kingdom the most important thing in your life. This was God's desire for Israel in the wilderness, and it's His desire for you too!

Prayer Point

Thank God that He is trustworthy!

Christ Focus

It is a small thing for God to provide for our physical needs when He has already given us Jesus (Rom. 8:32).

GOD'S GREAT PROVISION

 Memory Verse: Philippians 4:19


REVIEW

This week we discussed **God's Great Provision**. Let's do some review. For each day, begin by summarizing the lesson.



- Why was God testing the Israelites? *To see whether they would trust Him for their needs.*
- Where did Israel complain before they complained against Moses and Aaron? *At the Red Sea and at Marah.*
- What did Moses do with some of the manna? *He put some in a jar to remind Israel of God's **provision**.*



- How does the Bible describe **manna**? *Something like a grain or coriander seed; pale orangish yellow.*
- How did God treat Israel's complaints differently as time went on? *From patience to discipline.*
- What did the Israelites say about "the hand" of God? *The hand that saved them was trying to kill them.*



- Why should Israel have trusted God for water? *He had parted the Red Sea and provided for them before.*
- What did God tell the Israelites in Deuteronomy 7:1-11? *They were His people and no one else's.*
- How is Jesus' covenant better? *He provided escape from sin and gave us His **covenant love**.*



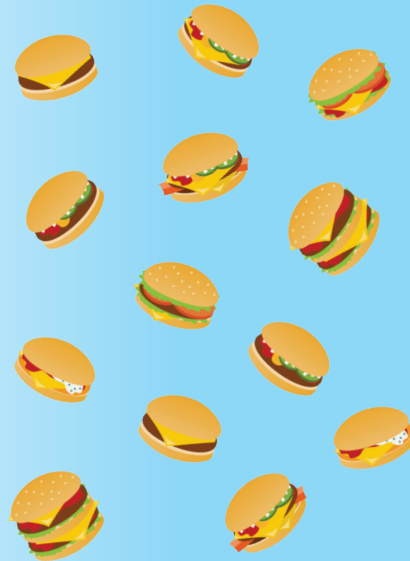
- How do you know God is trustworthy? *If parents can be trusted to provide, God can be trusted more!*
- Since God provides for animals, how do we know He will provide for us? *He made us in His image.*
- What happened when some Israelites gathered more manna than needed? *The food rotted and stank.*

APPLY

EVERY. SINGLE. THING.

You have never seen God rain cheeseburgers from the sky. But looking back, you can probably remember different ways God has provided something for you! James wrote that every good thing is really from God (1:17). Did a friend give a special gift when you really needed it? Did your mom make a favorite dessert on your birthday? Make a list of every way you can remember that God has provided what you needed (and maybe what you wanted)!

God blesses us so that He can bless others through us. What an awesome privilege! What has God given you that you can share with others? Make a list, and then share!



Prayer Point

Ask God to help you know the difference between needs and wants.

Christ Focus

We need Jesus more than anything else, and yet He needs nothing (Acts 17:25).