

Life Lesson 33
Don't Complain!
Text: Numbers 1-11

Introduction

Today we're learning about the fourth book of the Bible. It's the fourth book of the law and the fourth book written by Moses. It's called the book of Numbers.

The Story

When you start reading the book of Numbers you can see how it got its name. It has lots of numbers in it! In the first part of the book, the Children of Israel are numbered, or counted. They were almost to Canaan, the promised land. They needed to know how many men they had who could go out and fight to win their new country.

Then God ordered the camp, telling each tribe where to pitch their tents around the tabernacle. That was important because God likes to have things neat and orderly. He doesn't like to see confusion. (Would you like to have God see your bedroom right now? What would He think about it?)

God had a place for each of His people in the camp. He has a special place for His people today, too. Do you ever wonder what you will be when you grow up? Have you ever worried about what job you will have and where you will live? You don't need to fret about it, because God has a place all ready for you. He knows what He wants you to do and where He wants you to live. He even knows already who He wants you to marry. He has a plan and order all laid out for His children. You just need to follow Him and trust Him to show you when the time comes.

It must have been an exciting time for the children of Israel. They had seen God do so many miraculous things. He had provided their every need in the wilderness. Now they were almost to the promised land. They should have been happy and excited. Let's pretend we are listening in on their conversation and can hear what they were saying.

"Manna, manna, manna," they grumbled. "I'm sick of manna. Manna for breakfast, manna for lunch, manna for supper."

"Do you remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt? And the onions and cucumbers and melons?"

"If only we had some meat to eat!" they cried.

Can you believe it? God delivered them out of slavery and gave them their every need in the wilderness. He protected them and guided them in a safe way. He gave them His law and forgave them of their sin of worshiping the golden calf. And now they were griping about the food God gave them!

How do you think God felt about their grumbling? He was angry! We sometimes think of complaining as a little sin, but to God it is a terrible sin. When we gripe and complain, we are doing just as the Israelites did. We are ignoring the things God gives us and ungratefully wishing for things He chose not to give us. We are saying we don't like the way God is doing things when we complain. That's a serious sin!

"All right," God said to Moses. "If these people want meat to eat, I'll give it to them. I'll give them meat for a whole month. I'll give them so much that it'll come out their nostrils, and they'll be sick and tired of it."

“Where am I going to get that much meat to feed them?” Moses asked. He was being gripey, too. As if it was Moses that had been feeding the people, anyway.

“Has my hand become weak?” God replied. “You’ll see now whether I can keep my word or not.”

God sent a wind and blew birds in from the sea. They landed just a day’s journey from the camp. There were so many of them that they were piled up three feet thick on the ground.

The people were so excited. They gathered up huge amounts of the birds and took them home to eat.

They made a big feast and began to stuff themselves with the birds. God watched them gorging themselves. It made Him angry. They didn’t care about important things at all. They were only concerned with filling their stomachs. While they were chewing, God smote them with a great plague.

They became sick -- horribly sick. The greedy ones who ate the most died. I imagine it was a very long time before any of them wanted to eat birds again.

The Life Lesson

What does God think of complaining? He hates it. Complaining people aren’t grateful people. God is in control of everything, so when you complain, you are saying that God messed up and didn’t do things right. Who are you to tell God what He should do? No wonder complaining makes Him angry. Don’t do it!

Review Questions

What is the fourth book of the Bible?

Numbers

Who wrote the book of Numbers?

Moses

How did Numbers get its name?

The Israelites were numbered, or counted.

What did the Israelites complain about?

They were tired of manna and wanted meat to eat.

How did God give them meat?

He made a wind blow birds in from the sea.

What did God think about the Israelites complaining and stuffing themselves with birds?

It made Him angry.

What did God do to the people to show His displeasure?

He sent a plague.

Why should we not complain and grumble?

Because God sees it as ingratitude.