



A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families: For the week of January 7, 2018

Note to Discussion Leaders: Have members read the Bible passage in the group meeting. This is a “worship discussion” guide, and our reflections and applications are grounded in Scripture. Read through this guide before meeting with the group. You do not need to work through the whole guide. Decide which points would be most helpful for the time of meeting together, and use them as a starting point for your time together.

Numbers 11:1-3 “Complained”

¹ And the people complained in the hearing of the LORD about their misfortunes, and when the LORD heard it, his anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp. ² Then the people cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to the LORD, and the fire died down. ³ So the name of that place was called Taberah, because the fire of the LORD burned among them.

- When is it legitimate to complain?
- Read Numbers 11:1-3. Why were the people complaining?
- How did the Lord respond to their complaint? Why did He respond in this way?
- This episode begins a series of stories in which every group among the Israelites rebels against the LORD and His providence. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul tells us that Israel serves as an example to the Church. What does [1 Corinthians 10:6,11-13](#) tell us we are to learn from them?
- Read [1 Corinthians 10:7,14](#) where Paul makes it clear that the complaining of the Israelites was actually a form of idolatry. In what way is complaining idol-worship? How does one repent of this kind of idolatry?
- Throughout the book of Numbers, fire represents that God is at work. He is at work either by His presence and blessing, or by His purifying judgment. The people understood the fire as a threat, and so they cried out to Moses to intercede for them, and they named that camp *Taberah*, which means “burning”. Have you ever experienced God’s “merciful fire” at the “outskirts of your camp”? In what way?
- Instead of simply resolving to complain less, repent and go to your intercessor, Jesus Christ, with your complaints. Read this week’s *Words of Encouragement* from [Hebrews 4:15-16](#) to begin a time of prayer together.

Questions about this week’s study guide? Contact Kevin Greene, kevin@wepc.org
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Sermon Notes

This week, Steve Shelby preached on [Numbers 11:1-3](#).

- Let's take a look back to understand what is happening here.
- Ever since Exodus 19 the LORD has been in a 'huddle' with his people. Through Moses the LORD has taught them all they need to know to live wise and worshipful lives. With His own care the LORD has given His people water to drink and food to eat. The LORD has carefully arranged the camp and the march, the tabernacle and worship.
- The LORD has delivered them from their oppressors in the past and has promised His strong presence to deliver them from any enemies in the future. He demonstrates this with a duo of clouds to guide them. And now they are setting out on their journey to the Promised Land.
- Remember the closing words of chapter 10: "Arise O LORD, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you." ([Numbers 10:35](#))
- After three days of travelling....
- So what is the first thing (in fact, the first three things, as we shall see) the people do: COMPLAIN
- And as we shall see every single portion of the community over the next several verses will complain.
- What are the 'misfortunes' that cause the complaint? Whatever they are God does not think much of them.
- So, what exactly is the problem here? It is not lament. It is not even asking the Lord for help or healing or desiring God to do something. It is simply taking the provision and presence of God to be not enough. It is seeking something or someone else.
- It is a form of idolatry.
- God's response is quite muted, merciful and majestic. He burns the outer edge of the camp, to refine and warn His people.
- In the wilderness the people will consistently try to stop, war against one another, or perhaps worse want to turn around and go back to Egypt. Their preferences are all wrong.
- So, what is God to do?
- Overlook all of this and let people continue down the path...
- The people respond to God's warning and direction and cry out. Moses intercedes and then there is another day. Life goes on.
- God is merciful in sending the fire to refine.
- God is merciful in using an intercessor, and hearing.
- Another mercy is simply that life goes on.
- He continues to work, and love, and guide, and provide.