

week two

NUMBERS 10:35-36, 11-12

THE NOT-LITTLE SIN OF COMPLAINING

The background image is a dramatic landscape. In the foreground, there is a dark, almost black area. The middle ground shows a vast, flat, brownish landscape, possibly a desert or a plain. In the background, there are dark, jagged mountains or hills. A large, white, billowing plume of smoke or ash rises from the mountains, suggesting a volcanic eruption. Several birds are flying in the sky to the right of the plume. The overall mood is somber and dramatic.

NUMBERS
10:35-36

³⁵Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say:
Arise, LORD!
Let your enemies be scattered,
and those who hate you flee from your presence.

³⁶When it came to rest, he would say:
Return, LORD,
to the countless thousands of Israel.

NUMBERS
11-12

COMPLAINTS ABOUT HARDSHIP

¹Now the people began complaining openly before the LORD about hardship. When the LORD heard, his anger burned, and fire from the LORD blazed among them and consumed the outskirts of the camp. ²Then the people cried out to Moses, and he prayed to the LORD, and the fire died down. ³So that place was named Taberah, because the LORD's fire had blazed among them.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT FOOD

⁴The riffraff among them had a strong craving for other food. The Israelites wept again and said, "Who will feed us meat?" ⁵We remember the free fish we ate in Egypt, along with the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. ⁶But now our appetite is gone; there's nothing to look at but this manna!"

⁷The manna resembled coriander seed, and its appearance was like that of bdellium. ⁸The people walked around and gathered it. They ground it on a pair of grinding stones or crushed it in a mortar, then boiled it in a cooking pot and shaped it into cakes. It tasted like a pastry cooked with the finest oil. ⁹When the dew fell on the camp at night, the manna would fall with it.

¹⁰Moses heard the people, family after family, weeping at the entrance of their tents. The LORD was very angry; Moses was also provoked. ¹¹So Moses asked the LORD, "Why have you brought such trouble on your servant? Why are you angry with me, and why do you burden me with all these people?" ¹²Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth so you should tell me, 'Carry them at your breast, as a nursing mother carries a baby,' to the land that you swore to give their ancestors?

¹³Where can I get meat to give all these people? For they are weeping to me, 'Give us meat to eat!' ¹⁴I can't carry all these people by myself. They are too much for me. ¹⁵If you are going to treat me like this, please kill me right now if I have found favor with you, and don't let me see my misery anymore."

SEVENTY ELDERS ANOINTED

¹⁶The LORD answered Moses, "Bring me seventy men from Israel known to you as elders and officers of the people. Take them to the tent of meeting and have them stand there with you. ¹⁷Then I will come down and speak with you there. I will take some of the Spirit who is on you and put the Spirit on them. They will help you bear the burden of the people, so that you do not have to bear it by yourself.

¹⁸"Tell the people: Consecrate yourselves in readiness for tomorrow, and you will eat meat because you wept in the LORD's hearing, 'Who will feed us meat? We were better off in Egypt.' The LORD will give you meat and you will eat. ¹⁹You will eat, not for one day, or two days, or five days, or ten days, or twenty days, ²⁰but for a whole month—until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes nauseating to you—because you have rejected the LORD who is among you, and wept before him, 'Why did we ever leave Egypt?'"

²¹But Moses replied, "I'm in the middle of a people with six hundred thousand foot soldiers, yet you say, 'I will give them meat, and they will eat for a month.' ²²If flocks and herds were slaughtered for them, would they have enough? Or if all the fish in the sea were caught for them, would they have enough?"

²³The LORD answered Moses, "Is the LORD's arm weak? Now you will see whether or not what I have promised will happen to you."

²⁴Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. He brought seventy men from the elders of the people and had them stand around the tent. ²⁵Then the LORD descended in the cloud and spoke to him. He took some of the Spirit who was on Moses and placed the Spirit on the seventy elders. As the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they never did it again. ²⁶Two men had remained in the camp, one named Eldad and the other Medad; the Spirit rested on them—they were among those listed, but had not gone out to the tent—and they prophesied in the camp. ²⁷A young man ran and reported to Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp."

²⁸Joshua son of Nun, assistant to Moses since his youth, responded, "Moses, my lord, stop them!"

²⁹But Moses asked him, "Are you jealous on my account? If only all the LORD's people were prophets and the LORD would place his Spirit on them!" ³⁰Then Moses returned to the camp along with the elders of Israel.

QUAIL IN THE CAMP

³¹ A wind sent by the LORD came up and blew quail in from the sea; it dropped them all around the camp. They were flying three feet off the ground for about a day's journey in every direction. ³² The people were up all that day and night and all the next day gathering the quail—the one who took the least gathered sixty bushels—and they spread them out all around the camp.

³³ While the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the LORD's anger burned against the people, and the LORD struck them with a very severe plague. ³⁴ So they named that place Kibroth-hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had craved the meat.

³⁵ From Kibroth-hattaavah the people moved on to Hazeroth and remained there.

12 MIRIAM AND AARON REBEL

Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses because of the Cushite woman he married (for he had married a Cushite woman). ² They said, "Does the LORD speak only through Moses? Does he not also speak through us?" And the LORD heard it. ³ Moses was a very humble man, more so than anyone on the face of the earth.

⁴ Suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "You three come out to the tent of meeting." So the three of them went out. ⁵ Then the LORD descended in a pillar of cloud, stood at the entrance to the tent, and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When the two of them came forward, ⁶ he said:

"Listen to what I say:

If there is a prophet among you from the LORD,
I make myself known to him in a vision;
I speak with him in a dream.

⁷ Not so with my servant Moses;
he is faithful in all my household.

⁸ I speak with him directly,
openly, and not in riddles;
he sees the form of the LORD.

So why were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" ⁹ The LORD's anger burned against them, and he left.

¹⁰ As the cloud moved away from the tent, Miriam's skin suddenly became diseased, resembling snow. When Aaron turned toward her, he saw that she was diseased ¹¹ and said to Moses, "My lord, please don't hold against us this sin we have so foolishly committed. ¹² Please don't let her be like a dead baby whose flesh is half eaten away when he comes out of his mother's womb."

¹³ Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "God, please heal her!"

¹⁴ The LORD answered Moses, "If her father had merely spit in her face, wouldn't she remain in disgrace for seven days? Let her be confined outside the camp for seven days; after that she may be brought back in." ¹⁵ So Miriam was confined outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not move on until Miriam was brought back in. ¹⁶ After that, the people set out from Hazeroth and camped in the Wilderness of Paran.

Life Group Discussion Guide

RHYTHM REMINDER  **Serve the Community**

LEAN IN

Are you more often an optimist, a pessimist, or somewhere in between? Why? _____

LOOK DOWN

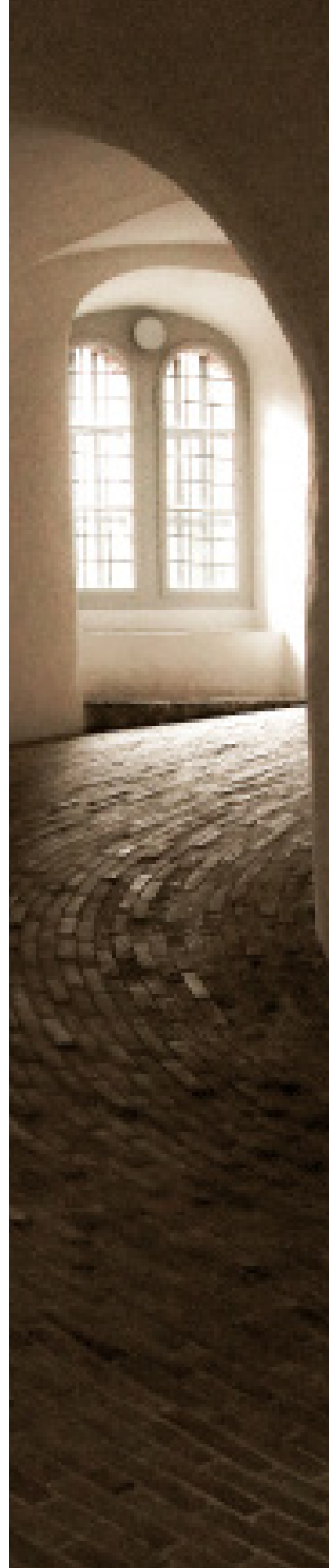
In what ways did God provide for Israel in the wilderness, and yet, how did most of the Israelites respond? _____

LOOK OUT

Why is it so easy to overlook complaining but call out other sins? _____

LOOK IN

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that no temptation is beyond God's reach to help us resist—how might we need to rely on God to resist the temptation to complain? _____



CHRIST CONNECTION

By Chris Li | High School Pastor

God faithfully leads His people through the wilderness, yet they continually respond with grumbling. Even after experiencing His guidance, at the first moment of hunger or discomfort, their hearts drift toward distrust. This reveals something true about all of us. When life gets hard, we are all prone to grumbling and forgetting the goodness of God. But God does not abandon His people in their times of weakness. He continues to lead them and show them grace, even in the midst of their grumbling.

Jesus, the embodiment of grace, forgives us when we fail and fall short. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, we are reminded of God's faithfulness as He gives us the power to live differently. Temptations are real in our lives, but God's power is greater. Satan wants us to believe that, at times, our only options are sinful ones. But that is not true. The Spirit living in us gives us the power to overcome and a path to escape temptation, as we rely on His grace.

The grace of Jesus frees us from patterns of grumbling and temptation. In moments when we can complain and live apart from God, it's an invitation for us to trust in God and remember His power and grace is greater.



Grumbling vs. Gratitude: HEART CHOICES
Original Artwork by Antje Campbell

THE DANGERS OF DWELLING ON THE PAST

By Rose Sawh

Have you ever felt stuck in the memories of your past?

Have you ever felt the pain of moving on, but were still clinging to past memories and experiences?

Are you looking in the rearview mirror, instead of focusing on the road ahead?

In life's journey we are often bound by the past. The past can shape our destiny toward a brighter future and a deeper walk in our faith, or stand in the way of progress, causing shame and regret.

The Israelites' journey through the wilderness in the book of Numbers is a timeless example of how dwelling on the past can hinder progress, cause spiritual stagnation, and distance us from God's loving presence and fellowship. Rather than trusting the future God had promised, they kept their eyes on their past. They complained that the past oppression of Egyptian rule was better than their current hardships, and even asked to return. Because of their doubts, they were unable to step into the Promised Land, and instead wandered in the wilderness.

We all have a story to tell of how our past has shaped us. Whether it has molded us into what we are today, or broken us in ways we are still healing from.

I know I do!

In my early walk with the Lord, I got caught in a spiritual web. It brought me pleasure, but it was contrary to God's Word. Memories of my past haunted me, holding me hostage and causing emotional trauma. Although God had a brighter future for me, I was allowing my past to define me, and rob me of future blessings.

But God turned my pain into purpose.

No season lasts forever. When I discovered the truth in God's Word, it was the turning point. It was a time to let go and time to grow. I replaced my worldly thoughts and habits with the Word of God. Letting go of what I couldn't change led me to a new beginning. My faith was refined, and the value of walking in God's Word became clearer.

Navigating my past led me from wandering the wilderness to claiming His promises. It's amazing how the Word of God, prayer, and obedience can transform our perspective and empower us to make life-altering changes. As we reflect on the book of Numbers, we are reminded of the apostle Paul's words in Philippians 3:13-14, "...Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus."

Had I not decided to forsake my past, I wouldn't be sharing this today. Now with unwavering courage and confidence, I can pray alongside others on the Prayer Team at Mariners to see lives transformed and hope restored. Every transition holds the possibility for transformation.

Tired of yesterday's regrets?

What's holding us back?

Let our past fuel our next move. Our biggest setback could spark our greatest comeback. The danger isn't in the past itself, but in letting it anchor us. Don't limit what God can do in us and through us.

Like Caleb and Joshua, with God on our side, we are well able to overcome.

Don't look back! The next chapter is waiting.





▼
Hungry for Meat
Original Artwork by Mary Leong

THE TRUE FIRE

By Jacqueline Lee

*In the wilderness, there was no bread;
complaints arose, then manna fell.*

*In misfortunes, there was no meat;
grumbling stirred, then quail rained down,
covering the ground they could see.*

*Is it truly written that the tongue is a fire
when it works so well to command the Lord Most High?*

Inspired by Numbers 11:4-6

It feels right to have the fire
of complaint on my side.
When the wilderness wraps around
me, the spark feels justified.

Those tall pillars of cloud and fire become
background noise to my complaints,
serving the gratification of my desires.

My complaints burn bright and sharp,
as if God should simply bend
to syllables uttered with a heart
pouring out pride and contempt.

But the power of murmurs is fake,
revealed when the fire of complaint
is shown to burn me up myself;
I am the firewood, not fire itself.

When my eyes are opened, I shall see that I am more
like a log cut down rather than a living tree,
prepared to be consumed by what I desire,
whether it is firstly of God's or my own empire.

The Lord who is yesterday, today, and forever the same
has holy fires lit within Himself kindled into flames.
And when the light dawns, it is grace to know that the fire
of the Lord is able to refine me and not leave me alone.

For what is there that can restore a log burned to ash
but only the person nailed to a bloodied tree on my behalf?
And what is there that can douse the fire of my complaining heart
but gratitude stemming from salvation that shall never part?

AS LONG AS HE LETS ME

By Heatherly De Naranjo | Photos by Gene Hsieh

Gregg has a vision of celebrating his future 100th birthday at the Mariners Food Pantry.

"I make it to a hundred years, and I'm still volunteering at the Food Pantry," he says with a smile. "I have to help people as long as the Lord will let me. I have pretty good genes; both my parents lived until their nineties."

At 83, Gregg is nearly two years into serving with the Food Pantry at Mariners Irvine.

"I started in October 2024. My wife died on October 5 that year, and in those couple of weeks after, I just felt I had to do something. The Lord has blessed me; I'm very fortunate. I needed to help others who were less fortunate."

After meeting the Food Pantry coordinator, Gregg felt it was where God wanted him to be. He now speaks of fellow Food Pantry volunteers in familial terms.

"We're all, you know, like brothers and sisters. We all get along together. We all cover each other. We all have fun there. We all pray together. We all like each other. I would recommend to anyone who wants to serve people: join our family, and you will not regret it."

When asked about Gregg, the lead volunteer of his shift, Michelle, is effusive.

"Gregg has made a lasting impact on our community," Michelle says. "Through his dedication, quiet acts of kindness, and willingness to step forward whenever help is needed, Gregg has embodied the very spirit of volunteerism. He also always brings a smile and an awesome fist bump."





In addition to serving consistently at the pantry, Gregg goes above and beyond by bringing food to those unable to visit the location in person. He began delivering groceries when a family member told him about a need in their community.

"It was a single mom with three kids. The dad had died about a year and a half earlier. They were living in low-income housing. She was working full time, so she couldn't come during the hours. And so I said, 'I can bring you food every other week because that's what we do here at the Food Pantry!'"

A second family came to his notice: another single mom with three children, this time without a car. Gregg offered to drive groceries to Buena Park, where he walks up to the apartment and loads food into the fridge.

He speaks with admiration of the people he serves and is awed by their joyful attitudes in the midst of difficult times.

"I want to say something about what amazes me with these two women. They're so upbeat. They're so positive about it. They're not bitter about anything. They're so grateful. I feel they're really under a lot of pressure. They have to be, but they don't show it. But it amazes me that they can be positive. Maybe they have to. Maybe that's what a mother does; she has to be positive under any circumstances."

And Gregg is looking for more families he can serve in this way.

"I actually could do more and this is what the Holy Spirit is telling me. I could help two more families if there's a need out there. I could do more to help out."

In the midst of talking about serving, Gregg reminisces about having spent time with "Pastor Ray" in the Laguna Woods community. The late Reverend Raymond Fico founded the "Beneath His Wings" ministry that served Orange County's unhoused population for more than 30 years. Gregg would sit and help Pastor Ray with the crosses he hand-carved and sold to support the ministry.

"He was the most influential man I ever met," Gregg recalls. "I never met a person like that. He dedicated himself."

The influence of other believers ripples through Gregg's story.

"I just feel like I'm making good use of my life. I'm not sitting around playing golf or something. I think my wife would appreciate that," he says fondly. "I think of Judi every day, multiple times a day."

When asked how he would encourage others to serve, Gregg appears baffled at the need to persuade.

"I think Jesus would say: 'You're here. You can do it. Think about others.'" He leans in to add, "You always have time. You just set priorities."