

## Hittin' Rocks

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**Numbers 20:1** And the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh. And Miriam died there and was buried there.

- Kadesh is mentioned in Numbers 13 after the spies returned with a bad report (except two men). God determined everyone 20 years and older would perish in the wilderness over 40 years for their lack of faith. Now, we're probably in their last year of wandering and back in Kadesh. We're back where it all began. Miriam passes away and Aaron will pass away in just a few months (5th month according to Numbers 33:38).

**Numbers 20:2–5** Now there was no water for the congregation. And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Would that we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord! Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we should die here, both we and our cattle? And why have you made us come up out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place? It is no place for grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, and there is no water to drink."

- This sound familiar? Yes, around 38-40 years prior, the congregation complained about having no water. They lashed out at Moses. It must have been strange, seeing the same scene . . . but new faces.
- And you know - that's life, isn't it? Not only is there nothing new under the sun, but if you've been given enough years under the sun, you begin to see the same problems . . . just new faces.

**Numbers 20:6–13** Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. And the glory of the Lord appeared to them, and the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle." And Moses took the staff from before the Lord, as he commanded him. Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?" And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock. And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them." These are the waters of Meribah, where the people of Israel quarreled with the Lord, and through them he showed himself holy."

- Does that sit well with you? This can be a hard one to read, because you want so badly for Moses (whom you love) to enjoy a new life and the fruit of the ground. He'd labored so long, if you will, and put up with so much . . . and this "little" thing ruined it . . . and right at the end. You know - you learn in life the importance of two things when dealing with each other and our hardships: empathy and accountability. Give me all the empathy in the world, but don't hold my feet to the fire and you're not my friend, really. Then again, hold my feet to the fire without any heart, and you leave me with no hope.

- **Empathy:** People need hope. They need to be heard. We need those around us who have the ability to walk in someone else's shoes and understand us. In life, you're going to go through hardships. You need someone to hear you and try to understand where you're coming from, even if they've not walked in your shoes. I remember telling my wife earlier in our marriage that at times I would share heartache from my past and I didn't need her to fix them, but acknowledgment would help. It was new territory and there were certain things I'd experienced that she hadn't specifically gone through, but I was still working them out in my mind. She has always been so patient and loving. She would let me speak, but at the beginning say nothing at all. It sounds so silly and, to be honest, embarrassing because it sounds so needy, but it really helped when she'd say something like, "I'm sorry you went through that. It must have been very difficult." The there are times in life when we make mistakes. Big mistakes. In fact, the word mistakes may be too kind. You're going to sin. You're going to mess things upLet's show Moses a little love, if you will, and try to appreciate where he's coming from.
- Moses' brief story and battles:
  - Exodus 2 He's sent down the Nile River.
  - Exodus 2 He flees to Midian after defending his own.
  - Exodus 3 He's instructed to go back to Egypt.
  - Exodus 5 Hebrews aren't exactly happy with Moses.
  - Exodus 7-13 Moses makes friends with Pharaoh.
  - Exodus 14 The people accuse Moses of hurting, not helping them.
  - Exodus 16 They complained about a lack of food.
  - Exodus 17 They quarrel with Moses over a lack of water.
  - Exodus 18 Moses is wearing himself out handling their disputes.
  - Exodus 32 He finds them turning to an idol and giving up on him in 40 days.
  - Numbers 11 They complained about life and the food they used to eat.
  - Numbers 12 Moses' own brother and sister complain about Moses.
  - Numbers 13 The spies give a negative report of the promised land and the congregation rebels.
  - Numbers 14 They grumble again and long for the good ol' days in Egypt. (Moses intercedes again . . . did we mention that?)
  - Numbers 16 Korah and his kin rebel against Moses' leadership.

- Numbers 20 Miriam dies.
- This frustrated Moses . . . and understandably so. Consider the following:
  - Psalm 106:32–33 "They angered Him at the waters of Meribah, and it went ill with Moses on their account, for they made his spirit bitter, and he spoke rashly with his lips."
  - Deuteronomy 1:37 Even with me the Lord was angry on your account and said, 'You also shall not go in there.'
  - Deuteronomy 3:23–26 And I pleaded with the Lord at that time, saying, "O Lord God, You have only begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your mighty hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours? Please let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon." But the Lord was angry with me because of you and would not listen to me. And the Lord said to me, "Enough from you; do not speak to Me of this matter again."
  - Deuteronomy 32:49–51 "Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, opposite Jericho, and view the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the people of Israel for a possession. And die on the mountain which you go up, and be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother died in Mount Hor and was gathered to his people, because you broke faith with me in the midst of the people of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, and because you did not treat me as holy in the midst of the people of Israel."
- I bet you could come up with your own list, could you not? We need to consider this in our lives. We need empathy in our marriages. We need it in our friendships. We need to ask people how they're doing and listen. We need to seek to understand one another. Many times we don't want to talk to others because of the guilt we may feel in our lives. This isn't good either. God has given each other to be "mini rocks". However, we have to balance this out with another kind of love - accountability.
- **Accountability:** By nature, we don't like accountability, but imagine where we'd be without it? Imagine who we'd be without it? Look around and see those who attempt to live without it.
  - **Numbers 27:13-14** "When you have seen it (the promised land - SB), you also shall be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was, because you rebelled against My word in the wilderness of Zin when the congregation quarreled, failing to uphold Me as holy at the waters before their eyes. (These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.)"
  - It's good to appreciate what God says to Moses. Moses was charged, by God, for not believing in Him. Did you catch what God told Moses before His death? He said Moses "broke faith" with God. You know, when I first decided to give this lesson, I was going to focus on the terminology: faith, believe, works, etc. These terms, though not always, can be used interchangeably. To obey God is to show faith. Or Jesus, for example, did not take offense when asked, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" He replied, "This is the world of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." **John 6:28-29**. These are all good and valid observations of the word and helpful when discussing different points of doctrine. But, I feel like I'd be missing the power behind what God was saying and what Moses still needed to learn.

- **No Excuses.** We don't ever stop believing in God no matter what the situation. In life, you always have an option, even when an option may seem unreasonable. Moses may have felt, in a brief moment, that his action was justified considering his faithfulness to God, but it was not. We can say all long that someone pushed us to do something or behave in a certain manner, but at the end of the day, God expects us to make the right decisions.
- **Representing and Influencing.** We are representing God. Moses was held to a high standard because of his role. Notice that all the complainers who pushed him to the edge were permitted to cross over. Shepherds: God has a higher expectation from you. Ministers: We will be judged with greater strictness ([James 3:1](#)). Parents: You have an incredible influence on your children and or your spouse. But Christians as a whole are held to a higher standard because we claim to be Christ followers! Moses sinned against God by striking the rock, but also for his careless words. Sometimes words hurt more than actions:
  - "Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel" was the problem. We've got to remember who we are and who's watching.
- **Getting pulled in.** They weren't really quarreling with Moses - they were quarreling with God. How many times do we allow the world or others (even followers of Jesus at times), to pull us into a fight that's not ours? Moses didn't have a problem with God. Moses didn't doubt God's provision. We've got to have the wisdom to step back and evaluate what's going on. Who's fight is this? Is it worth it? What's my end goal? You've all got enough on your plate - may I suggest we choose our battles wisely!
- Gracious God
  - Having said all that, we're not throwing Moses under the bus. Moses died a faithful servant of God, and God was gracious to him. Moses actually had quiet the death and burial:
    - [Deuteronomy 34:5-7](#) So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord, and he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor; but no one knows the place of his burial to this day. Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated.
  - God was always with Moses . . . and He's with you.
    - [1 Corinthians 10:1-4](#) "For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ."
  - Moses was with Christ.
    - [Luke 9:30-31](#) "And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure (exodus), which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem."
    - You'll be with Him as well. For those who love Him! For those who hold on. Life is not an allusion, but training grounds, brethren. How much sweeter a home with God will be after walking through a wilderness for so long.