

# Provision

GOD HEARS HIS LEADERS AND SUSTAINS THEM  
FOR HIS PURPOSES.

## Numbers 11:4-17

4 The **riffraff** **A** among them had a **strong craving** **B** for other food. The Israelites wept again and said, “Who will feed us meat? 5 We remember the free fish we ate in Egypt, along with the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. 6 But now our **appetite is gone**; **C** there’s nothing to look at but this **manna!**” 7 The manna resembled coriander seed, and its appearance was like that of **bdellium**. **E** 8 The 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. 9 When the dew fell on the camp at night, the manna would fall with it. 10 Moses heard the people, family after family, **weeping** **F** at the entrance of their tents. The LORD was **very angry**; **G** Moses was also provoked. 11 So 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? 12 Did I conceive all these people? Did I **give them birth** **H** 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? 13 Where can I get meat to give all these people? For they are weeping to me, ‘Give us meat to eat!’ 14 I can’t carry all these people by myself. They are too much for me. 15 If you are going to treat me like this, **please kill me right now** **I** if I have found favor with you, and don’t let me see my misery anymore.” 16 The LORD answered Moses, “Bring me seventy men from Israel known to you as **elders and officers** **J** of the people. Take them to the tent of meeting and have them stand there with you. 17 Then I will come down and speak with you there. I will take some of **the Spirit who is on you** **K** 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.”

### Exploring Key Words

- A** A “collection” or “rabble,” likely the “mixed crowd” mentioned in Exodus 12:38. These likely were not native Israelites.
- B** To have a strong desire or “lusting” (as in KJV). It suggests a strong yearning for something prohibited (Deut. 5:21) or evil (Prov. 24:1).
- C** A skewed view of life in Egypt had led the people to ignore what God was currently doing and providing in their midst.
- D** The word comes from the question expressed when Israel first saw manna: “What is it?” (Ex. 16:15). It was God’s divine gift each day to Israel to sustain them in the wilderness.
- E** “Resin” (NIV). The meaning is uncertain. A similar term in other ancient languages describes it as a gum-resin from plants used in medicines and perfumes, such as myrrh.
- F** The attitude of the disgruntled riffraff spread, so the entire community wept over and complained about what they did not have.
- G** “Kindled greatly” (KJV); “blazed hotly” (ESV). The Hebrew wording suggests a burning anger.
- H** Using the image of a mother and her newborn infant, Moses pictured the people as children who refused to grow up.
- I** At his wits’ end, Moses desired death rather than life. Later, Elijah had a similar experience and request of God (1 Kings 19:1-5).
- J** Israel was somewhat organized with respected community leaders. “Elder” refers more to leadership capacity than age.
- K** God’s Spirit, the third member of the Trinity, empowered Moses to lead Israel. Moses would not lose his empowerment, but God would empower others with the same Spirit.



## Dissatisfied Followers (Num. 11:4-9)

- On the journey toward the promised land, the Israelites began to complain to Moses about food. They had grown dissatisfied with the manna God was providing that fell to the ground each morning with the dew.
- The people wanted meat, fish, and vegetables. They convinced themselves that life was better in Egypt. By living in their own definition of the past, they failed to appreciate what God was doing and providing in the moment.

## Frustrated Leader (Num. 11:10-15)

- God took note of the complaints and was angry.
- Moses approached God and asked a series of questions. Moses questioned why he had been burdened with the people and where he might obtain meat for them.
- Overwhelmed, he declared his frustration and misery with his predicament. He even went so far as to ask God to take his life.

## Gracious Provision (Num. 11:16-17)

- God heard and responded to Moses's frustrations. He commanded Moses to gather seventy men from Israel to meet with Him at the tent of meeting.
- God would fill these leaders with His Spirit. As a result, they would help bear the load of leadership alongside Moses.

## Summary Statements

*God hears His leaders and sustains them for His purposes.*

- Believers should be careful not to take God's provisions for granted.
- We can always take our concerns to God, telling Him what we need.
- We can trust God to provide what we need to carry out the tasks He gives us.

## Memory Verse

*Numbers 11:23*

## Key Doctrine

*God the Holy Spirit*

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. (See Genesis 1:3; Exodus 31:2-3.)

## ENGAGE

*When has some difficulty kept you from doing what you needed to do? How did you feel when someone came through with a solution? (PSG, p. 10)*

- Many of us know what it's like to have a job and find out we don't have the tools we need. We start to wash clothes and discover the washing machine isn't working. Maybe we are supposed to drive for the carpool, and the car won't start.
- We need to turn in an assignment in the morning and realize at midnight that the printer is out of ink. We discover that the bolt we're trying to remove requires a metric socket wrench that we don't have.

*Bonus: What are some things we do that make a job harder than it has to be?*

## EXPLORE

### 1. DISSATISFIED FOLLOWERS (NUM. 11:4-9)

*Bonus: What are some things that are easy to take for granted?*

*What blessings from God might we tend to overlook? (PSG, p. 13)*

- The complaints of "riffraff" stirred the Israelites. The term refers to a mixed crowd. These were non-Jews who had left Egypt with Moses and the Israelites (Ex. 12:37-38; Josh. 8:35).
- This group began to complain about the food God had provided. Ignoring the hard labor of slavery, their "strong craving" convinced them that life was better in Egypt.

*What does God's providing manna to His people reveal about Him? (PSG, p. 13)*

### 2. FRUSTRATED LEADER (NUM. 11:10-15)

*Why do you think God was angry at His people? (PSG, p. 14)*

- The attitude of the riffraff spread like a wildfire. Before long, the entire community was weeping over the manna supplied by God. They already were turning up their noses at what God was supplying, even though it was free and abundant.
- The people's complaints made God "very angry." The Hebrew word describes someone burning or being ablaze with fury. Our word "incensed" conveys the same idea.

*We often applaud Moses for his great faith and obedience. What does verse 15 reveal about Moses? How do you handle frustration and the feeling of defeat? (PSG, p. 16)*

- "Also" connects Moses's reaction to God's. But while the Lord burned with righteous indignation, Moses was exasperated and had reached his boiling point.
- In the past, Moses had interceded for the people before God. This time, though, he expressed his frustration with a sarcastic and self-pitying rant. He expressed his feelings of inadequacy and even asked God to kill him.

*Bonus: Do you think Moses was more frustrated with the people or with God? Why?*

*Bonus: How do you tend to express your frustrations to God?*

### 3. GRACIOUS PROVISION (NUM. 11:16-17)

*Bonus: How easy is it for you to delegate responsibility to someone else? Explain.*

*Bonus: Why is it important to allow others to help us at times?*

- God responded to Moses's anger with grace and promised to meet Moses at his point of need. He commanded Moses to enlist seventy leaders who could be trusted from among the people and to meet Him at the tabernacle.
- God's Spirit had been leading Moses. Now, the Lord would place His Spirit on the seventy elders as well. They would help Moses carry the "burden" of leading the people.

*What did God reveal about His character by supplying Moses's specific and stated needs? (PSG, p. 17)*

## CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss ways adults can help carry one another's burdens.

*What actions can your Bible study group take to help each other feel free to share their burdens and concerns openly—with God and with one another? What can you do to help foster honest dialogue? (PSG, p. 18)*

Challenge adults to reflect on God's provision and to express their gratitude toward Him.

*What can you do to help you remember God's past blessings? (PSG, p. 18)*

## FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

**BIBLE SKILL (P. 17, PSG)**

Look for the prayer prompts in a passage of Scripture.

Numbers 11 describes how God sustained Moses by bringing alongside him seventy of Israel's elders (vv. 16-30). He also provided quail for the people (vv. 31-34). **What does this reveal about God? How does it prompt you to pray?** Consider the following suggestions: Give thanks for the ways God has provided for you in the past. Express your willingness to allow God to meet your needs in the way He chooses, rather than merely asking Him to work in the ways you desire.

Instruct adults to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 17 of the PSG. After a few minutes, lead a brief discussion on what the passage reveals about God and how adults can pray these truths back to Him. Give adults a few minutes to pray silently, then lead the group in a prayer thanking God for meeting our needs instead of simply granting our desires in the moment.

**OBJECT LESSON: THERMOMETER**

Show adults a thermometer and encourage them to share the basic uses for this item. Affirm that the primary use is to measure temperature.

Ask: **If Moses had been given a thermometer in verses 10-15, what do you think his temperature would be like?** Note that his emotions were pretty high. Allow adults to suggest practical ways we can calm our emotions when things get a little “heated” in our lives.

Highlight that Moses had let his emotions get the best of him, but God was still in control of the situation. The complaints of the people did not change His authority or alter His call on Moses's life. Moses just needed to learn how to trust God without being distracted by the drama of the “riffraff.”

**SHARING LEADERSHIP**

Many pastors experience burnout trying to fulfill the numerous tasks laid on their desk. Pastors certainly work hard and carry a great deal of responsibility, but by no means is he to be the only worker. He is “to equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph. 4:11-12).

In God's kingdom, He often gives assignments that are bigger than one can handle. But He also empowers His servants with His Spirit. He also does not intend for believers to carry such burdens alone.

Earlier, Moses had learned to share the task of settling disputes with other faithful men of integrity (Ex. 18:17-27). In this passage, he needed help in dealing with complaints. God did not lift the burden, but He provided partners for the task.

In Acts 6, the apostles found the burden of distributing food was distracting them from ministry. Again, God did not lift the burden, but He used other faithful men empowered by the Holy Spirit to help (Acts 6:1-7). Even waiting on tables required spiritual power.

Many times, we make the burden greater by taking on more than God intends. But He is faithful to provide for the task and gives all the resources needed to fulfill His calling.

Wise leaders recognize their limits and understand the value of delegation. Jesus had His disciples, men He trained for kingdom work. Likewise, Paul seldom ministered alone. Instead, he worked with other partners in ministry. He thanked the Philippian church for their “partnership” in his gospel ministry (Phil. 1:5).

When Moses pleaded to die to escape the burden of leading Israel, God did not answer with a stern rebuke. Rather, He graciously provided resources beyond Moses's ability through which the important task of leadership could be accomplished.