

God on Trial Exodus 17

1. What is one thing about the character of God that has become more real to you over the course of our series in Exodus so far? What impact has it had on you?

Read Exodus 17

2. (vs. 1) Each time Israel moves it does so at the commandment of God. God has brought them to be trapped between the Egyptian army and the red sea (Exodus 14); to a place of undrinkable water (Exodus 15); to a place where there is no food (Exodus 16); and now to a place where there is no water. Read Deuteronomy 8:1-6. How does this passage help us understand the work of God with his people during this time in the wilderness? How do you personally respond to this work of God?
3. (vs. 2) It was God that led them to this place and yet they quarrelled with Moses. Why do you think they took this approach, to blame Moses instead of God?
4. (vs. 2) Moses exposes the spiritual underbelly of their complaints against him – they were testing God. Essentially saying if you really loved us, if you were really with us, if you really cared it would mean something different than what we have right now. Do you think this spiritual underbelly sits behind many of our complaints in life? If so why? If not, why?

5. (vs. 5-7) God assembles the people at Horeb (Mount Sinai) for a court case, with witnesses present (elders), with the instrument of judgment present (the rod), and the seat for the accused (the rock). God places himself in the seat of the accused and asks Moses to bring down the rod of his judgement upon him and out comes water. What do we learn about the nature of God from this encounter?

6. Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-4. Paul likens the rock to Christ. What is Paul trying to tell us about the work of Jesus by making the connection between the encounter with God at Horeb and Jesus' work? (see also John 19:34)

7. God continues to shape his people to deepen in their trust of him through these times of testing, shaping, and refining. Looking back on your life, have you experienced such a time of refining? If so, what did it look like? What impact did it have on your life?

8. It is no mistake that these four stories of testing and refining come before they receive the law on mount Sinai. The law would be the pattern of communal and individual flourishing in which trust would be the key ingredient. In what ways has their trust been built through this encounter with God? Did your experience reflected on in question 7 build your trust?