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**Adversities of the Desert**

**Thirst, Hunger and Attack—God Overcomes Them All**

***Exodus 15:22–17:16***

**Purpose:** To discover reactions prompted by adversity and how they deter our obedience to God.

One of the premier sports events in America is the Super Bowl, a football game played each February for the championship of the National Football League. Contending teams get two weeks to prepare. Players and coaches get the best of everything in order to win. Suppose the teams ran out of water and food. Suppose the players mutinied. If that happened, suppose you were the coach. Could you possibly concentrate on your game plans? Of course not. But that's what confronted Moses as he led team Israel. This study chronicles not only defection in the ranks, but also attack from outside. Not a pretty picture, really, until we see how God intervened.

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**1**. Describe a time of great team disappointment and why it hurt you.

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**2.** Read Exodus 15:22–27. Put yourself in the shoes of an Israelite three days into the desert with no water. How would you feel and why?

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***Question 2.*** *After reading these verses, turn to a map in the back of the Bible to locate the desert where these events took place. Briefly summarize what the Sinai Peninsula is like.*

*Marah was reached after a journey of 30 to 40 miles.*

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**3.** God provided water for his people (vv. 25, 27). Why do you think he led them to bitter water first?

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**4.** When you have reached the end of the rope, what do you say to God and to those whom you think are to blame? Why?

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***Question 4.*** *Insist on complete candor here. No dodging the issue with clichés.*

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**5.** Read Exodus 16:1–34. Faced with starvation, the Israelites attacked Moses and Aaron (vv. 1–3). In what sense were they groaning against God (vv. 7–8)?

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**6.** What does this reveal about the true nature of complaining about our circumstances?

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**7.** Why and how did God respond to Israel's complaints (vv. 9–15)?

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***Question 7.*** *“The common quail migrated across the Red Sea in large numbers at this time and, faint after a long journey, could be caught with ease. The miraculous element consists in the time of their arrival” (The New Bible Commentary, Revised, p. 129).*

*Manna (16:15, 31) comes from the Hebrew word meaning “What is it?” Several things like it are known to exist in Sinai, but nothing matches it exactly. Manna remains wholly in the realm of the supernatural. This substance was Israel's staple food for forty years, ceasing abruptly when they entered Canaan.*

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**8.** In what ways did Israel violate God's commands, and why (vv. 16–30)?

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***Question 8.*** *An “omer” (vv. 16, 18) was a small measuring bowl of about four pints.*

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**9.**  Reflect on God's meeting your needs in emergencies. How might you be able to keep such events as a testimony to future generations?

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***Question 9.*** *Come prepared with some ideas of your own. This is probably a new subject for some.*

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**10.**  Read Exodus 17:1–16. Lack of water creates another crisis. How did Moses sum up the people's failure (v. 7)?

How do you account for their short memory?

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**11.** Israel's next hurdle is an enemy attack (vv. 8–16). What was God's plan for victory over the Amalekites?

What part did Moses, Aaron, Hur and Joshua and the men of Israel play in the victory?

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***Question 11.*** *The Amalekites were a branch of the Edomite race, descendants of Esau (Gen 36:12, 16). They were a nomadic people especially hostile to Israel (see Deut 25:17–18).*

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**12**. As you look around at the unbelief and opposition to God, how might you better organize yourself and your friends to do something about it?

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***Question 12.*** *Many avenues are available, but generally Christians are too introspective to think about using them. Most of the applications in this study are personal. Here is a chance to think about the needs of society.*

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**13.** Reflect on how Moses summarized the day. What did he do, what did he emphasize, and why (vv. 15–16)?