

# Moses Messes Up

Numbers 20:1-13

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## Bible Memory Verse

James 2:10

*For whoever keeps the whole law and stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.*

## Bible Story

Things have really been going badly for the people of Israel, the people of God.

First, they refused to enter the land, thus sentenced to wander till that generation died.

Second, Korah and his delinquent followers put up a smoke screen for a coup d'etat and ended up suffering the wrath and judgment of God.

Third, the people believed and followed the rebels up to the point of judgment then ran screaming and afraid and some ended up dying as well.

Fourth, it took the budding of Aaron's staff to visually prove to the people who was God's pick for high priest and not of any cunning or manipulation on the part of Moses or Aaron. Things have got to look better, right? Well, as is a common phrase: things usually get worse before they get better. That is true in the case of this story.

The people began to grumble again (uh-oh) about not having any water, so they quarreled and gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron (double uh-oh).

*"If only we had died when our brothers fell before the Lord!" they said. "Why did you bring the Lord's community into this desert, that we and our livestock should die here? Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink?"*  
(Numbers 20:3-5).

Sound familiar? This has been the pattern of complaint and grumbling ever since the people left Egypt. It is interesting to note that we as humans tend to complain about the

same stuff over and over again until it is smashed several times into the ground—human nature; sinful human nature. And Moses and Aaron did what they always did when the people began to be not very smart in their thinking and actions, they fell on their faces before the Lord. The Lord told Moses to go and *“speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out water”* (Numbers 20:8).

Moses went to the rock as the Lord had commanded him (Numbers 20:9), but then said this: *“Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?”* (Numbers 20:10). Then Moses took the staff and struck the rock twice with it (uh-oh).

This was definitely not what the Lord had said. *“Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I will give them”* (Numbers 20:12). Thus judgment was pronounced on Moses and Aaron.

The book of Deuteronomy is a re-telling of some of the events that happened throughout the Israelite journey in the wilderness. It is a personal memoir of Moses and an exhortation to the people of Israel to love the Lord their God and to continue to follow him. Moses writes, with some accusatory language, this: *“Because of you the Lord became angry with me also and said, ‘You shall not enter [the land], either’”* (Deuteronomy 1:37). Moses puts partial blame on the Israelite people for his disobedience to the Lord. I think Moses knew what he did was wrong, but, like most of us, he wanted part of the blame to lie with someone else other than ourselves. But could you blame him? I mean he had 1-3 million people screaming and complaining at him all the time. I am surprised he kept his obedience this long. The Lord wanted to destroy them long before Moses got upset and disobeyed; interesting.

## Life Application

When we disobey we cannot blame others even though they may have played a part. Disobedience is disobedience, no matter how you slice it. But we always want to get some of the attention off of ourselves, right? Yeah, we do not like it. We would rather disobey in community.

Complaining, after a while, sounds the same. How often do you think our parents hear the same complaints over and over again? A lot? Yeah. Do you think they ever get tired and want to set you outside for a day and a night to see if you could make it on your own? Well, they may think it, but they would never do it. Why? Because they love you. Love does amazing things. Even in spite of whining and complaining, parents still put up with us.

## Review Questions

1. Where were the Israelites staying during this story? @ Kadesh in the Desert of Zin
2. Why were the Israelites opposing Moses and Aaron again? They were very thirsty and prone to complaining
3. What did the LORD God tell Moses to do? "Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water" (Numbers 20:8).
4. What did Moses end up doing instead? He struck the rock twice with his staff
5. What did the LORD God say to Moses about his actions? "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them" (Numbers 20:12).
6. Do you ever get to a breaking point like Moses and lose your temper?

## Coloring Sheet

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