

## The Next Step of Faith

*The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." Exodus 16: 2, 3*

I was taking a walk on the ditch bank that runs behind my house when I encountered a father, son, and daughter. They were all three on bicycles, but the son was just learning how to ride. Although the dirt ditch bank is wider than many two-lane city streets, he was weaving from side to side and almost went off in the ditch, which at that point was as deep as a canal. He would have suffered hospital-sized hurt. His sister hollered out, "Aim at that man coming toward you!" meaning me. He missed.

The Israelites (above) didn't have dirt bikes as they wandered through the wilderness or desert, but they also were also learning how. They were learning how to walk in the Way of the Lord, and it wasn't the easiest thing they'd ever done. They zigged when they should have zagged, and then they went off in a ditch. Why? They saw no reason to go further. In their opinion, there was no way that God could provide enough food to meet their needs in that barren part of the world. And the Sinai Peninsula is one of the most non-productive stretches of desert in the world. It's almost anti-agricultural.

Thus, God taught the Israelites a lesson meant not only for them, but for everyone who has journeyed in the faith ever since. Namely, God provides what we need in order that we take the next step of faith. No matter how bleak we think things look. For the Israelites, it was manna, food for the body. Every morning they rolled out of bed and gathered enough to eat for the day. Thus they continued their journey.

For followers of Christ, it's a spiritual need that God fills first. Remember that when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, "the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."'" Matthew 4: 3,4

Jesus also said concerning the goods of life – food, drink, clothing – the following. "But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Matthew 6: 33. Get right spiritually, and the rest will fall in place.

So, as we walk the path of faith through today's wilderness, let's remember that, yes, the Israelites in the wilderness rolled out of bed of a day and gathered what they needed to keep going. For us, though, prayer is step one, all through the day. It's how we receive what we need to keep going, how we gain the sustenance to take the next step of faith, how we know which way to go. Jesus even teaches us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." - DJ

