

# 2

# OUR HEALER



*When have you admired a renovation project?*

**QUESTION #1**

## THE POINT

*God is the only one who can restore us and make us whole.*



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Works of art like Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* and *The Last Supper* are universally recognized as great masterpieces, but most people don't realize the images we admire are quite different from what da Vinci first painted. *Mona Lisa* has darkened over time because of the varnishes used on it. Original fine details are now obscured. *The Last Supper* has deteriorated due to mildew. Early on, well-meaning painters attempted to clean it and repaint sections. In the process, they covered up da Vinci's actual work. Restoration is needed when we want to return to the artist's original design.

When left to themselves, objects like art, houses, and old cars lose their luster and even fall apart. And so do we. When left to ourselves, we drift from God's original plan and design for our lives. We take our eyes off Him. We often complain about Him while forgetting all He has done for us.

In short, we need restoration and healing.

In the Book of Exodus, the Israelites lost their focus, yet God showed Himself to be the God who restores. He is the Lord, our Healer.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## ***Exodus 14:29-31***

**<sup>29</sup> But the Israelites had walked through the sea on dry ground, with the waters like a wall to them on their right and their left. <sup>30</sup> That day the LORD saved Israel from the power of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. <sup>31</sup> When Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and believed in him and in his servant Moses.**

The parting of the Red Sea was an incredible miracle that sealed God's rescue of His people from their slavery in Egypt. Not surprisingly, that event holds a prime position as a symbol of God's salvation in the Old Testament. Isaiah later wrote: "Wasn't it you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the sea-bed into a road for the redeemed to pass over? And the redeemed of the LORD will return and come to Zion with singing, crowned with unending joy. Joy and gladness will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee" (Isa. 51:10-11).

The Israelites had seen a clear demonstration of God's great power. As a result, "the people feared the LORD and believed in him and in his servant Moses." When they reached the other shore, the Israelites sang a song of celebration praising God for His deliverance. (See Ex. 15:1-18.) The song not only celebrated their present victory over Pharaoh; it also looked forward to their victorious conquest and settlement of the promised land. As we'll see, however, those songs didn't last very long. In fact, the Israelites' rejoicing turned quickly to grumbling when they were confronted with the reality of their freedom from Egypt.

What was true of the Israelites is often true of us today. Indeed, we often find that a testing of our faith will follow moments of spiritual victory. The question is whether we can still sing of God's glorious holiness even when we face moments of spiritual drought.

***What have you learned about God from firsthand experience?***

**QUESTION #2**

## **Exodus 15:22-24**

**<sup>22</sup> Then Moses led Israel on from the Red Sea, and they went out to the Wilderness of Shur. They journeyed for three days in the wilderness without finding water. <sup>23</sup> They came to Marah, but they could not drink the water at Marah because it was bitter—that is why it was named Marah. <sup>24</sup> The people grumbled to Moses, “What are we going to drink?”**

Only a few days into the journey, the people of Israel began to grumble and complain, frustrated by the lack of water. When the Israelites saw Marah in the distance, they thought it was an oasis and likely believed their problems were solved. But their hope was dashed to pieces when they discovered the wells contained “bitter” (non-potable) water. Many artesian wells are bitter and unpleasant because of mineral salts. This one was not simply unpleasant; it may have been dangerous to their health.

The Israelites responded the way we typically do when things don’t go our way: they complained. They demanded of Moses, “What are we going to drink?” How quickly a hero can become a scapegoat!

While their grumbling was aimed explicitly at Moses, it was implicitly directed at God, who had appointed Moses as their leader. Moses made this connection clear when Israel grumbled later about the lack of food: “He has heard the complaints that you are raising against him. Who are we? Your complaints are not against us but against the LORD” (Ex. 16:8). Sadly, God’s people are described as complaining over twelve times during their wilderness wanderings.

The apostle Paul used the grumbling nature of the Israelites to warn believers in Corinth about such behavior, along with craving evil things, idolatry, immorality, and more. (See 1 Cor. 10:6-11.) We tend to treat grumbling, griping, and complaining as minor issues, hardly worthy of mention since “everyone does it.” Yet Paul treated grumbling as a major offense and insisted it must be avoided.



*How does complaining impact our connection with God?*

**QUESTION #3**

The Israelites' thirst caused them to forget the deliverance they had recently enjoyed by the power of God. The contrast is striking between the faith they expressed in praise after crossing the Red Sea and the lack of faith when they encountered a challenge just three days into their journey. The matter was one of perspective. Could Israel trust God to work in every circumstance based on His character?

It's possible to grumble inwardly without verbalizing it. When we allow struggles and doubts to cause us to blame God for our circumstances, we're falling into the same pattern of behavior as the Israelites did in the wilderness. When we allow anxiety to rule our lives, we're focusing on circumstances rather than God's provision.

## ***Exodus 15:25-27***

***<sup>25</sup> So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he threw it into the water, the water became drinkable. The LORD made a statute and ordinance for them at Marah, and he tested them there. <sup>26</sup> He said, "If you will carefully obey the LORD your God, do what is right in his sight, pay attention to his commands, and keep all his statutes, I will not inflict any illnesses on you that I inflicted on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you." <sup>27</sup> Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy date palms, and they camped there by the water.***

God once again provided for the Israelites in a miraculous way, showing that He's not only powerful to deliver His people, but can and will sustain them. In addition, God made "a statute and ordinance for them." This statute contained a condition, "If you will carefully obey," which was followed by a promise: "I will not inflict..." The Old Testament contains numerous examples of "if/then" covenants. They demonstrate that God's blessings flow through the obedience of His children.

***What are some different ways God heals and restores His people?***

**QUESTION #4**

In this case, God's promise was related specifically to the illnesses that had been "inflicted on the Egyptians." Surely the Israelites would have connected God's turning of the Nile to blood (see Ex. 7:14-25) with the undrinkable water at Marah. If Israel would carefully obey the Lord, they would not find the water God provided to be bitter because He is "the LORD who heals you." This is the name *Jehovah Rapha*.

The word *Rapha* occurs about sixty times in the Old Testament; it always refers to restoring, healing, or curing. It's frequently used in relation to physical healing, but it also can relate to moral and spiritual healing. At Marah, Jehovah revealed Himself to be the only source of true wholeness. He alone has the power to change the bitter experiences of life into something sweet.

God mercifully sustained the people at Marah, but there's more to the story. God led them from Marah "to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy date palms, and they camped there by the water." The numbers seven and twelve (and multiples of those numbers) appear throughout Scripture representing completeness. Elim was a place of completeness—a refuge that pointed to the abundant and healing provision of *Jehovah Rapha*.

We should never overlook the most important way *Jehovah Rapha* heals: through Jesus Christ. "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree; so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Pet. 2:24). God promises healing for your deepest pains, your disappointments, your past, and your sins. He can turn your bitterness into sweet refreshment. If you've been sidetracked at Marah, bitter in soul and spirit, the only way to travel from Marah to Elim is to turn to *Jehovah Rapha*. Jesus is our *Jehovah Rapha*—our God who heals!

***How can our actions and attitudes demonstrate that we follow the God who heals and restores?***

**QUESTION #5**

## GOD OUR HEALER

*Healing and restoration can look very different in each believer's life. Use the space below to illustrate what God's restoration has looked like in your life. You may sketch a picture, write a poem, or use words and symbols to tell your story.*

*What did you learn about God our Healer through these experiences?*

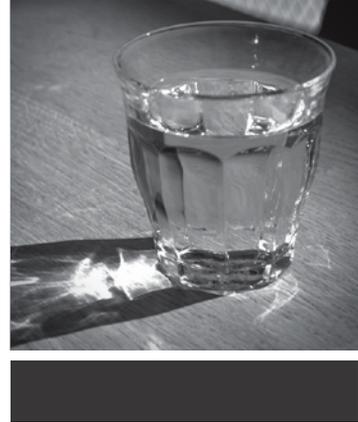
"Heal me, LORD, and I will be healed; save me, and I will be saved, for you are my praise!"

—JEREMIAH 17:14

## LIVE IT OUT

How should we respond when we find ourselves drinking from the bitter wells of Marah? Consider taking one of these steps this week:

- ▶ **Listen.** Listen earnestly to the voice of God. What is He trying to teach you in your present circumstances? What have you learned about God from these events? Change your perspective by seeing what God is doing on your behalf.
- ▶ **Obey.** Look to see if there are areas of disobedience in your life. Repent and turn from any disobedient actions or attitudes. Turn to the One who desires to heal you. Obedience flows from an accurate understanding of God's character.
- ▶ **Encourage.** Encourage someone you know who is drinking from bitter waters. Point them to Christ who offers healing, hope, and abundance.



You may not feel like a work of art right now, but the Bible assures each and every one of us that we've been created in God's image. If you want to move away from a place of bitterness, turn to *Jehovah Rapha*, the God Who Heals.

My thoughts