

2

Our Healer



When have you admired a restoration project?

QUESTION 1

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



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Works of art such as 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.

- » The *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," 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 us. We take our eyes off of Him. We often complain about Him while forgetting all He has done for us. 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 (CSB)

²⁹ 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. ³⁰ That day the LORD saved Israel from the power of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ 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.

To see just one miracle would be memorable for anyone, but the Israelites had seen one miracle after another in a relatively short amount of time. The Israelites had lived in Egypt for 430 years (Exodus 12:40), and for much of that time, they were slaves. But God never forgot His people, and He intervened, sending ten plagues that ultimately decimated the Egyptians. After the tenth plague, Pharaoh finally allowed the Israelites to leave (12:30-31), but once the people had left, he changed his mind and pursued the fleeing Israelites (14:5-8).

What the Israelites saw when they looked up was surely terrifying. The Red Sea lay before them, and the onrushing Egyptian army was behind them. But God instructed Moses to stretch out his staff over the Red Sea, and immediately the waters stood up on both sides. Ultimately, all of the Israelites walked “through the sea on dry ground, with the waters like a wall to them on their right and their left” (v. 22).

Then God directed Moses to stretch out his hand over the sea once again, and the water came back over the Egyptians, their chariots, and their horsemen. So Moses did as God instructed, and not a single one of the Egyptians survived (vv. 26-28). The Lord had saved Israel from the power of the mighty Egyptian army, which now lay “dead on the seashore” (v. 30). The sight of the dead soldiers was surely a graphic reminder that their old life of slavery was a thing of the past.

The miracle of the parting of the Red Sea holds a prime position as a symbol of God’s salvation in the Old Testament. The Israelites had seen a clear demonstration of God’s great power. “The people feared the

What have you learned about God from firsthand experience?

QUESTION 2

LORD and believed in him and in his servant Moses" (Exodus 14:31) who had been the Lord's instrument of deliverance. God had exhibited His ability to lead the nation from captivity into freedom.

Exodus 15:22-24 (CSB)

²² 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. ²³ They came to Marah, but they could not drink the water at Marah because it was bitter—that is why it was named Marah. ²⁴ 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. Travel was certainly difficult for the Israelites since the conditions were hot and dry. Suffering from thirst, they forgot the mercy and provision of God, who had miraculously delivered them from Egypt. Their present circumstances began to impact their spiritual joy.

The Israelites saw Marah in the distance, and it appeared to offer a solution to their immediate problem. They likely saw the palm trees that appeared to mark an oasis with its life-giving wells. But their hope was dashed to pieces when they discovered the wells contained bitter—undrinkable—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?" (v. 24).

While their grumbling was aimed explicitly at Moses, it was implicitly directed at God who 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" (Exodus 16:8b). Sadly, God's people are described as complaining more than twelve times during their wilderness wanderings.

How does complaining impact our connection with God?

QUESTION 3

When we grumble and complain, it is a clear indication that we are focusing on our circumstances and not on God. 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?

Exodus 15:25-27 (CSB)

²⁵ 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. ²⁶ 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." ²⁷ Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy date palms, and they camped there by the water.

Moses was faced with another crisis, and he again turned to his only source of help. He "cried out to the LORD" (v. 25). In answer to his prayer, the Lord showed him a tree and when Moses threw it into the water, the water became drinkable. The miraculous provision of life-giving water indicates that God is not only powerful to deliver His people but He can and will sustain them.





In response to God's miraculous provision, He made "a statute and ordinance for them" (v. 25). The statute was for the Israelites to exercise complete obedience. "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." Surely the Israelites would have connected the turning of water to blood (Exodus 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" (14:26). 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 is 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.

God had mercifully sustained the people at Marah, but there is 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" (15:27). The numbers seven and twelve (and multiples of those numbers) appear throughout Scripture representing completeness. Elim was a place of completeness and it pointed to the abundant and healing provision of Jehovah-Rapha.

We should never overlook the most important way Jehovah-Rapha heals. The greatest healing comes 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 Peter 2:24).

Jehovah-Rapha promises healing for your deepest pains, your disappointments, your past, and your sins. If you have 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!

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

QUESTION 4

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

QUESTION 5

GOD OUR HEALER



What is one way God has brought restoration and healing to your life?

Draw a symbol that represents your response in the space below.

LIVE IT OUT

How should we respond when we find ourselves drinking from the bitter wells of Marah?

- » **Listen.** Listen earnestly to the voice of God. What is God 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.** When you are drinking from bitter wells, 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 the 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.

When we struggle with bitterness and our own sin, it's all too easy to focus on our circumstances rather than God's provision. **God alone offers the complete restoration we need. He is Jehovah-Rapha, the God who heals.**



My thoughts