

## **Week One: Complaint**

### **Series: The Land Between**

**Date: October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2010**

#### **THE BIG IDEA:**

In the 'Land Between' the very elements designed for building our trust in God often result in complaint.

#### **OPENING ICE-BREAKER:**

Ask everyone to lightly or humorously share the common things that people complain about. This is not the moment to begin sharing deeply – that will come later - but to create opportunity to laugh a little at our culture or ourselves.

#### **BIBLE READINGS**

- **Key Verses: Number 11; Exodus 15**
- Exodus 17:1-2
- James 1:2-4

#### **THOUGHTS**

There are seasons in our lives when what is normal and predictable – and therefore often comfortable – is broken or interrupted with change. Sometimes the change is sudden and it feels like you've been thrown from a moving train into a new and unfamiliar land. A bereavement, redundancy, the slow decline of a relationship. *"You are not where you once were. You are not where you're going to be. You are in a confusing zone. Welcome to The Land Between."*

1. **The potential of the Land Between:** Wayne is convinced that the challenges of the Land Between have great potential for our transformation and growth in God. However, there is also the potential for the challenges of the Land Between to cause our hearts to become bitter and hard. *'The wilderness where faith can thrive is the very desert where it can dry up and die if we are not watchful.'*
2. **The Sinai Desert:** Moses is spoken to by God and told that he will lead the Israelites 'out of' Egypt and 'into' Canaan – the Promised Land. Egypt was where they were in slavery, but it was lush with life fed by the Nile. Canaan too was lush with life, but in between, the harsh terrain of the desert would force dependence and reliance on God.
3. **The desert was fertile ground for complaint:** God miraculously provided their food – called 'manna.' However, the frequency with which they had to eat manna caused strong complaints from the people. Within their complaints they say they'd prefer to be back in Egypt, in slavery. God took their complaint seriously, as rejecting God.
4. **Their complaints were causing their hearts to harden against God:** They were becoming blind to God's provision and mercy. They were complaining against the leader that God had appointed. They probably felt justified in complaining, but God could see the state of their hearts.
5. **Why are they in the desert?** God is allowing this trial so that the people grow in holiness. At that stage, the people were influenced by the idolatry of Egypt. *The Land Between was intended to help them to become a community trust, rather than complaint.*
6. **When we complain we have made a choice:** There is almost always a more constructive option than to complain. *'With each discomfort we experience, our responses both reveal the person we are and set the trajectory for the person we are becoming. Whether we age with grace and poise or become bitter, resentful people is largely determined by our response to disappointment and the habits of response that often result.'* We need to be watchful about our thoughts and complaints.
7. **We can invite complaint to leave our hearts by inviting trust to take its place.** As you go through the Land Between, and as PBC goes through a time of transition, we need to be watchful of the

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corrosive power of complaint. Instead, God wants to fashion PBC through this time to be an even greater community of trust.

### **QUESTIONS**

1. How does going through times of great change affect you emotionally?
2. How does going through times of transition affect you spiritually? What do you feel they 'do' to your relationship with God?
3. Do you agree that in the Land Between, there is potential for our transformation both positively or negatively?
4. How can these challenges cause us to become a 'community of trust' rather than a 'community of complaint'?
5. Is it possible for the best version of yourself to emerge when you're passing through a season of profound disappointment?

### **VERSES TO LEARN**

*'2Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.'* **James: 2-4**

### **WHAT WILL YOU DO?**

This week, take extra notice of complaints, either when they are from others or when they spring from your heart. Is there a better option than the complaint?