

1. I spoke to you last week about the children of Israel and their wandering experience in the desert, that place between the land of slavery, Egypt, and the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey.
2. We compared that to our own land between times, those times in life where we pass from one place or stage to another. Often times our own land between is a desert, a difficult place where things just don't seem to make sense. A place where things are hard and where we have more questions than we do answers.
3. What we find next is how the children of Israel handled this land between. They chose to grumble and complain against God and Moses. They chose to look back at all the supposed "comfort" they had left back in slavery in Egypt.
4. They chose to murmur against the very God who had proven time and time again that he could be trusted. Remember, **the purpose of these land between times is to help us learn to trust in God.** It is through the difficult times that we learn that God is faithful and is worthy of our faith.
5. But the children of Israel didn't learn the lesson and because they didn't learn the lesson, they had to stay in the same grade for 40 years. Can you imagine what it would be like for there to be a 48-year-old man or woman in the third grade?
6. Wouldn't that be pretty weird? But yet that's where these people were. They never moved on and they never progressed in God because they refused to trust him to lead and guide their lives.
7. And the result was that God became very angry with them. And they suffered for their lack of trust.
8. In contrast, Moses related to God in a very different way. On the surface Moses conversation with God might seem similar to how Israel responded but in truth it was very different.
9. Listen to what Moses says in **Numbers 11:11-15** He asked the LORD, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? **12** Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their forefathers? **13** Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!' **14** I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is

too heavy for me. 15 If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now—if I have found favor in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin."

10. Let's consider a few things about Moses' prayer to God. First, the people complained to one another, Moses poured out his heart to God.
11. There is a very big difference in those two responses.
12. Second, the people's complaint to one another was a sign they didn't want God's help, Moses going to God was a sign of dependence on Him.
13. Third, the people's complaining revealed a heart that didn't care about pleasing God, Moses outpouring of grief revealed a heart that was committed to pleasing God even in death.
14. What took root in the hearts of the children of Israel was mistrust of God.
15. Here is the key. Trust and complaint can't exist at the same time in our lives. I know that Matthew 6:24 is not about complaining, it is actually about money, but it is a reminder to us that no one can serve two masters, either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. It doesn't go both ways.
16. So, complaining angers God, but we have to know that **running to God, even with raw emotion is pleasing to God.**
17. Moses was pouring out his heart to God in a way that most of us would try and cover up. Moses is fed up. He has had all he can handle but understand he was not just venting his frustration with God, he was praying; and in his honest, unashamed way he was facing the right direction.
18. In fact, he is having a conversation with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the source of life, the one who provides. I am here to tell you that we too can be honest with God. We can ask him questions. We can be real, and we can pour out our heart to God in an unfiltered way.
19. I'm here to tell you, you can have a meltdown with God. Anybody ever had a meltdown with God? God isn't going to shun you or push you away if you have a meltdown with him.
20. How do I know that is the truth? Because God didn't get angry with Moses, and he didn't get angry with the long line of people who just like Moses got to the end of their rope.
21. Several hundred years after Moses, there was another man of God named

## Elijah.

1. Elijah had a meltdown if you will.
2. Now understand, Elijah served God in difficult times. The nation of Israel was under the evil influence of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. Under their leadership the nation had turned from worshipping the one true God to worshipping Baal and Ashtoreth.
3. To help us understand how purely evil this worship was, it is believed the idol Baal was a replica of the male sex organ and that the alter to Ashtoreth was a replica of the female sex organ.
4. Jezebel instituted male and female temple prostitutes to assist people in engaging in every kind of lascivious practice you could imagine. At the temple.
5. Elijah's mission was to restore the hearts of the people back to their God. You may remember the story comes to a head when Elijah has a showdown with the 450 prophets of Baal in 1 kings 18.
6. Elijah calls down fire from heaven and the prophets are killed and you would think that with that kind of victory that Elijah would be thrilled but you would be wrong.
7. Because Jezebel threatens to kill Elijah and as a result Elijah became afraid and ran for his life. He settles down under a broom tree and listen to what he says to God.
8. 1 Kings 19:4-5 He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." 5 Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.
9. Doesn't that prayer sound familiar? Sounds a lot like Moses' prayer doesn't it? With one evil threat Elijah falls from the highest high to the lowest low. We would probably say in 2024 language he was depressed. In that moment death seemed like a better option than continuing on.
10. Elijah is spent. He is drained. He has had enough. Some snooty, fluty Christian today would probably snarl their nose and say that Elijah needs mental help. He's just a basket case.

11. But what does he choose to do in that moment of absolute despair? He chooses to come to God with absolute transparency and cry out and pour out his heart to God.
12. Let's look at one more person in the bible who had a meltdown.

### **The Prophet Jeremiah.**

1. Jeremiah was commissioned by God to prophesy against the city of Jerusalem before it was destroyed by the Babylonian army in 586 BC.
2. To really get their attention God has Jeremiah preach an illustrated sermon. He calls a group of leaders to a valley outside the city and he takes a clay pot and smashes it against some rock and then tells them that this is exactly what will happen to Jerusalem.
3. That the city will be completely ruined. Now you would think that preaching what God tells you to preach would make you popular, but not always.
4. You would think that saying what God wants you to say in church would make you accepted, but when Jeremiah repeats this illustrated sermon in the temple the bible says he is arrested, beaten and placed outside on public display in stocks.
5. Stocks were usually a contraption that had holes in it for the wrists and feet. They were also used for holding animals while they put horseshoes on them.
6. It was basically a way of saying to everyone, you're no better than an animal. How many understand the severity of the situation?
7. They leave him there all night and the next morning they let him go but what follows is a meltdown.
8. Jeremiah probably feels as though he has been a complete failure. Nobody will listen to him. You can hear the anguish in his voice as he cries out in **Jeremiah 20:14,18 Cursed be the day I was born! May the day my mother bore me not be blessed! 18 Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?**
9. Jeremiah's depth of despair goes beyond just wanting to die. Jeremiah wishes he had never been born. He wishes he had never breathed air and even lived one day.

10. Have you ever been that low? I had to stop and question myself if I had ever been that low. I think I have. More than once. I may not have expressed it that exact way but I am pretty sure I've been to those depths.
11. What's interesting is that right before cursing the day of his birth and everybody who had anything to do with it he says in **Jeremiah 20:13 Sing to the LORD! Give praise to the LORD! He rescues the life of the needy from the hands of the wicked.**
12. You talk about a rollercoaster ride with his emotions. One second, he is praising God for rescuing him and the next he is overcome with the pain and humiliation of being beaten and bruised and the fact that his life is going nowhere.
13. It may seem strange that those two responses would be side by side next to one another, but according to the book of Psalms it is actually quite normal for that to occur.
14. Three men, Moses, Elijah and Jeremiah. All three have a meltdown. All three wish to die and for their life to be over. But yet one thing much more important binds them together.
15. All three of them come to God and they cry out to God, and they pour their hearts out to God. I believe we can learn some valuable lessons from these three men.

### **True greatness is seen in pain not in pride.**

1. Let's get something straight about the three men we have just talked about. These guys are what we would call spiritual heavyweights. These guys were not amateurs.
2. They were not spiritually immature. Yes, they were flawed human beings, but these were great men of God, called by God, equipped by God to serve God.
3. But yet all three of them had a meltdown with God. My take on that is that it is highly probable that **their desperate prayers** and their meltdowns **were actually an indication of spiritual health** and maturity **rather than a sign of spiritual immaturity.**
4. Let me just tell you right now, their reactions were very different than we see in some so-called saints of God today.

5. Saints of God today are characterized as people who seem to have it all together, who seem to have all the answers, who never have a problem, who never have a hair out of place, who never sweat or struggle or feel like giving up.
6. I want to tell you right now, if that is the definition of a saint then I for one am not one.
7. I think sometimes the longer we have served God the more we think we have to have it all together, but these great men of God certainly didn't have it all together.
8. And the truth is, none of us in this room have it all together either. We may dress all nicely and clean ourselves up on the outside but all of us struggle on the inside.
9. And when we put on the show and put on all the pretention what happens is we begin to live a life that is falsely prideful, and fake, and phony and void of any real genuineness.
10. But I believe it also causes us to become hard and calloused. We can get to the place where we can no longer be broken by God.
11. I know that we are not to judge what God does in the heart by the outward manifestation but I think that in these last days it would be good for there to be a return of rivers of tears and kissing the carpet and getting on our face before a holy God and pouring our heart out to him without any regard to the fact that we might mess our cloths or our hair up.
12. In these last days the world around us needs to see a church that is broken and real and genuine and not afraid to show emotion and most certainly not afraid to say to God, I don't know what you are doing, help me Lord.
13. Greatness comes not because you have it all together; greatness comes as a result of being real about your pain and your struggles.
14. Secondly.

**Blabber to God not run away from God.**

1. We don't like the word blabber. To blabber leaves the taste in our mouth of being out of control. We often think of a blabbering idiot when we think of the word blabber.
2. A blabber mouth is someone who tells everything they know. Blabber is not a good word to us uptown folks in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But that is exactly what these three great men of God did with God.
3. They blabbered. They didn't hide their feelings. They didn't run in the opposite direction. They didn't pray some pious, liturgical prayer they laid it all out there for God.
4. Maybe, just maybe, the reason why God included these meltdowns for us in his word is because he actually wanted us to see them and learn from them when, not if but when we find ourselves at a breaking point.
5. Maybe these stories of absolute desperation have been preserved for thousands of years because God is whispering to us, see you're not alone. Some of my closest servants have felt intense feelings of failure and frustration.
6. And this is how they prayed when they felt empty or exhausted and this is how I invite you to relate to me. Blabber on me. Have a meltdown on me. I'm big enough and strong enough to take it. Cry out, face me, tell me about your pain and your betrayal and your disappointment, turn toward me not away from me and just start saying something even if it's raw and even if it's ugly.
7. Somehow, I think we have mistakenly bought into the idea that we have to get all cleaned up and proper before we come to God or else he won't accept us.
8. None of these three great men came to God in a way that we would consider proper and orderly, but yet he loved all three of them and he brought all three of them through.
9. And I'm here to tell you Jesus still makes that same offer to you and me.
10. That's why Jesus said in **Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."**
11. I did a brief study on that verse and the commentators use words like groan and lost and poor and tremble and sinner and hopeless to describe Jesus' sentiment.

12. The message bible says come to me you who are tired and worn out and burned out and I will give you rest.
13. Those adjectives don't describe people who have it all together, they describe people who are on the bottom looking up, and God loves it when we come to him when we are in that condition.
14. I didn't say God loves for us to be like that. He loves for us to come to him when we are like that. He loves to comfort us when we are like that.
15. He loves to unburden us and lift off of us the stuff that weighs us down but that usually only happens when come to him and trust him enough to cry out to him.

#### Conclusion:

1. I am not trying to glorify a secular song this morning; it's just that the words are forever etched in my mind from my childhood.
2. It is a song sung by Kenny Rodgers called **The Gambler**.
3. The chorus says, you gotta know when to hold em.
4. Know when to fold em. Know when to walk away, know when to run.
5. You never count your money, while you're sitting at the table there'll be time enough for counting, when the dealings done.
6. Let me tell you something. I don't know what is coming from one moment to the next. I don't know any more than you what hand God is going to choose to deal me. But I do know that life is not a gamble.
7. Life is not a chance. **Life is certain when we learn what our heavenly father wants to do for us.**
8. He wants to love us; warts and all but we've got to be willing to bring it all to him.
9. I was touched as I prepared this sermon of the idea of being unburdened. Of taking a load off.
10. Since my announcement last week I have had a multitude of emotions, and I have had others express a multitude of emotions.
11. This is a major land between for BFA.



12. As a church we are entering a time of the unknown. It is natural to be afraid and to be scared.
13. But may I remind you, it is not unknown to God.
14. God knew this was going to happen in the life of BFA before I knew, and before you knew.
15. God knew this land between pastors would exist, and that it would not be easy.
16. But his desire for us is not to try and hold it together and be tough.
17. His desire is not that we run away from the unknown to something else.
18. His desire is that we run to him. Raw emotions, tears, pain, struggle and all, and trust Him to see us through.
19. Can we commit that this land between will not separate us, but instead will draw us much closer to God and much closer to one another.
20. Have people make a circle and lets pray for BFA and one another.