



Gripping God's Hand or Gripping About His Plan

This study will provide highlights of God's faithfulness and the lowlights of His people's fickleness. The presentation is different from usual WordTruth articles. This study is intended to get you directly into God's Word for personal application and provide you with teaching insights to help others grow in Christ.

Each major point of the study/teaching outline deals with a specific chapter in the Old Testament books of Exodus and Numbers. After reading the chapter, return to the outline to view practical insights and to add observations that the Lord may give to you.

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 15:4, "whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." (*This study is based on scripture passages from the New American Standard Version of the Bible.*) May this study encourage you to "grip" instead of "gripe" and, as a result, give further reason for your hope to abound as you live in a Christ-like manner and so bring glory to God.

I. Gripping about God's plan at the edge of the Red Sea (Exodus 14)

- A. In tests, people with a persistent self-focus blame others for their difficulties (*based on Exodus 14:11-12*).
- B. Leaders may remember God's past faithfulness and encourage God's people to watch the Lord work once again on their behalf (*based on verses 13-14*).
- C. God often says to His leaders and to His people when they are confronted with new challenges, "In addition to voicing your concerns in prayer . . . obey what I have already told you to do" . . . (*based on verses 15-16*).
- D. God uses difficult circumstances to establish His people's faith and fear of Him (*based on verses 30-31*).
- E. Other insights that you see in this chapter:

II. Gripping about God's plan when resources are not apparent (Exodus 15)

- A. People focused on themselves seldom learn to trust God's faithfulness in just one lesson (*based on Exodus 15:22-24*).
- B. Faithful leaders turn to the Lord for guidance to deal specifically with each situation (*based on verse 25*).
- C. God's faithfulness to provide remains a constant even though His ways of doing so may vary considerably (*based on verses 25-26*).
- D. Other insights that you see in this chapter:

III. Gripping about God's plan when personal preferences are not satisfied (Exodus 16)

- A. People focused on themselves complain about the price they pay to follow God and, as a result, often oppose their leaders (*based on Exodus 16:2-3*).
- B. God uses difficulties to reveal His people's willingness to obey Him (*based on verses 4*).

- C. Leaders recognize that those complaining about them are sometimes complaining about God (*based on verses 7-8*).
- A. God reveals more of His provisions and power even when disobedient people fail the tests He brings their way (*based on verses 6-7, 11-13*).
- B. Other insights that you see in this chapter:

IV. Gripping about the same old things (Exodus 17)

- A. People who remain focused on themselves will not trust the Lord and will not remember the Lord's earlier provisions but will complain whenever they are uncomfortable (*based on Exodus 17:2-3*).
- B. Leaders, if they take their eyes off the Lord and focus on themselves, can fear even for their own safety and think that they have to do things to placate the people (*based on verse 4*).
- C. God is gracious, often providing object lessons to help His people remember that He will always provide (*based on verse 6*).
- D. Other insights that you see in this chapter:

V. Gripping when time seems to stand still (Exodus 32)

- A. Self-focused people do not stay at the same level of complaining. Instead, they can degenerate to a point of enormous spiritual delusion rather than trusting the One who provides for them (*based on Exodus 32:1, 6-8*).
- B. Leaders reveal the depth of commitment that they have for those whom they lead. They show whether or not they will sacrifice for others, especially if it costs them dearly (*compare Aaron's actions in verses 2-5, 21-25 with Moses' actions in verses 9-13, 30-32*).
- C. God's faithfulness never wavers even though His people vacillate in their commitment to Him (*based on verses 14 and 34*).
- D. God disciplines His people when they go their own way (*based on verses 33-35*).
- E. Other insights that you see in this chapter:

VI. Gripping when adversity occurs (Numbers 11)

- A. People who are not committed to the Lord will continue to complain and will often run to their leaders for help when God's discipline becomes a reality (*based on Numbers 11:1-2, 4-6*).
- B. Leaders may erroneously assume that solutions to problems are their responsibility (*based on verses 11-15*).
- C. The Lord helps leaders to realize the only consistent Source of help is the Lord and that He often uses many others to accomplish His purposes (*based on verses 16-17, 25*).
- D. God will always be faithful in demonstrating His love for His people, even when it requires stern discipline (*based on verses 31-33*).
- E. Other insights that you see in this chapter:

VII. Gripping against God is often demonstrated by self-oriented comparisons of some of God's people against others (Numbers 12)

- A. Any of God's people, including leaders, who focus primarily on past ministry accomplishments are prone to take their eyes off the Lord in the present (*based on Numbers 12:1-2*).
- B. God remains faithful, which includes defending those who walk humbly with Him (*based on verses 3-8*) and disciplining His children who complain (*based on verses 9-10, 14-15*).
- C. Leaders respond to opposition with meekness (*based on verse 3*) and concern for those who oppose them (*based on verses 11-13*).
- D. Other insights that you see in this chapter:

VII. Lessons for life—grip God's hand instead of griping about His plan

- A. In spite of God's sovereign provisions and faithfulness to them over a lengthy time period, self-centered people will gripe about new challenges, will turn on their leaders, and will habitually complain about present discomforts instead of trusting the Lord.
- B. Leaders, unless they continually keep their eyes on the Lord and diligently trust Him, will falter and become discouraged along with those to whom they are providing leadership.
- C. God is faithful even when His people are not. He designs tests to show His children that He will always supply.
- D. God provides opportunities for His children to rely completely on Him. When they respond in this manner, their faith matures and they learn to trust God fully and live for Him. In doing so, they learn to live in loving obedience to Him, sacrifice willingly for others, and overcome their former tendency to gripe and live only for themselves.
- E. Other insights that you see in this study: