



Explore the Bible®

DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

Exodus; Leviticus

Fall 2017 > CSB

Steve Gaines, General Editor

LifeWay | Adults

LIFE BY DESIGN

We live in a broken world. This brokenness is seen in suffering, violence, poverty, pain, and death around us. Brokenness leads us to search for a way to make LIFE work.

The Bible tells us that God originally planned a world that worked perfectly—where everything and everyone fit together in harmony. God made each of us with a purpose—to worship Him and walk with Him. (See Genesis 1:31 and Psalm 19:1.)

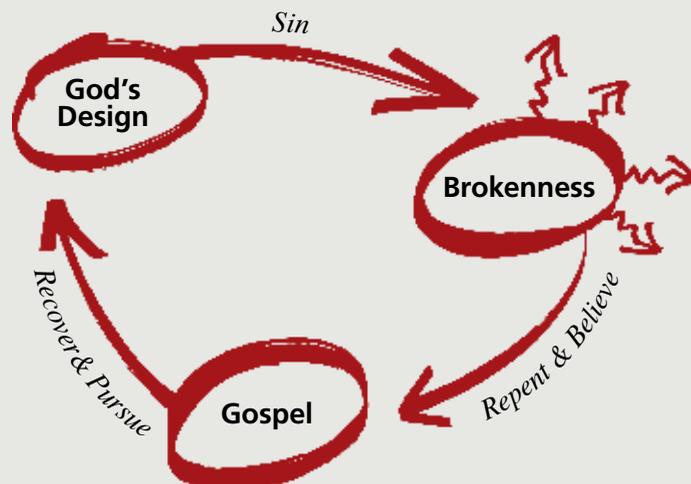
Life doesn't work when we ignore God and His original design for our lives. We selfishly insist on doing things our own way. The Bible calls this sin. Sin leads to a place of brokenness. The consequence of our sin is separation from God—in this life and for all of eternity. (See Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23.)

At this point we need a remedy—some good news. Because of His love, God did not leave us in our brokenness. Jesus, God in human flesh, came to us and lived perfectly according to God's Design. Jesus came to rescue us—to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. He took our sin and shame to the cross, paying the penalty of our sin by His death. Jesus was then raised from the dead—to provide the only way for us to be rescued and restored to a relationship with God. (See John 3:16, Colossians 2:14, and 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.)

We don't have the power to escape this brokenness on our own. We need to be rescued. We must ask God to forgive us—turning from sin to trust in Jesus. This is what it means to repent and believe. Believing, we receive new life through Jesus. God turns our lives in a new direction. (See Mark 1:15, Ephesians 2:8-9, and Romans 10:9.)

When God restores our relationship to Him, we begin to discover meaning and purpose in a broken world. Now we can pursue God's Design in all areas of our lives. God's Spirit empowers us to recover His Design and assures us of His presence in this life and for all of eternity. (See Philippians 2:13 and Ephesians 2:10.)

Now that you have heard this Good News, God wants you to respond to Him. You can talk to Him using words like these: My life is broken—I recognize it's because of my sin. I believe Christ came to live, die, and was raised from the dead—to rescue me from my sin. Forgive me. I turn from my selfish ways and put my trust in You. I know that Jesus is Lord of all, and I will follow Him.



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*Evangelistic emphasis

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A WORD FROM THE GENERAL EDITOR



Life is God's gift. He fashioned every person in his or her mother's womb. Each of us is "remarkably and wondrously made" (Ps. 139:14). At conception, we begin to live. As we grow, we learn how to live.

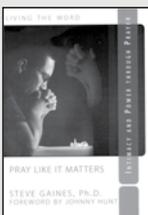
This quarter we will study the Books of Exodus and Leviticus. These biblical books are about life. That is why they go together. Exodus describes the new life the Israelites received when the Lord rescued them from Egypt. Leviticus explains how God further taught them to live holy lives for His glory.

In Exodus, God set the Israelites free from bondage. He said, "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from the forced labor of the Egyptians and rescue you I will redeem you I will take you as my people, and I will be your God" (Ex. 6:6-7).

In Leviticus, through His laws, God told His people how to live holy lives. He said, "You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be mine" (Lev. 20:26).

Together, Exodus and Leviticus make for a powerful study. As you work through these fascinating books, may you leave behind the old life of sin and bondage and begin a new life for God's glory through Jesus Christ!

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BIBLE READING PLAN

SEPTEMBER

- ❑ 1. Exodus 1:1-22
- ❑ 2. Exodus 2:1-25
- ❑ 3. Exodus 3:1-22
- ❑ 4. Exodus 4:1-17
- ❑ 5. Exodus 4:18-31
- ❑ 6. Exodus 5:1-6:1
- ❑ 7. Exodus 6:2-27
- ❑ 8. Exodus 6:28-7:25
- ❑ 9. Exodus 8:1-19
- ❑ 10. Exodus 8:20-32
- ❑ 11. Exodus 9:1-21
- ❑ 12. Exodus 9:22-35
- ❑ 13. Exodus 10:1-20
- ❑ 14. Exodus 10:21-11:10
- ❑ 15. Exodus 12:1-20
- ❑ 16. Exodus 12:21-42
- ❑ 17. Exodus 12:43-51
- ❑ 18. Exodus 13:1-22
- ❑ 19. Exodus 14:1-14
- ❑ 20. Exodus 14:15-31
- ❑ 21. Exodus 15:1-21
- ❑ 22. Exodus 15:22-16:12
- ❑ 23. Exodus 16:13-36
- ❑ 24. Exodus 17:1-16
- ❑ 25. Exodus 18:1-27
- ❑ 26. Exodus 19:1-25
- ❑ 27. Exodus 20:1-21
- ❑ 28. Exodus 20:22-21:11
- ❑ 29. Exodus 21:12-36
- ❑ 30. Exodus 22:1-20

OCTOBER

- ❑ 1. Exodus 22:21-23:9
- ❑ 2. Exodus 23:10-33
- ❑ 3. Exodus 24:1-18
- ❑ 4. Exodus 25:1-22
- ❑ 5. Exodus 25:23-40
- ❑ 6. Exodus 26:1-30
- ❑ 7. Exodus 26:31-27:8
- ❑ 8. Exodus 27:9-28:5
- ❑ 9. Exodus 28:6-30
- ❑ 10. Exodus 28:31-43
- ❑ 11. Exodus 29:1-21
- ❑ 12. Exodus 29:22-46
- ❑ 13. Exodus 30:1-21
- ❑ 14. Exodus 30:22-31:11
- ❑ 15. Exodus 31:12-32:14
- ❑ 16. Exodus 32:15-35
- ❑ 17. Exodus 33:1-23
- ❑ 18. Exodus 34:1-28
- ❑ 19. Exodus 34:29-35:19
- ❑ 20. Exodus 35:20-36:7
- ❑ 21. Exodus 36:8-38
- ❑ 22. Exodus 37:1-29
- ❑ 23. Exodus 38:1-31
- ❑ 24. Exodus 39:1-21
- ❑ 25. Exodus 39:22-43
- ❑ 26. Exodus 40:1-38
- ❑ 27. Leviticus 1:1-17
- ❑ 28. Leviticus 2:1-16
- ❑ 29. Leviticus 3:1-17
- ❑ 30. Leviticus 4:1-21
- ❑ 31. Leviticus 4:22-35

NOVEMBER

- ❑ 1. Leviticus 5:1-19
- ❑ 2. Leviticus 6:1-23
- ❑ 3. Leviticus 6:24-7:21
- ❑ 4. Leviticus 7:22-38
- ❑ 5. Leviticus 8:1-21
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- ❑ 25. Leviticus 23:23-24:9
- ❑ 26. Leviticus 24:10-25:7
- ❑ 27. Leviticus 25:8-31
- ❑ 28. Leviticus 25:32-26:13
- ❑ 29. Leviticus 26:14-46
- ❑ 30. Leviticus 27:1-34

MEMORY VERSES

Session 1:

God replied to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.” —Exodus 3:14

Session 2:

I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the forced labor of the Egyptians. —Exodus 6:7

Session 3:

Then Moses said to the people, “Remember this day when you came out of Egypt, out of the place of slavery, for the LORD brought you out of here by the strength of his hand. Nothing leavened may be eaten.” —Exodus 13:3

Session 4:

The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. This is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him. —Exodus 15:2

Session 5:

I have heard the complaints of the Israelites. Tell them: At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will eat bread until you are full. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God. —Exodus 16:12

Session 6:

Do not have other gods besides me. —Exodus 20:3

Session 7:

I have also selected Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to be with him. I have put wisdom in the heart of every skilled artisan in order to make all that I have commanded you. —Exodus 31:6

Session 8:

And he replied, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” —Exodus 33:14

Session 9:

The Israelites had done all the work according to everything the LORD had commanded Moses. —Exodus 39:42

Session 10:

Fire must be kept burning on the altar continually; it must not go out. —Leviticus 6:13

Session 11:

You must distinguish between the holy and the common. —Leviticus 10:10

Session 12:

Atonement will be made for you on this day to cleanse you, and you will be clean from all your sins before the LORD. —Leviticus 16:30

Session 13:

For their sake I will remember the covenant with their fathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God; I am the LORD. —Leviticus 26:45

INTRODUCTION TO **EXODUS; LEVITICUS**

The Pentateuch is central to the entirety of Christian Scripture. In fact, understanding the first five books of the Bible allows one to better grasp the redemptive plan of God for His people. In Genesis, we see the conception of God's people. Through the promise to Abraham, God establishes His covenant to make a people for Himself through which all the nations in the world will be blessed. In Exodus, we witness the birth of God's people. Not only are God's people born at Mount Sinai, they also begin to learn to walk in God's ways as His people. If Exodus is the birth and infancy narrative of God's people, Leviticus is their schooling. In Leviticus, God provides the curriculum that outlines their covenant relationship with Him. In Leviticus, God teaches them what it looks like to live as good citizens in His kingdom.

In Exodus, we see God's commitment to His promise to make Abraham's descendants a great nation. But the fulfillment of this promise would not be without its obstacles. In opposition to the great powers of Egypt, and despite God's people's lack of faith, God remained true to His promises. When God's people were faithless, He remained faithful. In fact, the victory of God's people in Exodus was actually the victory of God.

Leviticus is a continuation of Exodus. The second part of Exodus is devoted to building the tabernacle, while the first part of Leviticus outlines worship within the tabernacle. In Leviticus we see God providing the relational framework for the unfolding covenant relationship He had established with His people. The Israelites learned of their impurity and sin. Because God is holy, He could not dwell in the midst of an unclean people. Yet the grace of God provided a way to atone for their sin and maintain their proper relationship with God.

The gospel is unveiled throughout both of these Old Testament books. God's redemption of His people from slavery through Moses points to Jesus, the true and greater Moses, who would deliver His people from slavery to sin and death. In Leviticus, we see what it means to be the holy people of God. The requirement of holiness points to the perfect righteousness and holiness of Christ. In this sense, the sacrifices we learn about in Leviticus, particularly the sacrifice of atonement, prefigure the atoning sacrifice of Christ for our sin—a sacrifice that was made once and for all! All of the longings of Exodus and Leviticus find their perfect amen in Jesus.

OUTLINES OF **EXODUS; LEVITICUS**

EXODUS

I. Preparation for Deliverance (1:1–4:31)

- a. Hebrew Slavery (1:1-22)
- b. A Deliverer in Exile (2:1-25)
- c. A Reluctant Deliverer Called (3:1–4:31)

II. Moses Confronts Pharaoh (5:1–13:16)

- a. Initial Talks (5:1–7:13)
- b. Plagues One through Nine (7:14–10:29)
- c. The Tenth Plague (11:1–13:16)

III. Freedom Gained (13:17–15:21)

- a. The Departure (13:17–14:4)
- b. The Pursuit (14:5-14)
- c. The Red Sea (14:15–15:21)

IV. Into the Wilderness (15:22–18:27)

V. At the Foot of Mount Sinai (19:1–34:35)

- a. Setting Up Camp (19:1-25)
- b. God Reveals His Standards (20:1–31:18)
- c. Rebellion and Restoration (32:1–34:35)

VI. Building the Tabernacle (35:1–40:38)

LEVITICUS

I. Laws for Sacrifices and Offerings (1:1–7:38)

II. Ordination and Ministry of Priests (8:1–10:20)

III. Purity Laws (11:1–16:34)

IV. God's Requirements for Holiness (17:1–27:34)

USING THE DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

Follower. Adherent. Loyalist. Attached. Allegiant. Zealous. Disciple. Jesus' call is the same to all people: to follow Him as a disciple. He expects more than a courteous nod. He deserves more than intellectual agreement. He calls us to be disciples—growing disciples. How do we do that?

In Brad Waggoner's *Shape of Faith to Come* (2008), he identified the discipline of “daily Bible engagement” as the number-one predictor of a person's spiritual growth. *Daily* implies a discipline much like exercising, brushing teeth, or eating a certain number of calories EVERY day. Should we be any different when it comes to our spiritual training? The focus is the *Bible*, God's Word. There is nothing wrong with knowing the thoughts of great philosophers, leaders, or theologians, but they must not replace God's Word. *Engagement* implies participating in the act of reading, studying, and reflecting. Engagement is active, requiring us to do something.

Your *Daily Discipleship Guide* is full of tools to help you grow as a disciple. But like any tool, you have to use it to get the benefit.

Use this resource when studying with a group. The first five pages of each session help the group leader introduce a Bible passage and move you toward acting on the truths discovered.

Use the **Daily Exploration** pages to go deeper into God's Word, building on your group's study experience. Engage in daily Bible study, record your thoughts, reflect on the questions, and take action.

Use the **Talk It Out** section at the end of each session to hold yourself and others accountable by meeting in a smaller group of same-sex individuals (an accountability group). Share with the smaller group what God has been teaching you through the group time and your personal daily Bible study.

Use the resource every week even when you are unable to attend the group's Bible study. Missing a group Bible study does not excuse you from being engaged daily with God through His Word. Use the *Daily Discipleship Guide* to move forward in your spiritual growth.

Want this resource on your phone or tablet for when you are on the go? Purchase an eBook in the *Explore the Bible* APP (available through GooglePlay and the iTunes Store) or at LifeWay.com.

Getting the Most from **TALK IT OUT**

Talk It Out, found at the end of each session, supports groups of three or four people who come together weekly to encourage, share, build up, and sharpen each other. While other issues may be addressed, the Talk It Out section provides a few directed questions based on the previous group experience and daily Bible engagement suggestions to start the weekly conversation.

These groups are made up of three to four people...

- Participants should be of the same gender.
- These groups should be smaller on purpose.
- These groups can meet at almost any location.
- These groups can easily accommodate each other's schedules.

...Who meet weekly...

- Life happens weekly, so meeting weekly is important.
- There is nothing like sitting across from friends over coffee, a meal, or dessert.
- In some cases, your smaller group may need to meet using technology that allows for video chats (such as Skype or Google Hangouts).
- You may find it best to meet face-to-face every other week or once a month and use virtual tools the other weeks.

...To hold each other accountable and encourage each other in their spiritual growth.

- Review the questions in Talk It Out.
- You may focus on one question more than others.
- Include time to pray for each other.



Session 1

Reluctance

God calls and empowers people to serve Him and His purposes.

Exodus 3:4-14; 4:13-16



**What can cause a person to doubt his or her ability to accomplish a challenging task?
How do our doubts feed our reluctance and hesitation to act?**

Most of us likely have doubts about our capabilities in some area. Christians are not exempt from those feelings of doubt. Christian history is marked by reluctant leaders, struggling sinners, feeble doubters, and weak workers. God has accomplished His work through humans in spite of their human limits and failures.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Exodus 1:1–4:31, we are introduced to Moses. He is mentioned many times in the New Testament and is almost always shown in a positive light. Among God’s people, Moses is rarely criticized or disparaged; he is always honored. However, when we encounter Moses in the first chapters of Exodus, we get an initial picture of a weak and fearful man.

The Israelites had moved to Egypt (1:1) and grew into a large group (1:7). Because of their great number, Pharaoh and the Egyptians no longer regarded them with friendliness, but with fear. The Egyptians pressed the Israelites into slavery, causing God’s people to suffer greatly (1:8-11).

In chapter 2, Moses entered the story. His name sounds like the Hebrew verb meaning “to draw out.” His name alone foreshadows God’s purposes to use Moses to “draw out” Israel from Egypt. Moreover, the preservation of Moses at birth points to his destiny. Moses was set in a basket (or “ark,” KJV) to be saved from the death that would come from Pharaoh’s hand in the slaughtering of the firstborn sons of Israel (1:22; 2:3). Moses was selected as God’s means to deliver His people from a tragic fate. The one who had been delivered would become the deliverer.

In the exodus story, we see both the strengths and weaknesses of his leadership and character. Moses initially let his feelings of inadequacy overwhelm him. At this point, Moses’ significance was not primarily based on his godliness and faith. Rather, his significance was based on God’s plan and power working through him to accomplish His will—despite Moses’ doubt and fear. The story of Moses is the beginning of redemption for God’s people, setting the stage for a supernatural act of salvation by God for a people powerless to help themselves. For Christians, weakness should not lead to despair but to reliance on God’s power to accomplish His will.

EXODUS 3:4-14; 4:13-16

3:4 When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, **God called out A** to him from the bush, “Moses, Moses!” “Here I am,” he answered. **5** “Do not come closer,” he said. “**Remove the sandals B** from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” **6** Then he continued, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” **Moses hid his face C** because he was afraid to look at God. **7** Then the LORD said, “I have **observed the misery D** of my people in Egypt, and have heard them crying out because of their oppressors. I know about their sufferings, **8** and I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and to bring them from that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the territory of the Canaanites, Hethites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. **9** So because the Israelites’ cry for help has come to me, and I have also seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them, **10** therefore, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh so that you may lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” **11** But Moses asked God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” **12** He answered, “I will certainly be with you, and this will be the sign to you that I am the one who sent you: when you bring the people out of Egypt, you will all worship God at this mountain.” **13** Then Moses asked God, “If I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what should I tell them?” **14** God replied to Moses, “**I AM WHO I AM. G** This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.” [...] **4:13** Moses said, “Please, Lord, send someone else.” **14** Then the LORD’s anger burned against Moses, and he said, “Isn’t Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, he is on his way now to meet you. He will rejoice when he sees you. **15** You will speak with him and tell him what to say. I will help both you and him to speak and will teach you both what to do. **16** He will speak to the people for you. He will serve as a mouth for you, and you will serve as God to him.”

Passage Outline

The Approach (Ex. 3:4-6)

The Assignment (Ex. 3:7-10)

The Authority (Ex. 3:11-14)

The Assurance (Ex. 4:13-16)

Keywords

- a. God gets our attention in different ways when He wants to reveal His will to us (Heb. 1:1).
- b. God’s presence caused the ordinary sandy desert to become set apart for God’s distinctive purpose.
- c. What Moses saw was “the form of the LORD” (Num. 12:8), which does not contradict Exodus 33:20; John 1:18; and 1 Timothy 6:16.
- d. God revealed His compassion for His suffering people. God’s love for them caused Him to “come down” (v. 8) and identify with them in their distress and deliver them from the Egyptians.
- e. God was saying, *I AM He who exists, and will be present with you in the situation to which I am sending you.* God’s name is His person, character, authority, power, and reputation.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

While tending sheep on Horeb (also known as Mount Sinai), Moses encountered God in a burning bush (3:2). In Exodus, God's presence is often revealed in a flame of fire (13:21-22; 19:18; 40:38). It is not difficult to imagine why Moses stopped and approached this mysterious burning bush that was not being consumed by flames (3:3).

Here was Moses, standing before the Almighty God. There was God, manifest in the flames in His beautiful glory, burning purity, and consuming holiness. And what did God do? He called Moses by his name.

KEY DOCTRINE: God – The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

God specifically revealed Himself to Moses as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (see Ex. 2:24). Moses clearly understood who was addressing Him. In awe and fear, Moses hid his face. One must remember that Moses was in exile from God's enslaved people in Egypt (2:15). In fact, Moses had been alienated from them since birth. With this declaration God reminded Moses of his heritage (2:23-25). Moses surely wondered why God had chosen to reveal Himself.

What did Moses' responses reveal about his view of God? What do people's responses to God reveal about their view of God? About their view of themselves?

The God of Israel was not a distant deity, detached from His people; He had intimate knowledge of their sufferings. God had heard their cries. The words “have observed,” “heard,” and “know” reveal God's deep covenant love for His people (see also Ex. 2:23-25). Then God revealed His plans. He had come down to rescue the Israelites from the enslaving Egyptians and to deliver them to a land flowing with milk and honey. You can imagine Moses' awe as the God of his fathers revealed His plan to deliver His people from approximately four hundred years of slavery in Egypt. Moreover, God would deliver them to a land of their own.

How did knowing God's identity bring assurance to Moses? How does God's promised presence enable us to trust Him?

God did not answer Moses' question in the way that he asked but rather pointed back to Himself. In the Old Testament, when God declares that He will be with someone, He is saying, “I will do this by my own power” (see Gen. 26:3; Ex. 4:12). God confirmed His promise by stating that once the Israelites were delivered they would serve God on the very mountain where Moses stood.

How did God plan on demonstrating His power through Moses' weaknesses? What does this passage teach about how God uses our weaknesses to accomplish His purposes?

APPLY THE TEXT

- God is holy but demonstrates His grace by approaching unholy people.
- God selects specific people to serve His purposes and lead His people. Even so, like Moses, we often doubt our ability to live according to God's will.
- Believers can be assured that God provides the resources for them to be successful in their God-given responsibilities.

Whom do you think Moses doubted more, himself or God? How might a person's self-doubt cause them to doubt God as well?

How do your personal doubts impact how you view God and His plans to involve you in His work?

List the resources God has provided you to accomplish His will. How can you use each resource to accomplish God's will? Ask God for courage to fulfill His will using the provided resources.

What steps do you need to take to carry out the role God desires you to play in His redemption of His people?

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: Our response to God says more about us than it does about Him.

Read Exodus 3:4-6, identifying how God initiated His conversation with Moses.

God took the initiative by approaching Moses. He also lovingly warned Moses as he approached the burning bush that he was standing on holy ground. Just as God did not consume and destroy the object of His revelation (the bush), He also would not consume or destroy the recipient of His revelation (Moses). This shows us God's grace and purpose, for no sinful man can survive a close encounter with the Almighty God. In response, an encounter with the living God calls for a respectful change in posture, a fearful reverence that treads lightly. This shows us that though God is transcendent, He is also immanent.

God is not required to reveal Himself to humanity but chooses to do so out of love and for His purposes. Even so, God is holy and should be approached with reverence.

What does your response to God reveal about your view of God? About your view of yourself? How does your response to God need to change?

Day 2: God hears our cries for help.

Read Exodus 3:7-10, circling the things God said He was about to do through Moses.

God told Moses He would use him to orchestrate the events that would change history and become embedded in the minds of the Israelites as one of the most significant moments in their story as a people. God is a saving God and a sending God.

Moses is a prime example that God "is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). His purposes are accomplished not by our power, but by His. God sent Moses as the deliverer to rescue His people from slavery and to lead them to dwell in the promised land.

God commissioned Moses by His word and power to do something that seemed impossible. Moses was sent by God to stand before Pharaoh and call for the Israelites' release. He was sent to lead a huge group of slaves out of bondage. It was going to be possible only if God supplied the power. God is not a distant deity. He hears the cries of His people and is moved to action.

What challenges are you currently facing that seem beyond your abilities? How do the cross and the resurrection of Christ remind you that God has ultimately heard your cries?

Day 3: God's name reveals His character.

Read Exodus 3:11-14, paying particular attention to verse 14. Notice how God identifies Himself.

The words I AM have been the focus of much theological study. The wordplay on the Hebrew verb “to be” is understood well in the Septuagint’s translation, “I am the One who is.” Simply put, God’s nature is not dependent on anything other than Himself. God is beyond our exhaustive knowledge, and yet He graciously chooses to reveal Himself to humanity. While He is not completely comprehensible, in revealing His personal name He lovingly shows that He is knowable. In this sense, the more you know about God, the more you do not know.

God simply is. God will be who He is. This required that Moses trust Him, His word, and what He chose to reveal at that time. In Hebrews 1:1-2 we are told, “Long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son.” Jesus is the clearest revelation of God to man. For this reason, the name I AM anticipates the “I am” sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John, which show His deity (see, for example, John 8:58). Moreover, God’s promise to be with Moses foreshadows Jesus’ promise to be with the disciples as they went on mission with God (Matt. 28:18-20).

How do the realities behind God’s name give you confidence? Take time to pray, sharing your doubts, confessing your shortcomings, and asking that He will help you with your doubts. Memorize Exodus 3:14.

Day 4: God promises His presence as we take on His assignments.

Scan Exodus 3 and 4, looking for verses that highlight God’s presence or promised presence.

God’s presence is always promised to those who are willing to follow Him. Review the following passages: Joshua 1:9; 1 Chronicles 28:20; Matthew 28:20. Pay particular attention to who is addressed. In each of these passages, the presence of God is promised to the person who carries out His mission. God’s presence enabled Moses to stand before Pharaoh and call for the release of the Israelites. God’s presence gave Joshua the courage he needed to lead the Israelites into the promised land. God’s presence sustained Solomon as he built the Jerusalem temple and took on the role of king. God’s presence enabled Jesus’ followers to faithfully make disciples of all the nations. One shudders to think of the results if any one of these individuals been left to complete their assigned task alone. Believers can rest assured knowing that God will be with them when they are completing a God-given assignment.

Why is it important for the person receiving a God-given task to be assured of God’s presence? How does God’s presence serve as a motivator to action? How does His promised presence give you courage to complete your God-given assignments?

Day 5: God works through our weaknesses.

Read Exodus 4:13-16, looking for ways God would work through Moses' weaknesses.

Moses still doubted himself (see Ex. 3:17-18; 4:1). Even after God had given Moses further confirmation (4:8-9), Moses pleaded for God to send someone else. Moses did not have the credentials (3:11-12), the knowledge (3:13-22), the people's trust (4:1-9), or the communication skills (4:10-12). In Moses' eyes, it would seem that he had built a pretty strong case against God's plan. While God reprimanded Moses for his questioning, He also provided Aaron as Moses' spokesperson to help accomplish His purposes.

God would provide the power to accomplish His will. He would provide the message through Moses that would accomplish His will. Now, God provided the mouthpiece in Aaron to speak into action what He willed. Believers can be assured that God provides the resources for them to be successful in their God-given responsibilities.

How has God used your weaknesses to demonstrate His power? How would you describe the significance of God's working through your weaknesses?

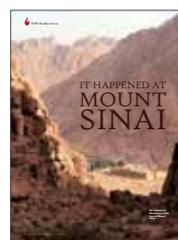
TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Exodus 3 and 4, sharing with two other members of your Bible study group.

What has God directed you to do in the past week that made you hesitate? How did you see Moses in yourself in the way you responded?

When have you sensed God's presence in the past week? How did that experience impact your confidence in God?

What did God reveal about Himself to you? How does Scripture affirm what He revealed to you? How does what He revealed to you impact your life? What actions are you taking?



For additional context, read "It Happened at Mount Sinai" in the Fall 2017 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Available at LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator.

Session 2

Confrontation

God displays His power, reminding all that He alone is worthy of worship.

Exodus 7:1-13



Think about a time when you let your stubbornness get the best of you. How did that experience open the door for you to learn about God and His power?

Let's be honest. We like being in control and calling the shots. We may even have our own ideas about how God should work in a specific situation. We are not questioning His power, but perhaps we question His wisdom or willingness. It boils down to us being stubborn and unwilling to allow God to be God.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Exodus 5–10 we enter into the saga of Israel's slavery under Pharaoh. It is important to remember that the Egyptians viewed Pharaoh as the divine offspring of their sun god, and they believed he became the god of the afterlife upon his death. In other words, Pharaoh was a false god waging war against the God of Israel. In the end, however, the God of Israel was the only one standing as the true sovereign God over all of creation.

After the call of Moses (Ex. 3–4), Moses confronted Pharaoh about releasing God's people (5:1). Pharaoh's response was swift and decisive (5:2). Moses' initial confrontation with Pharaoh resulted in the increased oppression and suffering of God's people (5:6-18).

Moses was confused by the results of this encounter with Pharaoh (5:22-23), but God assured him that He would grant His people freedom regardless of the consequences of this first confrontation (6:1). God reminded Moses that He is the covenant-keeping God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (6:8) and that there is a larger, redemptive story—God's plan to make a people for Himself. No man, not even Pharaoh, would be able to hinder God's purpose and power.

Moses again protested that Pharaoh would not listen to him since he spoke poorly (6:30; see also 4:10; 6:12). God answered Moses' objection by sending Aaron to speak His words as mediated through Moses (7:1-2). Moses and Aaron again confronted Pharaoh and showed him the sign of turning Aaron's staff into a serpent. But when the Egyptian sorcerers did the same with their staffs, Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go (7:6-13).

God then sent a series of plagues on the Egyptians (7:14–10:19). Several times Pharaoh promised to let the Israelites go, but when each plague ended, he refused to free the people. The plagues punished Egypt, showed the powerlessness of its gods, and demonstrated God's sovereignty.

EXODUS 7:1-13

1 The LORD answered Moses, “See, **I have made you like God to Pharaoh,** **A** and **Aaron your brother will be your prophet.** **B** **2** You must say whatever I command you; then Aaron your brother must declare it to Pharaoh so that he will let the Israelites go from his land. **3** But **I will harden Pharaoh’s heart** **C** and multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt. **4** Pharaoh will not listen to you, but I will put my hand into Egypt and bring the military divisions of my people the Israelites out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. **5** The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the Israelites from among them.” **6** So Moses and Aaron did this; they did just as the LORD commanded them. **7** Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh. **8** The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, **9** “When Pharaoh tells you, ‘**Perform a miracle,**’ **D** tell Aaron, “Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh. It will become a serpent.”” **10** So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD had commanded. Aaron threw down his staff before Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a serpent. **11** But then Pharaoh called the wise men and sorcerers—the magicians of Egypt, and they also did the same thing by their occult practices. **12** Each one threw down his staff, and it became a serpent. But Aaron’s staff swallowed their staffs. **13** However, **Pharaoh’s heart was hard, and he did not listen to them,** **E** as the LORD had said.

Passage Outline

Strategy Explained
(Ex. 7:1-5)

Simple Obedience
(Ex. 7:6-7)

Signs and Wonders
(Ex. 7:8-13)

Keywords

- a. The miracles God enabled Moses to perform caused Pharaoh to see him as a god in a functional sense.
- b. To convince Pharaoh that Moses was indeed God’s agent, Aaron served as a prophet, interpreting Moses’ words to the king.
- c. Pharaoh’s heart was hardened when he would not submit to God’s demands to free Israel. Hardness of heart includes a rejection of God and His message.
- d. When Moses and Aaron reappeared before Pharaoh, he mockingly demanded they “perform a miracle,” likely to disprove their claim to be God’s representatives, as well as for his own amusement.
- e. Even after seeing these signs, Pharaoh’s heart grew harder, and he was determined not to let God’s people leave bondage.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

God clearly laid out His strategy for bringing about His purposes in saving His people. There are three reminders of God's promises from earlier conversations that fortified Moses and Aaron in their calling and confidence. First, God reminded Moses that He had provided Aaron to function as a prophet before Pharaoh (see 4:14-16).

How would God's providing Aaron as a spokesperson bolster Moses' confidence? How does the promise of Christ's presence bolster a person's confidence to share the gospel?

Next, God again declared that He would harden Pharaoh's heart (see 4:21). Lastly, God proclaimed once again that He would bring Israel out of Egypt by His mighty hand (see 3:19-20). Neither Pharaoh nor his army could stop God from accomplishing His will. Soon enough, Pharaoh would know who God was when the plagues were unleashed against Egypt.

Moses and Aaron fully obeyed God's directions, doing exactly what they were told. Moses was eighty years old and Aaron was eighty-three. They did not make excuses; they did just as the Lord commanded them. We often shy away from God's work because of excuses or perceived weaknesses. But the example of Moses and Aaron in this passage reminds us that God's power is made most evident when we are weak. With confidence in our all-powerful God, we are called to live just as God has commanded us.



KEY DOCTRINE: God – To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience.

What attitudes toward God are demonstrated by Moses and Aaron's obedience? How are their attitudes toward God in opposition to the attitude seen in Pharaoh?

Although Moses and Aaron had already requested that Pharaoh let Israel go (5:1-3), they had not yet performed any of the signs from the Lord demonstrating His sovereign power. Exodus 7:8-13 narrates the initial sign of turning Aaron's staff into a serpent.

Yet Pharaoh still refused to listen to Moses, so the cycle of miraculous plagues began. The water in the Nile River turned to blood. Then frogs, gnats, and flies overran the land. One plague caused the death of livestock. Another brought boils, while another was a plague of deadly hail. Still another brought swarms of locusts, then a plague of darkness covered Egypt.

Moses announced each plague, and each arrived and departed exactly as he stated. As the plagues progressed, they became more devastating. Several times Pharaoh promised to let the Israelites go but then refused to free the people when each plague ended.

How does Pharaoh's repeatedly going back on his word mirror characteristics of false repentance? What is the difference between false repentance and true repentance?

APPLY THE TEXT

- God is working in this world so all will recognize His power and sovereign rule.
- Believers acknowledge God’s sovereignty through simple acts of obedience.
- Everyone who sees evidence of God’s power and presence yet does not respond in faith is without excuse.

When has God asked you to do something beyond your natural abilities?

Why were you chosen when an “Aaron” could have more easily done your job?

What could Moses and Aaron have used to prepare for Pharaoh’s intimidation factor?

How can God prepare us for a difficult faith challenge?

Identify the fears and excuses that get in the way of your living on mission with God.

What has God provided to you that overcomes those fears and excuses? What simple act can you do this week to demonstrate obedience to God?

List some of the powers of this world that hold people in captivity and keep them in the dark about Christ. What actions can be taken to point people to the greater power of God?

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: God is in control.

Read Exodus 7:1-2, noting the provisions God arranged for Moses.

Designating Aaron as a prophet was a concession to Moses' perceived disadvantage based on his own poor speaking abilities (see 4:10; 6:30). While Aaron was the spokesperson, Moses clearly played the primary role in this confrontation since he was to be like God to Pharaoh. Moses was to fulfill his role as God's mediator or representative. This was to counter not only Moses' doubt but also Pharaoh's belief that he himself was a god. This was a reminder that God was in control.

How does the promise of God's presence bolster your confidence to share the gospel?

Day 2: God can use anyone to accomplish His will.

Read Exodus 7:3, paying attention to God's true purpose as stated in this verse.

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is described in various ways throughout Exodus. At times, the biblical text refers to God's hardening Pharaoh's heart (9:12; 10:20,27; 11:10); Pharaoh's hardening his own heart (8:15,32); and Pharaoh's heart being hardened without identifying the cause (7:22; 8:19; 9:7,35). All of these statements must be considered together for every act of Pharaoh's disobedience.

It seems reasonable to conclude that throughout the narrative Pharaoh is in opposition to God; therefore, God's hardening of his heart is only confirmation of the course that Pharaoh is on already. If we believe that God is all powerful, by implication we must also affirm that God uses even those who resist His will to accomplish His purposes. We see this in the New Testament with Herod and Pilate (see Acts 2:23). One of the scariest ways that God gives us over to judgment is by giving us our hearts' desires. When someone repeatedly refuses God's will, their hearts become harder and harder toward Him.

In what areas of your life have you hardened your heart to God's truth? How can you follow God's will to reverse the hardening of your heart?

Day 3: God will deliver His people.

Read Exodus 7:4-5, looking for the specific plans God had in place to deliver His people.

God's plan did not depend on Pharaoh's cooperation. Pharaoh might have refused to obey God, but he could never prevent God from delivering His people. Soon all of Egypt would clearly know He was the one true God through His self-revealing mighty acts (see 8:10,22; 9:14,29; 11:7). In the same way, all of the earth will one day know that He is the one true God (Phil. 2:10-11).

God is working in this world so all will recognize His power and sovereign rule. There are times when we minister to people with hardened hearts and times when our own hearts become hardened with sin. But the power of God revealed in Jesus Christ can break through the hardest of hearts. Just as God equipped and empowered Moses and Aaron, He will do the same for you to be a faithful witness. His mighty acts in history should be a reminder to us that He can do far more than we even ask or imagine (Eph. 3:20).

Read this week's memory verse, Exodus 6:7. Read it aloud, placing emphasis on the nouns. Read it aloud a second time, placing emphasis on the verbs. What emotions are appealed to in this verse? What emotions did you experience as you read the verse aloud? How should the reality of this verse impact how you worship?

Day 4: It is never too late to be used by God.

Read Exodus 7:6-7. Consider the barriers to ministry that Moses and Aaron might have faced.

Note that Moses and Aaron were both senior citizens. Moses was eighty years old and Aaron was eighty-three. Their advanced age reminds us that it is never too late to be used by God. It is never too late for God's power to be manifest through our faithful living. Regardless of our weaknesses and inabilities, God can and will work through us when we faithfully live according to what He has commanded. In other words, when we are weak, God is strong (2 Cor. 12:9-11).

What attitudes toward God do you see demonstrated by Moses and Aaron's obedience? How is your attitude toward God in opposition to the attitude seen in Pharaoh?

Day 5: God will bring judgment on those who defy Him.

Read Exodus 7:8-13, identifying the ways in which Pharaoh turned his back on God.

This is the first of three instances where the magicians of Egypt saw the sign that Aaron performed and then did the same by their secret arts (see 7:22; 8:7). The text does not provide any explanation for the means by which these magicians performed their signs, but it is clear that Aaron's staff swallowed their staffs, indicating God's supreme power over the magic of man.

Just as God had foretold, Pharaoh did not listen, and the plagues began (7:14–10:29). Pharaoh promised to let the Israelites go, but after each plague subsided, he changed his mind and refused.

While Pharaoh's hard-hearted, evil rule over Israel was characterized by slavery and death, the good God of Israel desired to lead His people to life. While God normally holds chaos at bay, in this instance He stepped aside and allowed chaos to plague His enemy. In the end, God brought judgment to Pharaoh and Egypt.

How are your actions showing repentance?

TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Exodus 7, sharing with two other members of your Bible study group.

What self-imposed barriers to ministry have you identified this week?
How has God directed you to move past those barriers?

How has God led you to open your heart to Him this week?
What practices are you incorporating in your daily life to become closer to Him?

When were you led to moments of worshiping God in the past week?



For additional context, read "Serpents: What the Egyptians Believed" in the Fall 2017 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Available at LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator.

Session 3

Liberation

God provides deliverance for those willing to trust Him.

Exodus 12:1-13



What are some of the common identity markers that define us and communicate who we are to others?

Throughout our lives we make decisions that have implications for our identity. One part of our identity is formed by whom or with what we associate. The people with whom we choose to associate and the type of activities in which we invest our time form who we are and communicate to those around us what we value. In some instances, immediate decisions have lasting effects on our identity.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

God told Moses He would bring one final plague upon the Egyptians, after which Pharaoh would drive out the Israelites. He instructed Moses to tell the people to ask their Egyptian neighbors for gold and silver jewelry. He knew that the Egyptians, having seen God's power, would give the Israelites whatever they requested. God revealed that He would pass through Egypt about midnight, killing the firstborn males in every Egyptian family, flock, and herd, but sparing the Israelites (Ex. 11:1-10).

God then told Moses and Aaron how to prepare for His deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, giving specific instructions for celebrating the Passover on that night and from then on. The animal blood smeared on the doorposts would mark the Israelites and would be a sign for God's angel to pass over the house without killing the firstborn. God instructed the Israelites to remove yeast from their houses and to hold a sacred assembly on the first and seventh days of the festival. After Moses and Aaron instructed the Israelite leaders, the Israelites worshiped God and did as He commanded (12:1-28).

At midnight, God killed the firstborn of all Egyptian families and livestock. Pharaoh summoned Moses and ordered the Israelites to leave. God granted the Israelites favor with the Egyptians, and the Egyptians gave the Israelites gold and silver (12:29-42).

God stated that no uncircumcised individuals could participate in the Passover. He then commanded that every firstborn son and male animal should be consecrated to Him, stating that after the Israelites arrived in Canaan they must redeem every firstborn male, both human and animal. When children of later generations asked the reason for the redemption of the firstborn, the parents were to explain that the custom was based on God's deliverance of His people from Egypt (12:43-13:16).

EXODUS 12:1-13

1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: **2** “This month is to be the beginning of months for you; it is the first month of your year. **3** Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month they must each select an animal of the flock according to their fathers’ families, one animal per family. **4** If the household is too small for a whole animal, that person and **the neighbor nearest his house** **A** are to select one based on the combined number of people; you should apportion the animal according to what each will eat. **5** You must have an unblemished animal, a year-old male; you may take it from either the sheep or the goats. **6** You are to keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembly of the community of Israel will slaughter the animals at twilight. **7** They must take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses where they eat them. **8** They are to eat the meat that night; they should eat it, roasted over the fire along with **unleavened bread** **B** and bitter herbs. **9** Do not eat any of it raw or cooked in boiling water, but only **roasted over fire** **C**—its head as well as its legs and inner organs. **10** You must not leave any of it until morning; any part of it left until morning you must burn. **11** Here is how you must eat it: You must be dressed for travel, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. You are to eat it in a hurry; it is **the LORD’s Passover**. **D** **12** I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night and strike every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, both people and animals. I am the LORD; I will execute judgments against all the gods of Egypt. **13** The blood on the houses where you are staying will be a distinguishing mark for you; when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No plague will be among you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.”

Passage Outline

- Prepared (Ex. 12:1-5)
- Sacrificed (Ex. 12:6-7)
- Hurried (Ex. 12:8-11)
- Delivered (Ex. 12:12-13)

Keywords

- a. Smaller families would unite with another family to eat the Passover lamb. A later custom was to limit the number of people consuming one lamb to ten.
- b. Leaven (or yeast) represented the invasive nature of sin and was not included in the preparation of the Passover bread that was baked and eaten.
- c. In the wilderness, Israel would only be able to cook over an open fire. The Passover commands symbolize this necessity.
- d. This somber event marked when the blood of God’s Passover lamb would save the Israelites from death. It also alludes to the blood of Jesus Christ, the Passover Lamb, who would come to save all believers from eternal death (1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 5).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

While there was only one Passover day, Israel commemorated this day with the Passover festival as a memorial to the Lord's salvation and judgment (12:14). This weeklong festival included the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which served the purposes of remembrance and instruction (12:15-20; 13:3-10).

On the tenth day of the month (Abib, referred to later as Nisan), Israelite families were to select a year-old, spotless lamb to be sacrificed on behalf of their household. Sickly or injured animals could not rightly symbolize the perfect deliverance of His people by the perfect God.

It is important to note that unless Israel believed the Word of God and followed all of His directions, all of their firstborn would die with the firstborn of Egypt. Therefore, we see that the lamb's blood covered those who believed, and by their obedience to God's Word they avoided judgment.

How does preparation for a tradition add to the significance of that tradition?

What preparations could a person add to a religious practice like the Lord's Supper?

God instructed Moses and Aaron to lead all of Israel to sacrifice the Passover lambs at twilight on the fourteenth day of Nisan and to take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of their houses.

BIBLE SKILL: Use a Bible dictionary (either in print or online) to learn more about the Passover lamb. – In a Bible dictionary, look up “Passover” and “Lamb of God.” Review the biblical passages listed in the entries. How does the Passover lamb point to Christ? Having contemplated the nature of the Passover lamb, write a brief description of how Jesus fulfilled that role for us.

God told Moses and Aaron that the Passover lamb was to be eaten in an urgent fashion with everyone ready to travel. The Passover lamb was to be consumed with unleavened bread. The command to eat bitter herbs would be a reminder of the bitter slavery they once experienced in Egypt. Each person was to be dressed and ready to depart at any moment for the journey.

How does the manner in which the Israelites ate the sacrifice serve as a demonstration of faith in God? What does this teach us about obedience to God?

We must remember that the Lord had made clear that the primary purpose of the plagues was for both Egypt and Israel to know who He was (see 7:5,17). The Passover, therefore, highlights both judgment and salvation. When we read the New Testament, we see that Jesus' death was the event in which salvation and judgment were fulfilled (1 Cor. 1:18).

What does this passage teach about God's judgment and salvation? Can you have judgment without salvation or salvation without judgment? Explain.

APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers can be thankful that God provided the perfect sacrifice in the form of His Son.
- All of God’s commands should be followed with urgency and anticipation.
- Only by trusting in Jesus’ redemptive and sacrificial death on the cross can we be delivered from the consequences of our sin.

God surely could have accomplished the exodus without the death of all the firstborn of Egypt. Why do you think He chose to do it this way? Do you think this was God’s judgment on Egypt, or perhaps one of God’s “wonders” (Ex. 11:9)?

On a scale of 1 to 10, rate your level of preparedness to do what God calls you to do and to go where God calls you to go. Identify your reasons for rating yourself as you did. What do your reasons reveal about your trust in God? What action do you need to take to demonstrate complete trust in Him?

Read Exodus 13:3. Ask God to help you remember all the great things that He has done for you, especially your deliverance through Christ. Memorize this verse this week.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: Our history is defined by God.

Read Exodus 12:1-2, noting the importance God placed on remembering the exodus.

The Israelites left Egypt in the month of Abib [AY bib], referred to later as Nisan [NIGH san]. In our modern calendar this date falls around March–April. The exodus from Egypt is so significant for Israel’s identity as a people that the month became the first month of the year. For His people, history is defined by God and His actions on their behalf.

Remembrance was an important aspect of Israel’s sustaining their identity as a distinct and set-apart people, especially in recalling the work of God on their behalf. The same is true of Christians today, particularly with the Lord’s Supper. The Gospel accounts show Jesus instituting the Lord’s Supper during an observance of Passover with His disciples (Matt. 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-30). In the New Testament, the Lord’s Supper serves as a new festival established for God’s people for remembrance and instruction (1 Cor. 11:23-26). While the Passover was a celebration of God’s covenant with Israel, the Lord’s Supper celebrates the new covenant established with the church by the blood of Christ (Luke 22:20).

**How important is the practice of the Lord’s Supper to the body of Christ?
What importance does it play in your life?**

Day 2: Sacred commemoration reaffirms our commitment to God.

Read Exodus 12:3-5. Consider the attention to detail God required in selecting the sacrifice.

Since the animal would not be slaughtered until the fourteenth day of the month (v. 6), each household would have to care for the animal for four days. God wanted no last-minute preparations for the commemoration.

Not all Israelite families would be able to eat an entire animal in one night, so God allowed neighboring families to join together. A meal with too many people would be better than a meal with too few. The Passover meal was not meant to encourage gluttony or to feed a family for several days. The meal commemorated the fact that the Israelites were leaving Egypt quickly.

By eating together, the Israelites symbolized their unity under God and their commitment to obey Him. We do the same when we participate in the Lord’s Supper. Through this ordinance, believers remember Christ’s death for us, experience unity, and reaffirm our commitment to Him.

What preparations can you add to your participation in a religious practice like the Lord’s Supper to add to its significance?

Day 3: Our redemption comes through the spotless Lamb of God.

Read Exodus 12:6-7, looking for the command that God gave to the Israelites.

Placing the blood of a spotless lamb on the doorpost would indicate that the members of the household followed God's instructions and were thus set apart to Him. The blood of the slain lamb became a stark reminder that a life had to be sacrificed in their place.

Blood represents life. Once again, deliverance through the blood of a lamb pointed forward to the coming of Jesus Christ—the perfect and spotless Lamb of God—to obtain final salvation for God's people through His substitutionary death. Like Israel, Christian redemption involves not only release from slavery, but also escape from judgment by the blood of the lamb. Just like the lambs for Israel's household, Jesus is the only hope for those in the household of God.

How would you describe the importance of applying blood to the doorposts and lintels? How does the sacrifice of the lamb point to Jesus?

Day 4: God's people must be ready to follow Him at a moment's notice.

Read Exodus 12:8-11, identifying the six specific rules God provided.

The Passover lamb was to be eaten in an urgent fashion. The Israelites were to prepare their Passover lambs by roasting them over the fire, and then they were to burn up any part of the meal that remained before morning.

The unleavened bread related to the fact that Israel exited Egypt so swiftly that they had to leave before their dough was fermented (v. 34). The bitter herbs were a reminder of the bitterness of their slavery in Egypt.

For the same reason they were instructed to use unleavened bread (v. 8), Israel was to partake in the Passover meal dressed for travel. Note the urgency of obedience and participation in God's work. This is a powerful reminder that God's people must be ready to follow Him at a moment's notice.

The reference to the meal as the Lord's specified that it was to be treated as holy. This meal was set apart from other meals, to be remembered from generation to generation.

How does the manner in which the Israelites ate the sacrifice serve as a demonstration of faith in God? What can you point to in your life that serves as demonstration of faith in God?

Day 5: Jesus' death delivered us from judgment.

Read Exodus 12:12-13, paying close attention to God's provision in verse 13.

For the Israelites, the plagues were signs that Yahweh is the only true God and that He was acting on their behalf. For the Egyptians, the Passover was a solemn demonstration of God's righteous judgment because of their king's persistent rejection of Him. It became clear that Israel's God was infinitely greater than Pharaoh.

Egypt was judged with death, and the spotless lamb was judged for Israel in that God passed over Israel as they were protected by the blood of the lamb (12:13,23). Jesus' death was the once-for-all sacrifice that delivered His people from judgment and death (Heb. 10:10-14). The gospel is the good news that God offered His own Son in our place to pay the price for our sin.

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Son – In His substitutionary death on the cross, Jesus made provision for the redemption of men from sin.

How does the promise of judgment and salvation encourage you to urgently share the gospel with others?

TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Exodus 12, sharing with two other members of your Bible study group.

How does the truth that God provided the perfect sacrifice for your salvation impact how you live your life?

Identify one person in your life with whom you need to share the gospel. What truths from this session is God urging you to share with this person?

In what areas of your life do you need to evaluate your obedience to God? What is one step of obedience you can take today?

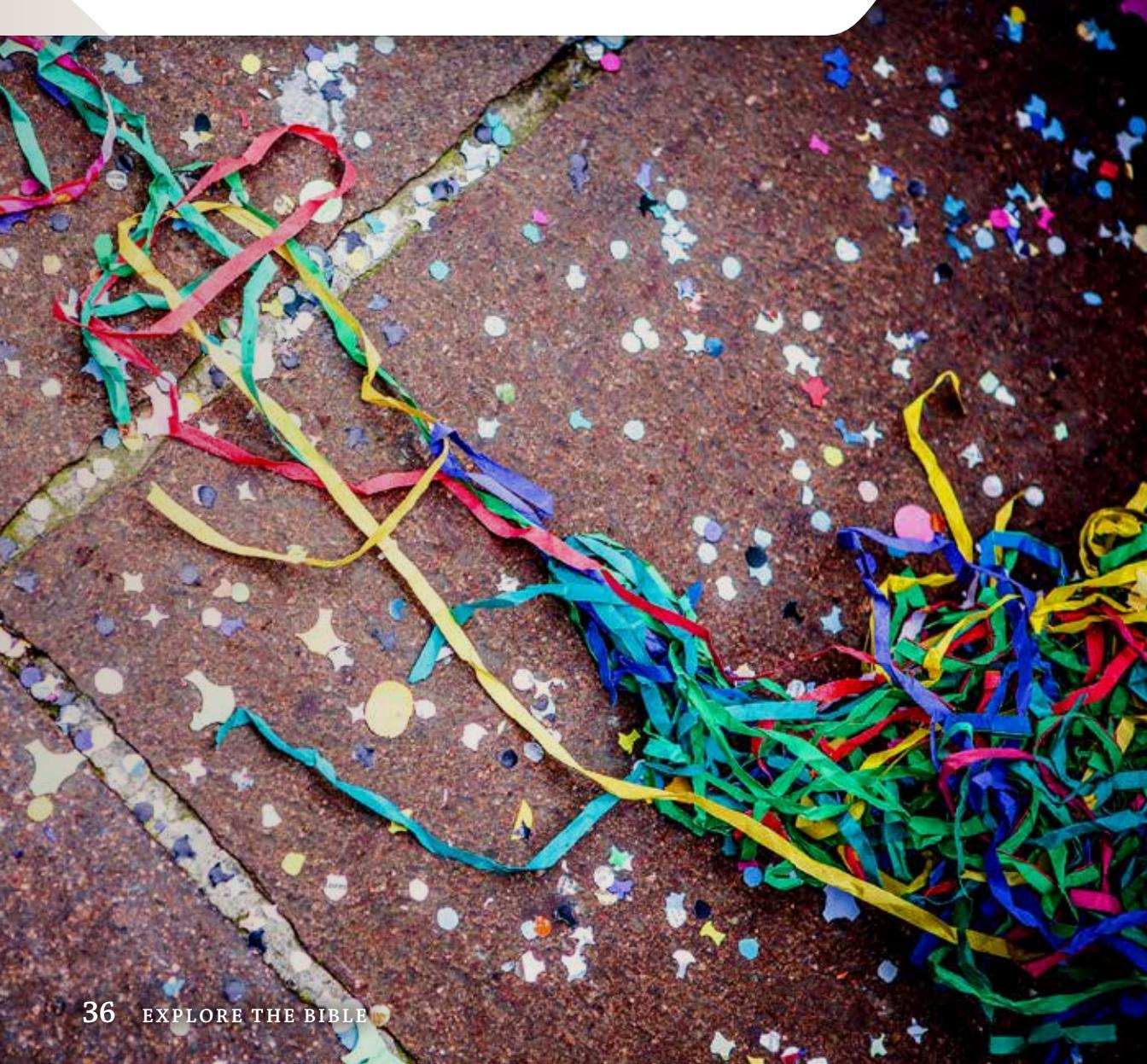


For additional context, read "Death of the Firstborn," available digitally in the Fall 2017 *Biblical Illustrator for Explore the Bible* at LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator.

Victory

God will ultimately be victorious over His enemies and the enemies of His people.

Exodus 14:13-28



How does overcoming a difficulty or challenge help a person face other difficulties or challenges? How does God use a challenge to build a person's confidence in Him?

As Christians, we do not like to admit doubt. We see doubt as antithetical to the victorious Christian life. But let's face it—there are times of doubt in the Christian life. This is particularly true when we face seemingly insurmountable odds. Yet God has revealed His faithfulness throughout history and in our lives. His faithfulness should encourage us when we face uncertainty. Thankfully, salvation comes from the object of our faith and not the strength of our faith!

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

As the Israelites left Egypt, God led them along a southeasterly route through the Sinai Peninsula rather than the seacoast route that would force them to confront the Philistines. They carried with them the bones of Joseph as he had asked (see Gen. 50:25). God manifested His guiding presence by a pillar of smoke during the day and a pillar of fire by night. The Lord also hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he and his army would pursue the Israelites. God planned to utterly defeat Pharaoh and his army (Ex. 13:17–14:4).

Pharaoh gathered his troops and caught up with the Israelites as they camped beside the Red Sea. The Israelites cried out for help, complaining that they would have been better off remaining as slaves in Egypt. Moses encouraged the people to trust God. God's angel and the pillar of cloud moved between the Egyptians and the Israelites, thus preventing the Egyptians from attacking. Moses stretched his hand over the sea, God divided the waters, and the Israelites crossed on dry ground. When the Egyptians pursued the Israelites into the dry seabed, God brought the waters back together, drowning Pharaoh's army (14:5-31).

In response to God's deliverance, Moses and the people sang praises to their incomparable, powerful God. They proclaimed that when other nations heard of His deeds, they would tremble before God and His people. The Israelites' song of praise ended with an affirmation that God would surely bring them into Canaan. Miriam and the women then offered another brief song, thereby exalting and praising God (15:1-21).

EXODUS 14:13-28

13 But Moses said to the people, “Don’t be afraid. **Stand firm A** and see the LORD’s salvation that he will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians you see today, you will never see again.

14 The LORD will fight for you, and you must be quiet.” **15** The LORD said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to break camp. **16** As for you, lift up your staff, stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. **17** As for me, I am going to harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them, and I will receive glory by means of Pharaoh, all his army, and his chariots and horsemen. **18** The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I receive glory through Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.” **19** Then the **angel of God, B** who was going in front of the Israelite forces, moved and went behind them. **The pillar of cloud C** moved from in front of them and stood behind them. **20** It came between the Egyptian and Israelite forces. There was cloud and darkness, it lit up the night, and neither group came near the other all night long. **21** Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back with **a powerful east wind D** all that night and turned the sea into dry land. So the waters were divided, **22** and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with the waters like a wall to them on their right and their left. **23** The Egyptians set out in pursuit—all Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots, and his horsemen—and went into the sea after them. **24** During the morning watch, the LORD looked down at the Egyptian forces from the pillar of fire and cloud, and threw the Egyptian forces into confusion. **25** He caused their chariot wheels to swerve and made them drive with difficulty. “Let’s get away from Israel,” the Egyptians said, “because the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt!” **26** Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the water may come back on the Egyptians, on their chariots and horsemen.” **27** So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea returned to its normal depth. While the Egyptians were trying to escape from it, the LORD threw them into the sea. **28** The water came back and covered the chariots and horsemen, plus the entire army of Pharaoh that had gone after them into the sea. Not even one of them survived.

Passage Outline

The Setting (Ex. 14:13-18)

Act 1: The Separation
(Ex. 14:19-20)

Act 2: The Crossing
(Ex. 14:21-22)

Act 3: The Victory
(Ex. 14:23-28)

Keywords

- a. By faith Moses knew God would protect His people and destroy the Egyptian army. He admonished the people to exercise the same faith and stand without fear before the enemy.
- b. This was a miraculous revelation of God Himself in angelic form.
- c. This cloud stood between the pursuing Egyptians and the Israelites, causing darkness to enshroud the Egyptians on the one side and light for the Israelites on the other.
- d. The east wind was also used in the eighth plague (Ex. 10:13) and was usually seen as bad. However, in this case, God used it for good.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

God's words to Israel, "Don't be afraid" (v. 13), were issued to bolster their confidence. Rather than fear, the Israelites were to stand firm and see. The phrase "the LORD's salvation" (v. 13) describes the deliverance only God can provide. God would do what Israel could not do.

God told Moses to lift his staff and stretch it out over the sea, and He would divide it so that the Israelites could go through the sea on dry ground. There would be no question as to who was working to bring about Israel's salvation, for God would receive the glory. As Israel faced certain destruction, God delivered them by the power of His hand.

How were the directions given by God a call to trust Him? Do God's provisions always require faith? Explain.

 **KEY DOCTRINE: God** – God is all powerful.

The angel of God stood between the Israelites and the Egyptians. We must remember that when the angel of the Lord appears in the Old Testament, he is depicted as acting and speaking for God Himself (see Gen. 22:11-18). The angel of the Lord appeared in a flame of fire (Ex. 3:2), in the pillar of fire and cloud (13:21-22), on Mount Sinai (19:18), and in the tabernacle (40:38). In all instances, the angel of the Lord signified God's presence and protection.

How does the promise of God's presence give a person hope? How does the promise of His presence impact a person's faith?

Moses and the people did exactly as God had directed them. When Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, God drove the sea back with a powerful east wind, revealing the dry land that would lead to their salvation. While it is simply referred to as "the sea" (v. 16), we know from Exodus 13:18 and 15:4 that the body of water Israel was about to cross was the Red Sea. The waters formed a wall of protection. In a similar way, God would show His power when Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River into the promised land in Joshua 3:14-17.

What is the relationship between faith and obedience? Can a person have one without the other? Explain.

When the Egyptian chariots pursued the Israelites into the dry seabed, God caused them to swerve and stall. Even the Egyptians themselves realized that their confusion and difficulty was no coincidence; this was all happening because Israel's God was fighting for His people.

At the command of God, Moses extended his staff again, and the sea completely engulfed the Egyptian army in judgment. It is important to note God's justice here. The Egyptians had repeatedly rejected God and His warnings. Pharaoh repeatedly went back on his promise to release Israel. God gave several warnings but kept His word.

APPLY THE TEXT

- God delivers His people, providing a way of escape.
- Believers can find hope in the mighty power of God.
- Believers demonstrate faith in God by obediently following His directions.
- God is worthy of worship and praise as the victorious God.

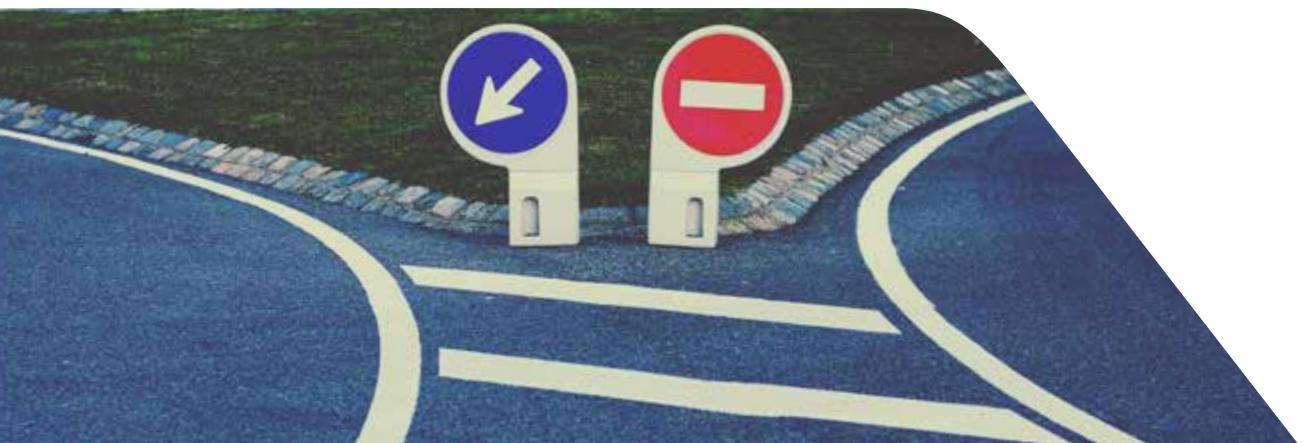
Identify a situation in which you currently feel defeated. What steps should you take in light of today's study? What might victory look like in that situation?

How do you think the Israelites would have described God to someone who had not seen these events firsthand?

In what ways might this passage help you to trust God with your fears? What one battle would you like God to fight for you this week?

Reflect on Exodus 15:2. Spend some time praising God for His defeat of our greatest enemies—sin and death. Memorize this verse this week.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: God is with you.

Read Exodus 14:13-15, looking for Moses' words of assurance to the Israelites.

Words of assurance such as “don't be afraid” (v. 13) were typically spoken by angels when appearing to humans (see Gen. 15:1; 26:24) and by God to those facing overwhelming odds (see Num. 14:9; Josh. 10:8). Moses' words assured the people they had no reason to fear. The people saw only Pharaoh's army, but God, whom they could not see, was with them and would save them.

The Israelites did not need to try to swim across the sea or prepare to fight or give up. They only needed to watch. Thus far they had seen only the Egyptian army and their predicament. Moses encouraged them to open their eyes in faith and to see God at work.

Which fears or uncertainties assailed the Israelites? Which of these fears are familiar to you?

Day 2: God is sovereign.

Read Exodus 14:16-18, underlining what God promised to do.

Signs and wonders have been used for a variety of reasons. The apostles gained a hearing for the gospel as a result of these (Rom. 15:18-19). The writer of Hebrews stated that signs and wonders served as a witness of the truth of the gospel (Heb. 2:3-4). At the same time, Jesus chided the unbelief of those who needed a sign as proof (John 4:48).

God told Moses to stretch his staff out over the sea, and God would divide the sea for the Israelites to safely travel through. Not only would God bring salvation to His people, He would also bring down the waters of judgment on His enemies. While Egypt was strong in chariots and horsemen, the God of creation commands every molecule of the sea. God chose to use weapons that no one on earth had command over and to which no one on earth had a defense. This attack on Egypt would remove all doubt that God alone was the victor. God's victory over Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea would be known throughout the land and in the surrounding nations (9:16; 15:14-16). We are reminded in Isaiah 54:17 that no weapon formed against God's people will succeed. Our God is sovereign over all.

What directions has God given you that required faith and trust to follow through? Explain.

Day 3: Christ is our refuge against attacks from the enemy.

Read Exodus 14:19-20, identifying what God provided to protect the Israelites.

The angel of the Lord signifies God's presence and protection. Here, the angel of the Lord protected the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt and would go before them into the promised land (14:19; 23:20; 33:2). God's presence with Israel points forward to His presence in Christ, who is our protection and refuge against all the attacks of the enemy.

This passage reminds us that we can find hope in the presence of God. No matter what we face in this life, we can hold fast to the words of God: "I will never leave you or abandon you" (Heb. 13:5). Our God is faithful to His promise to be with us, even to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20). Therefore, we can face the uncertainties of this life with confidence in God's presence and comfort in His promise.

How does the promise of God's presence give you hope? How does the promise of His presence impact your faith?

Day 4: God protects His people.

Read Exodus 14:21-22, noting the end of verse 22.

Moses and the people did exactly as God had directed them. Moses stretched out his hand and God drove back the sea. Moses and the Israelites demonstrated faith by following God's directions; believers today likewise demonstrate their faith in God when they obey His Word.

This intense display of God's power over the waters was a powerful sign of His protection over His people and His judgment over His enemies (Ex. 14:28-31). This was clearly a supernatural event. Israel did not achieve any of this; it was all the work of God.

What is the relationship between faith and obedience? Can you have one without the other? Explain.

Day 5: God is faithful.

Read Exodus 14:23-28, looking for ways that God displayed His power.

In response to God's faithfulness and protection, Moses sang a song of praise in Exodus 15:1: "I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted; he has thrown the horse and its rider into the sea." This song is a reminder that God is true to His Word and will deliver His people from their enemies.

When we see the salvation that has been achieved by our God, it should cause us to confess that He alone is worthy of worship and praise. While Pharaoh's army was powerful and frightening, they were crushed by the power of God. While our greatest enemies—sin and death—are frightening, Christ crushed them on the cross. He is our victory. Just as the Israelites looked back on their salvation through the Red Sea, we also look back to the cross of Christ. The cross and the empty tomb serve as eternal reminders that the victory of God is our victory.

How has witnessing a display of God's power caused you to gain a deeper understanding of God?

TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Exodus 14, sharing with two other members of your Bible study group.

What resources, habits, or convictions keep you equipped to go where God leads? What do you need to let go of or change to stay ready to respond to God's leading?

List the victories God has given you. How does your awareness of those victories enhance your spiritual walk?

How has this study enhanced your faith in God as Deliverer and Victor?



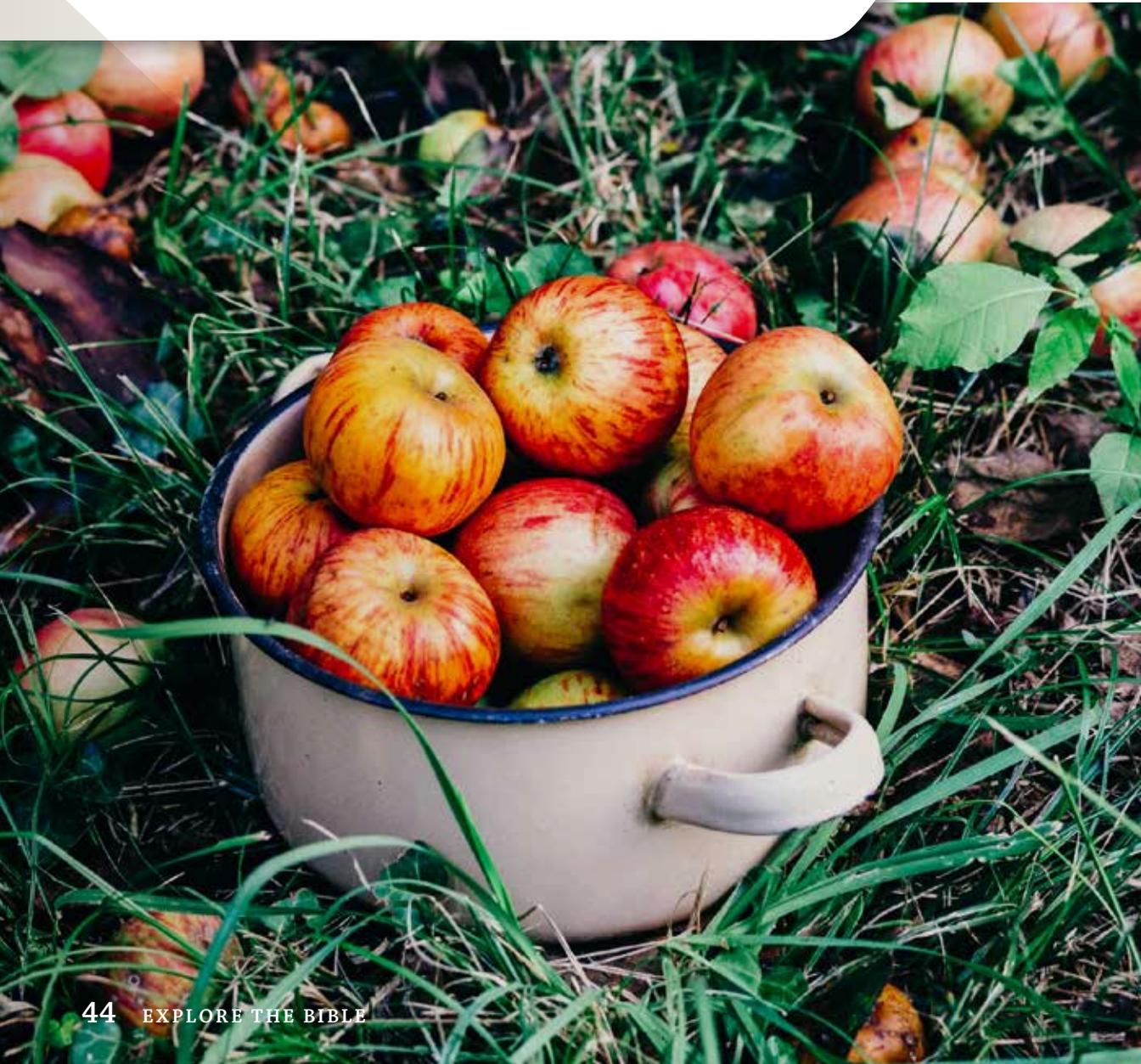
For additional context, read "The Angel of the Lord," available digitally in the Fall 2017 *Biblical Illustrator* for *Explore the Bible* at LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator.

Session 5

Sufficient

God provides for the needs of His people.

Exodus 16:1-5,11-20



When is adversity a good thing? How does adversity shape people?

Life is full of ups and downs, victories and adversities. However, one of the truths that we hold on to as Christians is that God is always God. He never changes. In light of this truth, we can accept the circumstances that come our way—even when they are difficult. Moreover, in understanding that God often moves us from times of triumph and victory to places of trial and testing, we learn that God can use every circumstance for our sanctification.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The first half of the Book of Exodus centers on God's deliverance of His people out of Egypt. In this exodus event, the Israelites journeyed from Egypt to the edge of the promised land. Along the way they faced many difficulties and tests. More specifically, each difficulty—at Marah (water), in the wilderness of Sin (food), and at Rephidim (water)—involved trials and tests of their faith in God to sustain them on their journey (Ex. 15:25; 16:4; 17:2).

As God's people faced difficulties, they complained against Moses about the lack of food. In response to their cries, God graciously provided both manna and quail. Moreover, God's provision of manna included careful instructions about gathering their food. Embedded in these instructions is a pattern that would shape Israel's life of work and rest. Throughout this section of Exodus, God tested His people to see whether they would trust and obey Him during their journey.

Implicit in these instructions was the need to learn how to walk in a way characterized by godly wisdom. Therefore, the exodus was not only a departure from their past story, it was also the beginning of a new one. Redemption is always an act of re-creation. In many ways, Exodus gives us a picture of the Israelites as children growing in their understanding and identity. In the wilderness journey, God's people had to learn new ways of living. In other words, they had to learn what it meant to live as God's people, completely reliant on Him for all of their needs.

EXODUS 16:1-5,11-20

1 The entire Israelite community departed from Elim and came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had left the land of Egypt. **2** The entire Israelite community **grumbled** **A** against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. **3** The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by pots of meat and ate all the bread we wanted. Instead, you brought us into this wilderness to make this whole assembly die of hunger!” **4** Then the LORD said to Moses, “I am going to rain bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. This way I will **test them** **B** to see whether or not they will follow my instructions. **5** On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days.” [...] **11** The LORD spoke to Moses, **12** “**I have heard the complaints** **C** of the Israelites. Tell them: At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will eat bread until you are full. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.” **13** So at evening quail came and covered the camp. In the morning there was a layer of dew all around the camp. **14** When the layer of dew evaporated, there were fine flakes on the desert surface, as fine as frost on the ground. **15** When the Israelites saw it, they asked one another, “What is it?” because they didn’t know what it was. Moses told them, “It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat. **16** This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Gather as much of it as each person needs to eat. You may take two quarts per individual, according to the number of people each of you has in his tent.’” **17** So the Israelites did this. Some gathered a lot, some a little. **18** When they measured it by quarts, the person who gathered a lot had no surplus, and the person who gathered a little had no shortage. Each gathered as much as he needed to eat. **19** Moses said to them, “No one is to let any of it remain until morning.” **20** But they didn’t listen to Moses; some people left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. Therefore **Moses was angry** **D** with them.

Passage Outline

Questioning the Future
(Ex. 16:1-3)

Questioning Their
Obedience (Ex. 16:4-5,11-12)

Questioning the Provision
(Ex. 16:13-18)

Questioning the Next Meal
(Ex. 16:19-20)

Keywords

- a. En route from Elim to the Wilderness of Sin, the entire community of Israelites exaggerated their lack of food and overstated how well they fared in Egypt (see also Ex. 14:10-22; 15:22-26).
- b. “Prove” (KJV); to measure someone’s quality through adversity or hardship. The purpose was to test if the people would obey and trust God by faith.
- c. God chose to respond to them directly.
- d. The disobedience of the people tried Moses’ patience. His anger was righteous indignation that the people would so presume on the goodness of the Lord.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

Only a little over a month into their journey, God's people were already complaining. In verses 7-8, Moses made it clear that their complaining was really against God. Moses reminded the people that God had heard their complaints (Ex. 16:8-12). In questioning God's power to sustain them, the people were actually questioning His character.

It was by God's power that Israel had been delivered from Egypt (6:1; 7:4-5; 13:3). That the Israelites voiced their wish to have died at His hand rather than be delivered by it shows that they had not understood God's purposes and power, nor did they fully believe the promises that God had made to their forefathers.

Why do people sometimes prefer the old to the new? How is accepting God's provision for today an act of trust and faith?

God's provision of manna from heaven not only met the people's immediate physical needs, it was also meant to signify that God would sustain their whole lives. Moreover, it was meant to teach His people that their whole lives were to be governed by God's word and promise. This was a trial to teach them that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. The question was whether they would walk in God's instructions.

Throughout the Bible—even in the ministry of Jesus—God's miraculous works are not an end in themselves but a means to point people to His glory. These provisions should have reminded Israel that God was not a distant deity and that He loved and cared for them intimately. Even when they complained, God's response was to provide for them and give them another chance to be obedient.

What is the connection between obedience and trust? Can you have trust without obedience? How is obedience without trust different from obedience with trust?

KEY DOCTRINE: Stewardship – God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him.

Not only did God miraculously provide quail in the evening and manna in the morning, He also provided instructions that the people were to collect two quarts per individual. After all was collected, no one had more or less than what was needed. In fact, each person in the camp could gather as much as he or she needed.

Moses was very clear that God's people were to collect all of the manna and not leave any of it until the next day. Even after being warned by Moses, some people disobediently left part of the manna uneaten overnight. Since they ignored Moses, the remaining manna ruined. This command was meant to be an expression of trust in God for each day's provisions.

How does God's daily provision foster dependence on and trust in God?

APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers must guard themselves against the pessimism of doubt.
- God designs tests that require His followers to depend on Him in greater ways to strengthen their trust in Him.
- Believers should show gratitude when God provides for their daily needs.
- Believers express trust in God through obedience to His commands.

In what areas of your life do you have the most difficulty obeying God? How does that challenge relate to your willingness to trust God? For what do you need to trust God as the next step in your obedience to Him?

With others in your Bible study group, share how God has provided for your needs over the past three months. Celebrate God's provisions by thanking Him as a group.

How can being reminded that God hears our prayers for our daily needs encourage us? Memorize Exodus 16:12 as a means of reminding yourself that God hears and provides for your needs.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: God wants us to trust Him.

Read Exodus 16:1-3, paying close attention to the Israelites' attitude toward God.

Like Israel, we often fail the test of trusting God, and we often find ourselves grumbling and wanting something other than what God has provided. Thankfully, Jesus was faithful in His wilderness testing. Israel was tested for forty years; Jesus was tested for forty days. Remember that Jesus' first test involved bread (Matt. 4:3). The tempter tried to convince Jesus to betray His trust in the Father's provision and turn stones into bread. Where Israel failed, and where you and I often fail, Jesus succeeded.

It is important to note that this was not the only instance where God's people doubted Him and longed for what they had in Egypt (see 14:12), and it would not be the last time of doubt during their wilderness wanderings (see Num. 20:3-5). They had only been in the wilderness for over a month, and already they were complaining about not having food like what they ate in Egypt. The Israelites faced genuine adversity and had genuine concerns, yet ultimately they failed to trust God's provision for these concerns. The Israelites doubted that God would provide; their hearts were revealed in their complaints, and they thought that God had brought them into the wilderness to die. Though He had saved them from slavery, they now doubted that He would sustain them.

How is accepting God's provision for today an act of trust and faith? In what areas of your life do you struggle to accept God's daily provision?

Day 2: God provides for our every need.

Read Exodus 16:4-5,11-12, identifying the provisions God would supply to His people.

Jesus pointed to the manna-like sign after He fed the five thousand (see John 6:41,43-58). He applied this principle to Himself by declaring that He was "the bread that came down from heaven" (v. 41). The bread provided in the feeding of the five thousand was nothing more than a sign to show that Jesus would provide Himself, the bread from heaven that would never perish, the bread from heaven that would meet their deepest needs. The Israelites ate the manna and still died; however, those who feast on Christ will live forever (see John 6:44-51). As Christians, we must understand that in Christ, God has provided a way to meet our deepest needs in this life and in the eternal life to come.

What daily provisions have you trusted God to supply in your life? How have those times of trust grown your faith in God?

Day 3: God's provisions are always enough.

Read Exodus 16:13-18, focusing on verse 18.

Moses made it clear that it was God alone who provided what they needed. The quail was provided in such abundance that it covered the camp. As the morning dew evaporated, manna covered the ground to reveal that God had provided what they needed for their nourishment.

God's people did not understand what He had done: "They asked one another, 'What is it?' because they didn't know what it was" (v. 15). Moses had to explain that this was food that God had graciously provided.

Note that God's provision was strictly according to the people's needs, no more and no less. This is a theme common in the Bible. God's provision is always enough. Not only does God's act of provision remind us that He is the God of creation, His commands for collection also remind us that He is the God who lovingly sustains His people as they dwell in His creation.

How can not knowing what something is or how it was provided cause you to question that provision? How does focusing on what was provided to you get in the way of being thankful for that provision?

Day 4: God provides instructions for our daily lives.

Read Exodus 16:19-20, considering why Moses gave the command in verse 19.

There was a test implicit in Moses' command not to hoard God's provisions; they must be collected as gifts for each day. God would provide bread daily. In this sense, Exodus 16 is paradigmatic, presenting a real-life example of what it means to rely on God to "give us today our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11).

Clearly, Israel failed the test time and time again. Obeying God's specific instructions was an integral aspect to the Israelites' showing they would walk in trust and obedience according to the law of the Lord. We learn from this passage that God not only provides for our needs but also provides the instructions we need to live in a way that honors Him by trusting Him each day.

God permitted one break in their daily pattern for the Sabbath rest. On the night before the Sabbath, double portions could be collected and stored (vv. 22-30). Moreover, some of the manna was to be solemnly preserved. It would be a reminder for future generations of the lesson learned in the wilderness and of God's provision, even when manna was no longer needed once they reached the promised land (vv. 31-36).

How does God's daily provision in your life foster your dependence on and trust in God?

Day 5: God provides when we ask.

Read Matthew 6:5-14, 25-34; 7:7-12, looking for the ways that Jesus said God would provide.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught about prayer and God's provisions. He instructed us to ask in prayer for our daily bread. He instructed us not to worry about what we will eat or drink or wear, because those who seek His kingdom will have all those things given to him. And like a parent provides good gifts for their children, so will God provide those good gifts to His children when they ask.

The Israelites spent much of their time complaining about their wilderness experience and then not trusting God for the provisions He sent to them in their time of need. As Christians, we should turn our worry into prayer and trust that God will provide for each of our daily needs if we only ask Him.

**What specific way can you seek His kingdom this week?
What worry should you turn over to God and trust Him to provide for?**



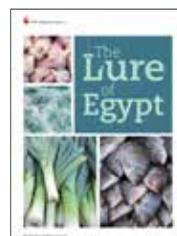
TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Exodus 16, sharing with two other members of your Bible study group.

In what areas of your life do you feel God calling you to turn over your worries to Him? What daily provisions did you ask Him for this week? How did He provide for you?

What past provisions did God remind you of in your study this week? How has remembering those provisions encouraged you to continue trusting God for future provisions?

What truths about prayer did you learn from studying the Sermon on the Mount? How have you adjusted your prayers this week based on that passage?



For additional context, read “The Lure of Egypt” in the Fall 2017 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Available at LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator.

Session 6

Commanded

God gives a clear standard for holy living.

Exodus 20:1-17



Reflect on a time when you did not fully understand the expectations for a job or task assigned to you. How would understanding expectations have changed how you felt about the task and/or the person who assigned it?

Too often, people think of God's commands as being negative or restrictive. They feel that God's law holds them back. For them, God's restrictions keep them from living life as they want, doing what they want to do. In a sense that is true. However, to view God's commandments as restrictive or negative misses the point of God's giving us rules as a demonstration of His love for us.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Parents know how toddlers love to explore their surroundings. Attentive parents also know that toddlers need rules to guide their exploration. One of those rules may be to keep little fingers, or any other object for that matter, out of electrical outlets. This command is for their good, not for their detriment. Similarly, the commandments God gave to His people were not restrictive or negative. On the contrary, they were protective and positive. The fact that God gave His people commandments is a sign of His favor and grace.

The second half of Exodus begins with the events at Mount Sinai when the law was revealed to Moses. This section will later be referred to as the Book of the Covenant (24:7). It includes the Ten Commandments (20:1-21), instructions for worship (20:22-26; 23:10-19), principles for community life (21:1-23:9), and instructions for entering the promised land (23:20-33). Specifically, the Ten Commandments define the life that God calls His people to live before Him (20:1-11) and with each other (20:12-17). Thus, they have both a vertical and horizontal aspect.

As we know from Scripture, the law cannot save people. The law reflected God's holiness and also warned His people of the power of sin to enslave (see Gal. 3:19-23). When we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ, we are released from the power of sin and the condemnation of the law. We are also empowered to live according to God's law (see Jer. 31:31-33; Ezek. 36:26-27). In the believer, the spirit of rebellion against the authority and rule of God is replaced by a spirit of obedience.

EXODUS 20:1-17

1 Then God spoke all these words: **2** I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery. **3** Do not have **other gods** **a** besides me. **4** Do not make an idol for yourself, whether in the shape of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. **5** Do not bow in worship to them, and do not serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the fathers' iniquity, to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, **6** but showing faithful love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commands. **7** Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God, because the LORD will not leave anyone unpunished who misuses his name. **8** Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy: **9** You are to labor six days and do all your work, **10** but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. You must not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female servant, your livestock, or the **resident alien** **b** who is within your city gates. **11** For the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six days; then he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and declared it holy. **12** Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. **13** Do not **murder**. **c** **14** Do not **commit adultery**. **d** **15** Do not steal. **16** Do not give false testimony against your neighbor. **17** Do not covet your neighbor's house. Do not covet your neighbor's wife, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Passage Outline

The God of the Commandments
(Ex. 20:1-2)

Relating to God
(Ex. 20:3-11)

Relating to Society
(Ex. 20:12-17)

Keywords

- a. This did not grant the possibility that other gods existed. Though the Israelites believed in one God, they were vulnerable to the influence of idol worship.
- b. "Stranger" (KJV); "foreigners" (NLT); "sojourner" (ESV). The Sabbath day of rest was for all people.
- c. This commandment forbids the violent and unauthorized taking of life. God determines the timing of one's life and death, not any human.
- d. Unfaithfulness on the part of husbands and wives (Matt. 5:27-32; 1 Cor. 6:19-20). The marital relationship is the foundation of the family and a key element of God's plan for humans.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

The law was never a means for establishing a relationship with God. Notice that God's first words to His people in this passage were a reminder: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt" (v. 2). In this sense, Israel's obedience to God's commands was the proper response to the grace God had shown to them. Their obedience to the commandments was the means by which they enjoyed and responded to what the Lord had already done by delivering them from Egypt and taking them as His possession.

An important point to be made here is that divine indicatives (who God is) always go before divine imperatives (what God's people are supposed to do). Therefore, the preface to the Ten Commandments reminded Israel of God's work on their behalf and called them to covenant faithfulness based upon the Lord's grace shown to them. This is a covenant relationship.

How do the Ten Commandments relate to Israel's relationship with God? How do they relate to Israel's mission to the world around them?

BIBLE SKILL: Explore further a phrase used in a verse or passage. – God identified Himself in various Bible passages as the One who brought the Israelites out of Egypt. Look up the following passages and find that phrase: Judges 6:1-10; Nehemiah 9:1-21; and Daniel 9:1-19. How do these passages compare to Exodus 20:1-2 and the events leading up to that day? How are the situations different? How are these situations related (if at all)? What do they reveal about the importance of remembering what God has done for His people?

The first four commandments (vv. 3-11) identify how God's people should relate to Him. These commandments affirm personal responsibility for one's sins while pointing to how the collective sins of a generation can impact future generations.

The vertical dimension of the first four commandments reminds believers that God alone is worthy of worship and trust. These commands framed the Israelites' life in such a way that they could avoid anything that would divide their allegiance.

How is keeping the first four commandments a way of demonstrating love for God?

While the commandments in verses 13-16 are aimed at actions and words, the tenth commandment aims at the heart. Because of the way coveting values a particular thing over God as the Provider, it is also a breach of the first commandment (see Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5). Therefore, refusing to covet means that we are sold out to God, so much so that the things of this world have little value when it comes to the desires of our hearts.

Is there an issue not covered in this set of laws? If so, what? To what level are all other laws based on these?

APPLY THE TEXT

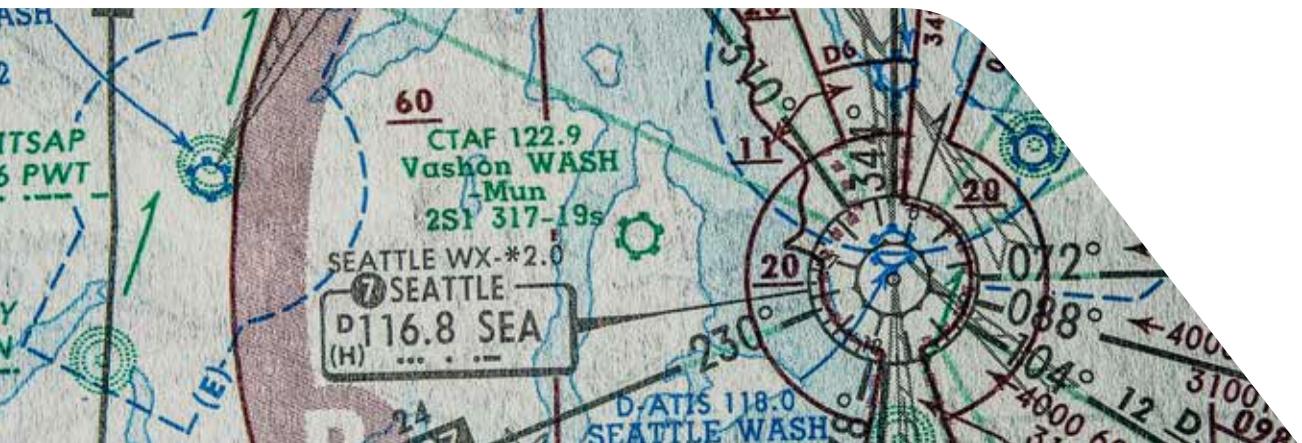
- God has the authority to define how His people should live and to demonstrate His character in this world.
- Believers are to worship God alone, avoiding anything that would divide their allegiance.
- Believers demonstrate their love and commitment to God by treating others with respect and dignity.

What needs to change in your life so that the standard of the commands is seen in you? Ask God to reveal ways in which you fall short of these commandments, confessing to Him what He reveals to you. Ask Him to help you live out His desires in your life.

Paul explained that the law points us to our need for Christ (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:19-26). How do these commandments point you to Christ? With whom can you share that the commandments show our need for a Savior? Pray with other members of your group, asking God to give you opportunities to share about the need for Christ.

Reflect on Exodus 20:3. Consider how keeping this commandment relates to keeping the other nine commandments. Memorize this verse.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: God can be trusted and obeyed.

Read Exodus 20:1-2, noting God's reminder to the Israelites.

What God revealed about Himself in these two verses set the stage for what was about to be revealed in the law. What He had done for the Israelites would be the motivation to do what God required. Throughout Israel's history, the exodus event remained central to their identity, and God often called them to remember what He had done. The God who had delivered them could be trusted and obeyed. (See Judg. 6:8; 1 Sam. 10:18; Neh. 9:18; Ps. 81:10; Jer. 34:13; and Dan. 9:15.)

How do the Ten Commandments relate to your relationship with God? How do they relate to your mission to the world around you?

Day 2: God wants us to worship only Him.

Read Exodus 20:3-6, paying attention to the focus of the first two commandments.

In the first commandment, the Lord demanded exclusive covenant loyalty and exclusive worship. (See also Ex. 22:20; 23:13,24,32.) We are to have no other gods in competition with the Lord God for our affections and obedience. Having no other gods implies loving God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength. Therefore, this command deals with worship.

Related to the first commandment, the second commandment makes it clear that God's people should not make for themselves any idol. In this sense, no object that represents God should substitute for the worship of the one true God. That God is the sovereign Creator of all heaven and earth makes this command explicitly clear. To craft any image of God from created materials elevates creation over the Creator. Therefore, not bowing before idols means honoring and revering God as Creator and Redeemer with every thought. This command regulates worship and warns against false worship. God is a jealous God, and rightly so. He alone is worthy of all honor and praise from His creation. The warning related to children and the third and fourth generations affirms the fact that immoral behavior often results in negative consequences for future generations.

In what do you find ultimate joy and satisfaction? From what "other gods" has the one true God freed you in order to serve Him only?

Day 3: God wants us to honor Him.

Read Exodus 20:7-11, considering the importance placed on the Sabbath.

Misusing the name of the Lord refers to taking a deceptive oath in God's name or invoking God's name to affirm a dishonest act. This command also bans using God's name irreverently or disrespectfully. God was warning His people against using His name as if it were disconnected from His person, presence, and power. Not misusing God's name means honoring that name with our words and our actions.

God also commands His people to remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. God established the rhythm of life in the seven days of creation. The first six days are set apart for work and the seventh day is set apart for rest (see Gen. 2:1-3). The day of rest was a reminder for the Israelites to trust that they were sustained by God's hand, just as God had sustained them in their slavery in Egypt. Remembering the Sabbath means trusting God and finding our rest in Him—not in our own striving. In this sense, the Sabbath is a weekly reminder that God, not our work, sustains us.

KEY DOCTRINE: The Lord's Day – The Lord's Day commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private.

What boundaries do you need to put in place to create time for the Sabbath each week for yourself and for your family?

Day 4: God wants us to honor authority.

Read Exodus 20:12. Focus on the importance God places on honoring your parents.

The first horizontal command is to honor your father and your mother. This means treating them with the proper respect due to their role. Beyond treating parents with respect, children are to provide for them and look after them in their old age.

Not only did both Jesus and Paul underline the importance of this command (Mark 7:1-13; Eph. 6:1-3; 1 Tim. 5:4), it is also the only command with a promise attached to it. When we honor our parents, our days will be filled with God's presence and favor. This becomes clear when we consider that honoring our parents means accepting and promoting the family values that God has set into creation.

This command also carries with it the implication of submitting to the order of relationships designed by God and honoring all authority that God has established.

As an adult, are you released from the commandment of honoring your parents? How can you honor your parents through difficult situations?

Day 5: God wants us to protect life.

Read Exodus 20:13-17, identifying the last five commandments.

The sixth through eighth commandments uphold justice and holiness as Israel sought to live as a light among the nations. Avoiding murder involves loving and protecting life as the image of God in man. Avoiding adultery means keeping our hearts pure from lust and from twisting things to appease our sinful appetites. Not stealing includes working hard to supply not only for your own needs but also for the needs of others.

The ninth commandment prohibits speaking falsely for the sake of gaining at the expense of others and perverting justice. In every situation our words bear truth.

Specifically, verse 17 warns of the sin of coveting anything that belongs to one's neighbor. Coveting is the motivation for murder, adultery, stealing, and lying.

To what level do you agree that all of society's laws are based on the Ten Commandments?

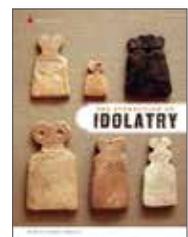
TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Exodus 20, sharing with two other members of your Bible study group.

What commandment did you bump up against this week? How can you honor God by focusing on His intent behind that commandment?

What boundaries can you set as a group to help protect the Sabbath? How can you hold one another accountable to that standard?

How did you see God's commands expressed in the laws you followed this week?



For additional context, read "The Attraction of Idolatry," an archived *Biblical Illustrator* article provided on the CD-ROM in the Fall 2017 *Explore the Bible: Leader Pack*.

Equipped

God enables and equips His people to do the work He directs them to do.

Exodus 25:1-9; 31:1-6



Consider the work of your Bible study group. What skills and abilities are needed for the group to function well? What kind of financial resources are needed for the group to function?

Most of us never think about what is required for a good Bible study group to function. We arrive to fresh coffee and a clean room. We use the comments in resources like the one you are now reading to help the group better understand the passage. Prayer requests are shared, and the list somehow ends up in your email box. God provides through you and other people the resources needed for your Bible study group to function. He has given various gifts and talents to people in your group who make sure each action is completed.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The second half of Exodus focuses on the events at Mount Sinai and the giving of the law through Moses. In this half of the book God prepared His people (19:1-25) and gave them the law (20:1-23:19). God also gave them instructions for entering the promised land (23:20-33). In 24:1-18 the Lord confirmed His covenant with His people. In this session, our passage turns to the instructions related to the construction of the tabernacle (25:1-31:18; 35:1-3).

The instructions concerning the tabernacle and the description of the instructions make up the majority of the second half of the Book of Exodus. We must remember that the Lord had said of Israel, “I will take you as my people, and I will be your God” (6:7). The tabernacle was the means through which God had chosen to dwell among His people. The level of detail in chapters 25-31 points to the reality that God is a holy God and His people must relate to Him according to His revealed word. The details concerning the tabernacle are important because they reveal God’s grace toward His people in protecting them from His consuming holiness. We also are reminded that God wants to dwell among His people; otherwise, He would not have gone to such great lengths to lay out the painstakingly specific details for the tabernacle.

This entire narrative points us forward to Jesus Christ, who tabernacled among us (John 1:14). God so desired to dwell with His people that He sent His only Son to make a way (John 3:16). Through Christ, we are able to dwell with God in the most intimate sense. Christ is the way (John 14:6). Not only is Jesus the greater tabernacle, He is also greater than Moses. Jesus is the only Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5).

EXODUS 25:1-9; 31:1-6

25:1 The LORD spoke to Moses: **2** “Tell the Israelites to take an offering for me. You are to take my offering from everyone who is willing to give. **3** This is the **offering** **a** you are to receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze; **4** blue, purple, and scarlet yarn; fine linen and goat hair; **5** ram skins dyed red and fine leather; acacia wood; **6** oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; **7** and onyx along with other gemstones for mounting on **the ephod and breastpiece** **b**. **8** They are to make a **sanctuary** **c** for me so that I may dwell among them. **9** You must make it according to all that I show you—the pattern of the tabernacle as well as the pattern of all its furnishings.” [...]

31:1 The LORD also spoke to Moses: **2** “Look, I have appointed by name **Bezalel** **d** son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. **3** I have filled him with God’s Spirit, with wisdom, understanding, and ability in every craft **4** to design artistic works in gold, silver, and bronze, **5** to cut gemstones for mounting, and to carve wood for work in every craft. **6** I have also selected Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to be with him. I have put wisdom in the heart of every skilled artisan in order to make all that I have commanded you.”

Passage Outline

The Offering (Ex. 25:1-7)

The Purpose (Ex. 25:8-9)

The Leaders (Ex. 31:1-6)

Keywords

- a. An offering separated as a gift to be consecrated to the Lord for a sacred purpose, a voluntary offering from those whose heart prompted them to give. This offering would serve as the means for the tabernacle.
- b. The ephod was the specific garment worn by the high priest. The breastplate was a piece of cloth with golden settings for precious stones.
- c. The sacred and portable tent where God met His people in the wilderness. Nomads lived in tents, and they had no permanent place to live at this time; God set aside one tent as His dwelling place.
- d. The name means “under the protection of God.” Bezalel was a member of the tribe of Judah (Ex. 31:2) and a great-grandson of Caleb (1 Chron. 2:20) who was gifted by God to train others to build the tabernacle.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

Our study begins with God's directing Moses to call on the Israelites to willingly offer the supplies needed to build the tabernacle. Before anything else, the instructions for the tabernacle begin with an assessment of the people's hearts.

In verse 2, God called for giving from willing hearts. God wanted the contributions to come from people who loved Him and wanted Him to dwell among them.

In verses 3-7 we see that God requires costly or sacrificial giving. The materials for the tabernacle were unique and valuable. We may rightly ask: where did the people get these costly items? Weren't they wandering through the wilderness? Remember that God promised that Israel would not leave Egypt empty-handed (see 3:21-22). Israel was delivered from slavery with great wealth (12:36). In His divine provision, God provided these elements to build the tabernacle even before Israel knew what they would be used for.

How do believers honor God by participating in willful and costly giving toward His purposes? Give an example of how God provided for a specific need through His people.

BIBLE SKILL: Compare similar passages. – In his Second Letter to the Corinthians, Paul called on these believers to fulfill a commitment they made to take an offering to assist believers in Jerusalem. Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15 and compare it to the directive given by God to Moses to collect an offering for the tabernacle (Ex. 25:1-9). How are these calls similar? How are they different? What principles about giving can be seen in both accounts?

In verse 8, God instructed the people to make Him a sanctuary that He might dwell among them. God called His people to build the tabernacle exactly as He instructed them. He demanded that they follow His pattern. It is significant that Moses did not devise the plan for creating a sanctuary for God; rather, the Lord provided a detailed pattern.

As a holy God, He was not to be approached according to the best Israelite ideas or the whims of the culture but according to His word. God stipulates how we must approach Him. The carefulness of following God's pattern was important as a heart check for Israel.

Is there a relationship between our obedience and God's presence? Explain.

The Lord prepared Bezalel son of Uri and Oholiab son of Ahisamach to work in every craft He had prescribed for the construction of the tabernacle and all its elements (see 35:30–36:2). Not only had God provided the materials and the instructions for the tabernacle, He also empowered the workers to build this tabernacle by the power of His Spirit.

How does God's provision of skills and talents give both confidence and humility in doing His work?

APPLY THE TEXT

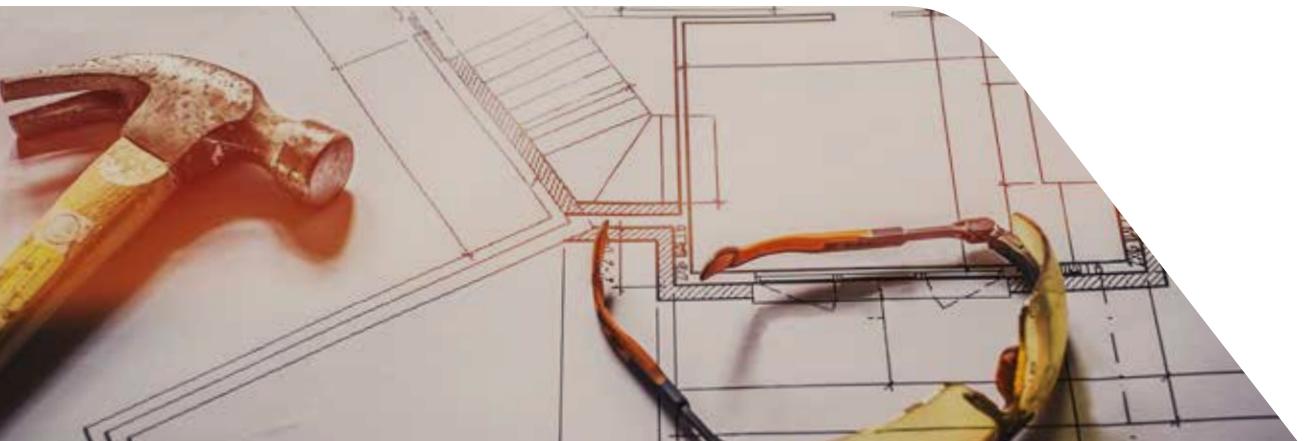
- Believers honor God by giving offerings for His purposes.
- Believers can enjoy the presence of God when they come together for worship and work together for His purposes.
- God provides skills and talents that can be used for His honor and glory.

Discuss as a group the needs seen in your church or community that could be met with the resources and talents available in the group. What will be the next steps in meeting these needs?

In what ways are you using the skills and talents that God has given you to join Him on His mission? What actions do you need to take to develop and refine your skills and find a place of service in your church or Bible study group?

Read and memorize Exodus 31:6. Reflect on the role Oholiab would have in completing the building of the tabernacle. Thank God for the opportunity He gives you to be involved in His work.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: Sacrifice honors God and His purposes.

Read Exodus 25:1-7, noting the specific sacrifices God is calling them to make.

God told Moses to receive an offering from everyone who is willing to give. Why is this important? One could argue that regardless of the state of their hearts, God could use the materials for His purposes. However, God wanted the contributions to come from people who loved Him and wanted Him to dwell among them. What moves people's hearts to give to God's work? I think it is as simple as remembering God's goodness to them. As our hearts overflow with thankfulness and gratitude, we give.

The cost and the detail of the tabernacle remind us that God cannot be approached casually. But this again points us to the grace of God. What God requires, He provides. God provided His people what they needed to build a suitable place for Him to dwell among them.

This truth has a clear connection to the New Testament. We know that sin separates us from God. For this reason, the tabernacle and temple point to a greater reality—God desires to dwell with His people, and through Jesus He makes a way for His people to dwell with Him.

KEY DOCTRINE: Stewardship – According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

How do you honor God by participating in willful and costly giving toward His purposes? What is a sacrifice God is calling you to make for His purposes?

Day 2: God continually made a way for His people to dwell with Him.

Read Exodus 25:8, reflecting on the similarities between the garden and the tabernacle.

The theme of God's dwelling in the midst of His people is a significant biblical theme. In the garden of Eden, God walked in the midst of the garden in the cool of the day (Gen. 3:8). Creation itself was the sanctuary in which God dwelt with Adam and Eve (Ps. 104:1-3,13). The tabernacle, like the garden of Eden, is where God dwelt, and various details of the tabernacle suggest it is a picture of Eden—of paradise lost. Both had an east-facing entrance guarded by cherubim, the tree of life (symbolized by the lampstand), and the tree of knowledge (symbolized by the law). This tabernacle pointed back to Eden and pointed upward to the heavenly tabernacle in which God dwells (Heb. 8:5).

How would you explain the idea of God's dwelling with people? How was this different from the way people usually attempted to relate to gods?

Day 3: God's presence is available to us.

Read Exodus 25:9, considering the call for obedience.

God stipulates how we must approach Him. No one can approach God in his or her own way without being condemned by sin. God must provide the way.

In the tabernacle and later in the temple, God's presence was separated by a veil (see 26:31-35). The Gospel accounts tell us that when Jesus was crucified, the veil was torn in two (Luke 23:44-45). This shows us that access to God was granted through the sacrifice of Christ. Christ did all of the perfect law-keeping so that we could enjoy fellowship with our God. The Book of Hebrews makes it clear that Christ makes intercession between God and man (Heb. 7:25). What made the travels through the wilderness bearable for the Israelites was the ever-immediate and knowable presence of God always before them. Through Christ, we have even greater access to that comfort and security.

How does your level of obedience to God affect the feeling of His presence in your life?

Day 4: God will equip you to fulfill His tasks.

Read Exodus 31:1-6, identifying the specific ways God equipped His workers.

In verse 3, Bezalel is described as being filled with God's Spirit, which means here that he had been equipped to fulfill the particular task to which he was called. The expression "filled ... with God's Spirit" (v. 3) appears in the Old Testament with the idea of God's equipping a person for a task that serves His purposes and the well-being of God's people.

Just like the workers mentioned in this passage, we are equipped by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the particular tasks to which God has called us. God prepares us through the power of His Spirit for the tasks that serve the well-being of God's people. Imagine what the church can accomplish when we all set our hands to the task. We already have a promised outcome. We are to do what God has called us to do, knowing that He is empowering us by His Spirit to accomplish His work.

How does God's provision of skills and talents give you confidence and humility in doing His work?

Day 5: Jesus' death delivered us from judgment.

Review this week's passages, highlighting the areas where God is instructive to His people.

If you step back and look at Israel's wilderness journeys, you come to an amazing realization. They followed God every step of the way. When God's presence stopped, they stopped and set up camp. When God's presence moved before them, they pressed on. God was on a mission, and they joined God on that mission. God does not merely send the church on mission; God is already on mission. The church is called to join Him on His mission. This also means, then, that the church does not simply have a missions program; it should wholly exist to be on mission.

What is a skill you have used to serve God? Consider if you could have accomplished those tasks without God's intervention in your life.



TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Exodus 25 and 31, sharing with two other members of your Bible study group.

What sacrifice is God calling you to make in His name?

What skills and talents do you have that can be used to further God's kingdom? Name one specific way you can minister to the community around you using those talents.

When do you most feel God's presence? What steps can you take to increase that feeling? Consider if there are areas of your life where God is calling for your obedience to His will.



For additional context, read "Bezalel, Artisan of the Tabernacle" in the Fall 2017 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Available at LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator.

Rebellion

Worshiping anyone or anything other than the one true God is rebellion against Him.

Exodus 32:1-6,11-14



What is one thing that would devastate you if you lost it? What is one thing that you think would bring you contentment if you gained it?

Essentially, anything other than God that we seek to give us security and significance is an idol. For some, it is romantic relationships. For others, it is approval. For many people, it is financial security or a comfortable lifestyle. The list goes on and on. While these can be good things, they are not ultimate things. They fail to deliver the deep and lasting joy that we long for. We were created for God. Augustine said, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in Him.” The good news of the gospel is that, in Christ, we have more than we need to meet our hearts’ deepest desires. The only way to destroy our idols is to set our affections on Him and enjoy Him above all else.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Exodus 32–34 the Israelites were camped at the foot of Mount Sinai. It was from this encampment that Moses made the long climb up Mount Sinai to meet with God and receive the law. But as Moses was on the mountaintop, God’s people become impatient and rebellious. Chapter 32 records perhaps the most flagrant act of idolatrous rebellion in all of Scripture. How sad it is when we so easily abandon the God who continually delivers us.

This infamous incident of idolatry that we encounter in Exodus 32 was central to Israel’s journey of faith. In their impatience with Moses (and thus with God), Israel created a golden idol for worship. What this passage reveals about the Israelites—and about us—is that we are all created to worship. As we will see in the study, the perpetual trap of idolatry blinds the eyes, closes the ears, and stiffens the neck to the voice of God. Thankfully, there is more grace in God than there is sin in us. When Israel was unfaithful, God was faithful to His promises.

EXODUS 32:1-6,11-14

1 When the people saw that Moses **delayed** **A** in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said to him, “Come, make gods for us who will go before us because this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt—we don’t know what has happened to him!” **2** Aaron replied to them, “Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me.” **3** So all the people took off the gold rings that were on their ears and brought them to Aaron. **4** He took the gold from them, fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it into an image of a calf. Then they said, “Israel, these are your gods, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!” **5** When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of it and made an announcement: “There will be a **festival** **B** to the LORD tomorrow.” **6** Early the next morning they arose, offered burnt offerings, and presented fellowship offerings. The people sat down to eat and drink, and got up to party. [...] **11** But Moses **sought the favor of the LORD** **C** his God: “LORD, why does your anger burn against your people you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and a strong hand? **12** Why should the Egyptians say, ‘He brought them out with an evil intent to kill them in the mountains and eliminate them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce anger and **relent** **D** concerning this **disaster** **E** planned for your people. **13** Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel—you swore to them by yourself and declared, ‘I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and will give your offspring all this land that I have promised, and they will inherit it forever.’” **14** So the LORD relented concerning the disaster he had said he would bring on his people.

Passage Outline

Rebellion
(Ex. 32:1-4)

Sin Committed
(Ex. 32:5-6)

Appeal for Grace
(Ex. 32:11-14)

Keywords

- a. Moses’ delay in returning from the mountain to the people was a test, and they failed. Occasionally God uses delays to test and strengthen our faith.
- b. Aaron planned the feast possibly as a sop to the people, with the feast designed to honor the Lord, the true God!
- c. In spite of their sins, Moses deeply loved the people. God honored Moses’ sincere appeal and did not follow through with His threat to destroy them.
- d. Moses’ compassionate appeal for God to remember that if He allowed the Israelites to be consumed by their sin, His name would be mocked by the pagan Egyptians.
- e. The destruction of the sinning Israelites at the hand of a righteous, holy God, and the testimony of such that would be given to the enemies of the Lord.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

KEY DOCTRINE: God – There is one and only one living and true God.

Moses was on the mountain receiving instruction from God about the tabernacle. It seems that Israel doubted whether he would return. The people called on Aaron to make gods who would go before them. In response to their request, Aaron instructed the people to bring him their gold jewelry so that he might fashion this false god. This jewelry had been a gift from God taken out of Egypt to be used in the building of the tabernacle. Yet, here they were, willing to use it to blaspheme the very God who provided it to them. Aaron fashioned an image of a calf for the people to worship. It is no coincidence that Israel made a golden calf. Most likely, they chose a calf because cows were worshiped in Egypt and were used to represent the Egyptians' creator god.

What role does a person's impatience play in idolatry? What would you consider the greater influence—impatience, or the desire for a leader?

Having made the golden calf, Aaron built an altar and announced a day of celebration. Early the next morning the people offered sacrifices to the idol, followed by a full festival. This text makes it abundantly clear that Israel had turned its back on God. Israel had exchanged the truth of God for a lie. They worshiped a creation, rather than the Creator, and they were in all-out celebration of their idolatry.

BIBLE SKILL: Compare, contrast, and correlate Bible passages – Review the following New Testament passages about idolatry or idols: Acts 17:29; Romans 1:23; 1 Corinthians 10:7; Galatians 4:8; and Colossians 3:5. How do these verses inform us about Exodus 32? What lessons about idols and idolatry are common in all these verses?

God's wrath burned hot against His people. This was a situation prime for God to destroy the entire nation of sinners, and He would be just in giving them what they deserved, since they were not rendering to Him what He deserves. However, God is faithful to His word. This is where we see Moses functioning as a mediator between God and Israel. Moses called on God to remember His promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel.

Moses' prayer on behalf of the people accomplished two things. First, it verbalized (or revealed) the reality that God is moved to burning wrath because of His people's rebellion. Second, it revealed God's promise to His people. This is what held back the Lord's judgment—His promise. Despite the people's rebellion, the promise of God is the controlling factor in this narrative. In the end, God turned His wrath away from His people and showed them grace.

How does God's being faithful to His promises give us comfort today? How is God's mercy seen in this passage?

APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers must stand against any acts that are in rebellion against God.
- Any attempt to worship any person or object other than the one true God will lead to foolishness.
- Believers can intercede on behalf of the disobedient, asking for God to give them an opportunity to repent.

What are some practical ways that we as a group of believers can help one another in guarding against idolatry and placing our trust or finding joy in things other than God?

Why is it critical that we intercede for people who are blinded by their own idolatry? What is our role in pointing out their foolishness? How can we approach them with both truth and love?

Reflect on Exodus 33:14 and how the promise of God's presence should discourage us from seeking joy, meaning, or peace from any source other than God. Memorize this verse.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: Impatience leads to idolatry.

Read Exodus 32:1-4, considering how quickly the people became impatient.

The true God of creation delivered His people out of Egypt, and now they were creating and bowing to the false Egyptian god of creation. How did this happen? Didn't the Israelites just declare in Exodus 24:3 that they would do everything the Lord had commanded them? Didn't God command them to have no other gods before Him (20:3)? Didn't God demand that they make no idols (20:4)? The psalmist declared that they had already forgotten God their Savior, the one who did great things in Egypt (Ps. 106:19-22).

The reality is that it is very easy to be drawn away from God toward idols. For us, the idols may not be golden calves, but they are ten thousand other things. We were made to worship. If what we worship is anything or anyone other than God, it is an idol. Idolatry, because it is rooted in the heart, is the elusive and silent killer of vibrant Christian faith. As Christians, we understand that in Christ we find joy, security, peace, identity, and salvation that nothing else in this world can give.

What feelings or situations tempt you to feel restless and impatient with God?

Day 2: Idolatry leads to foolishness.

Read Exodus 32:5-6, noting the people's focus.

Verses 5-6 provide a clear example of what Paul condemned in Romans 1:22-25—namely, that people become fools when they exchange the image of God for idols. One might wonder how Israel became so foolish. Verse 8 says that they quickly turned aside from God's ways. In verse 9 we receive a clue that offers clarity into why Israel so quickly moved into idolatrous celebration. Moses declared that they were "a stiff-necked people" (v. 9).

One of the Old Testament principles for understanding the effects of sin, especially idolatry, is that we become like what we worship. In Exodus 32, Israel had become stiff-necked, like a wild or untrained cow—they would not obey.

The idea is that when people are fully engaged in—and, in the case of Israel, celebrating—their idolatry, they become blind to their sin. In a sense, they receive their just reward. Any attempt to worship any person or object other than the one true God will lead to foolishness. Sometimes the scariest judgment of God in this life is to give us exactly what we want.

What is the relationship between idolatry and foolishness? Why is it so hard for people who trust in idols to see the foolishness of their actions?

Day 3: Our idolatry leads to God's wrath.

Read Exodus 32:11-13, paying attention to what Moses was asking of God.

God's wrath burned hot against His people. We must remember that these were the people He had saved from Egypt. God is jealous for His people's worship. He is also just and holy. Israel was in absolute defiance and rebellion. We must also remember the truth that God's jealousy for His people's worship does not make Him power-hungry. God is the only, all-powerful God of creation. Therefore, He alone is worthy of worship.

God had every right to judge, even destroy, His people. In fact, verse 10 gives us the initial verdict of God regarding the idolatrous rebellion of His people: "Now leave me alone, so that my anger can burn against them and I can destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation." God told Moses (1) to leave Him alone—that is, to make no appeal for mercy for His people; (2) that His anger would burn against His people; (3) that He desired to destroy His people; and (4) that He would begin a new nation and a new people with Moses.

Yet, Moses interceded on behalf of the people, appealing to God's faithfulness. Moses is a good model for us. God calls us to intercede for others, asking God to change what would otherwise happen as He judges rebellion and idolatry.

How would you characterize Moses' relationship with God based on his dialogue with God in this passage?

Day 4: God is faithful to His promises.

Read Exodus 32:14, focus on the importance of the word "relented."

Note the word "relented" used in verse 14. Because of His promise to His people, God relented from the disaster of destroying the people. The word "relent" has the idea of God's being moved to pity and having compassion. God in His longsuffering takes upon Himself the evil that has been done against Him. God's relenting here reveals His desire to be true to His own character and promise but also to show His steadfast love for His people. Moses' conversation with God did not remind God of something the Lord had forgotten. It does not mean that Moses swayed God, as if this whole event had taken Him by surprise. The Lord's promise is what held back His judgment. Although God's people enacted a serious rebellion against Him, God's promise never changes. In the end, He turned His wrath away and showed His people grace.

How does God's being faithful to His promises give you comfort today? What did you learn about God's mercy in this passage?

Day 5: Christ interceded on our behalf.

Read Exodus 32:11-14 again. Consider the depth of God's wrath and the abundance of His grace.

Moses, as the mediator between God and the people, communicated this reality to the people. Moses stood in the gap, speaking on behalf of both sides. He spoke on behalf of God to the people. He also spoke on behalf of the people to God. This should strike all of us as familiar. Jesus stands in the gap between sinful people and a holy God. What makes Jesus greater than Moses is that Jesus consumed God's wrath upon Himself. Thus, He satisfied the wrath of God against sin and demonstrated the love of God toward sinners.

For our salvation, Christ interceded on our behalf. Now, in Christ, the church is called to intercede on behalf of others, asking God to open their eyes to their sin and their need for repentance. The good news of this story, and the good news of the gospel, is that there is more grace in God than sin in us.

What is your responsibility in regard to people you know who have not yet made the decision to put their faith in Christ?

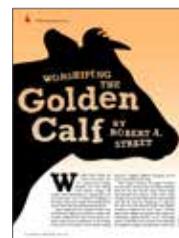
TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Exodus 32, sharing with two other members of your Bible study group.

Who or what we worship matters, and lip service to God is not authentic worship. How does your real worship affect your family, close friends, and community?

When someone lets you "off the hook" how do you feel about that person? When has that happened recently? How does God want you to feel about His forgiveness?

What promises has God been faithful to that you did not deserve?



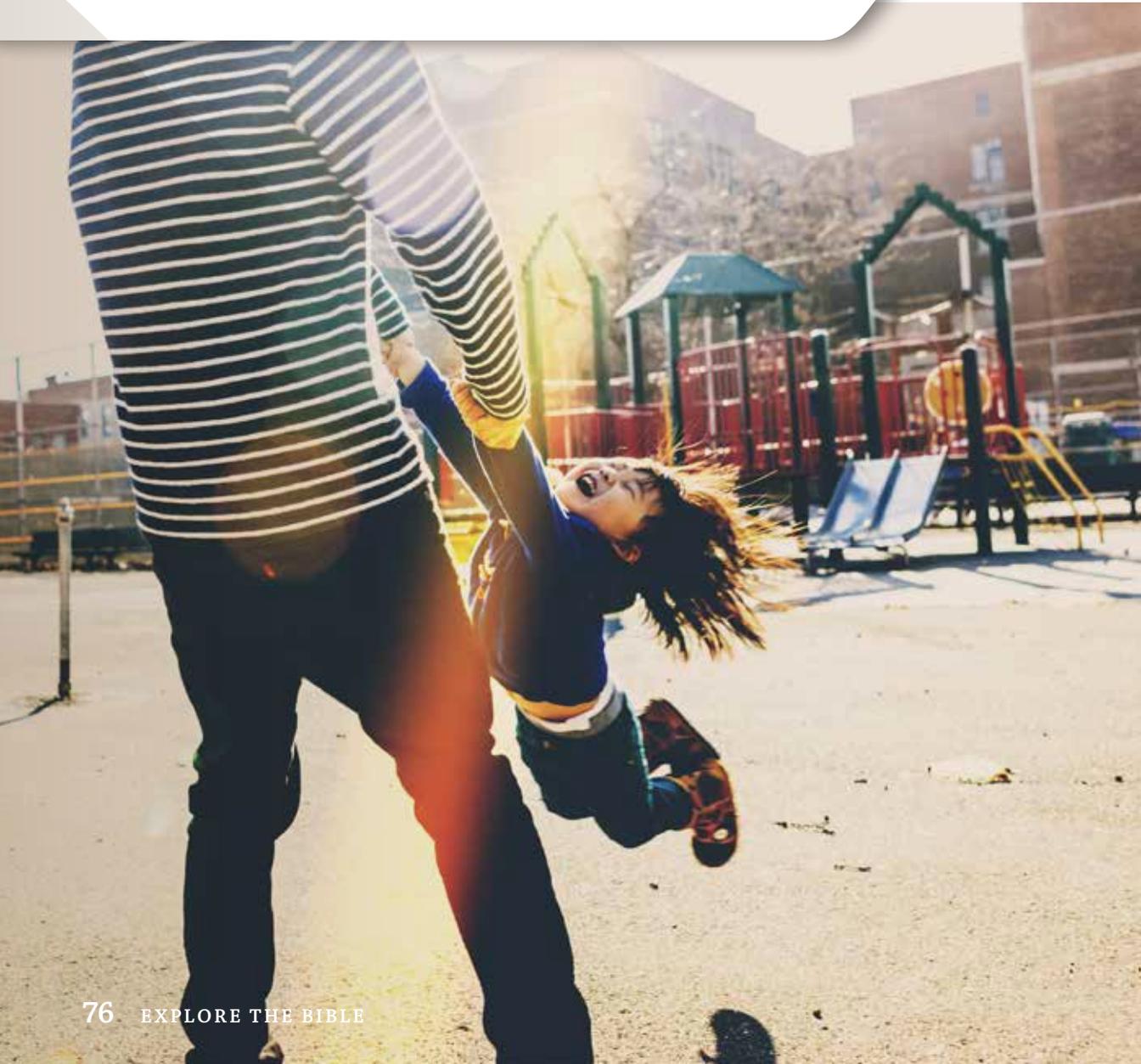
For additional context, read "Worshipping the Golden Calf" in the Fall 2017 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Available at LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator.

Session 9

His Presence

God enjoys dwelling with His obedient people.

Exodus 39:42-43; 40:1-4,34-38



How would you describe the desire for assurance when facing a difficult task or unsettling situation? What sources do people seek for assurance?

When do people most often cry out to God? At what points in our lives do we more fervently seek His presence? I would argue that it is when things are falling apart. We cry out to God most eagerly when our circumstance reveals our need for His presence. As children, most of us sought our parents when we were scared or unsure about our surroundings. We wanted to know that we had not been forsaken.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Heading toward the promised land by day, and especially by night, the Israelites realized their need for God's presence, guidance, and security. This reminds us that the presence of God is the peace of His people. For Israel, the tabernacle was the visible reminder of God's continuing presence and love for His people.

The second half of Exodus focused on the events at Mount Sinai and the giving of the law through Moses. In this half of the book, God prepared His people (19:1-25) and gave them the law (20:1-23:19). God gave them instructions for entering the promised land (23:20-33). He also confirmed the covenant (24:1-18).

The initial instructions relating to the tabernacle are dealt with in 25:1-31:18 and 35:1-3. Throughout this section, we are reminded that the entirety of the exodus event was a gracious act of God by which He delivered, sustained, and instructed His people for new life outside of Egypt.

The Lord had said to Israel, "I will take you as my people, and I will be your God" (6:7). The tabernacle was the means through which God chose to dwell among His people.

The instructions for the tabernacle (25:1-31:17) and the description of the instructions (35:4-40:38) make up the majority of the second half of the Book of Exodus. The final section of Exodus describes the preparation, construction, and assembly of the tabernacle. Once the preparations were in place, the tabernacle was filled by the glory of the Lord. The length of this account emphasizes the importance of the tabernacle for the people of God.

EXODUS 39:42-43; 40:1-4,34-38

39:42 The Israelites had done all the work according to everything the LORD had commanded Moses. **43** Moses inspected all the work they had accomplished. They had done just as the LORD commanded. Then Moses **blessed** **A** them. [...]

40:1 The LORD spoke to Moses: **2** “You are to set up the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, on the first day of the first month. **3** Put the ark of the testimony there and screen off the ark with the curtain. **4** Then bring in the table and lay out its arrangement; also bring in the lampstand and set up its lamps.” [...] **34** The **cloud** **B** covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. **35** Moses was unable to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud rested on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. **36** The Israelites set out whenever the cloud was taken up from the **tabernacle** **C** throughout all the **stages** **D** of their journey. **37** If the cloud was not taken up, they did not set out until the day it was taken up. **38** For the cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day, and there was a fire inside the cloud by night, visible to the entire house of Israel throughout all the stages of their journey.

Passage Outline

Finished! (Ex. 39:42-43)

Assembly Required
(Ex. 40:1-4)

Glory Shown (Ex. 40:34-35)

God Led (Ex. 40:36-38)

Keywords

- a. As God’s representative, Moses blessed them because they had completed the building of the tabernacle precisely as God had directed, with no shortcuts in the building process.
- b. God’s presence in this cloud had led the Israelites through the wilderness to the promised land (Ex. 13) and descended to cover the tabernacle when it was built (Ex. 40). The encamped Israelites did not resume their journey until the cloud moved forward.
- c. God’s presence inhabited the tabernacle before the Holy Spirit was sent after Jesus’ resurrection to indwell the hearts of God’s people.
- d. The Israelites’ journey through the wilderness started and stopped only according to the timing of the distances God planned for the journey.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

In chapters 25–31, Moses made sure that the work of building the tabernacle was done according to the instruction given by the Lord. In these verses, the Israelites had finished making all the items for the tabernacle as specified by God. The repetition of the phrase “according to everything the LORD had commanded” (39:42) is key. It clearly emphasizes the people’s obedience.

How does obeying the directives of God give us pleasure and satisfaction?

In the act of building the tabernacle, the people had a physical and formative reminder of who they were as the people of God. What’s beautiful about this passage is that having learned from their past disobedience, God’s people made sure that they followed God’s word exactly at this point.

How do past acts of disobedience drive us to acts of obedience?

Once again, the Lord spoke to Moses and gave him specific instructions regarding when and how he was to prepare and set apart the tabernacle. In obedience to God’s word, Moses carried out the tasks just as God had commanded (see 40:16-33). God instructed where the ark, the table, and the lampstand were to be placed. All of these items were placed in the tabernacle, in the center of the people, as reminders of their identity.

What were the dangers if Moses failed to assemble the tabernacle according to God’s directions? What are the dangers today of failing to follow God’s directions?

They had followed God’s commands regarding the building of the tabernacle just as He had instructed. God, in His sovereign mercy, was delighted to fill the tabernacle with His glory. Strange as it seems, the tent designed for meeting with the Lord was the very place where even Moses could not withstand God’s presence. Moses never saw the glory of the Lord directly. He saw only glimpses.

How does this biblical glimpse of God’s glory give us comfort and confidence as we look to the future? Why is it important that we keep our eyes on the future as we endure the struggles of daily life?

The cloud and the pillar of fire were constant reminders of God’s guidance and presence among the people throughout all the stages of their journey to the promised land. Today, God offers direction through His Word and the promptings of His indwelling Spirit.

How does the certainty of God’s presence give someone assurance to follow God’s mission even when the outcome is uncertain?

APPLY THE TEXT

- Satisfaction can be found in finishing the work God has assigned us.
- God offers specific directions to His people.
- Believers can celebrate with reverence God's presence in their lives.
- God provides leadership to His people.

Identify the tasks God has assigned to you. Review Exodus 39:42. How would this verse be different if your assigned tasks were the subject of this verse? What actions do you need to take to move toward completing your God-given tasks?

Reflect on God's presence. Does His presence concern or excite you? What changes do you need to make in order to look forward to being in the presence of God?

What can your group do to better place itself in a position to be ready for God's presence? What is it doing well already? How can you build upon what is already in place?

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: Obedience to God brings satisfaction.

Read Exodus 39:42, identifying how the Israelites did the work.

One of the patterns we have noticed in our study of Exodus is just how fickle and unfaithful Israel had been. Even in the construction of the tabernacle, the people learned righteousness from continued obedience. Taking a lesson from their past disobedience, God's people took great care to follow God's word exactly this time. With careful attention to God's word, they moved forward in obedience to His commands.

BIBLE SKILL: Correlate essential biblical concepts. – On a sheet of paper, draw a large triangle. On one corner of the triangle, write the words “God’s presence.” On another corner, write “worship.” On the third corner, write “obedience.” Read through Exodus 35:1–40:38. Record the teaching about God’s presence, the occasions where worship took place, and when God’s people were called to obey. Look for correlations and how the three categories interact with each other. What did you discover about God, worship, and obedience as you identified the points of interaction?

How does obeying the directives of God give you pleasure and satisfaction?

Day 2: Obedience to God brings blessings.

Read Exodus 39:43, noticing how Moses responded to their obedience.

If we approach our failures with a very practical view for spiritual growth, we will see two things. First, failure gives way to humility for the best of saints. Second, grace gives way to hope for the worst of sinners. When a saint experiences failure, it produces humility. When a sinner experiences grace after failure, it produces hope. Often it is the experience of God's grace in forgiveness after our past failures that equips us with greater determination to say no to sin and yes to godliness. God's work secured His people's redemption, and now their work would secure His dwelling place among them. In this sense, satisfaction can be found in finishing the work God has assigned us.

KEY DOCTRINE: Sanctification – Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him.

How do your past acts of disobedience drive you to acts of obedience? Record an example.

Day 3: We are God's people.

Read Exodus 40:1-4, underlining the three specific elements God mentioned.

It is important to note that central to the Israelites' camp were the elements that defined their identity as a people. The ark (see 25:10-22) would hold the Ten Commandments, for God's law was central to their life. It would also hold a container of manna and Aaron's staff. The ark was to be placed behind a curtain in the most holy place.

The table (see 25:23-30) was placed opposite the ark on the other side of the curtain. The Lord had instructed Moses to put "the Bread of the Presence" on this table (25:30). The bread consisted of twelve loaves (Lev. 24:5-9) and signified God's provision for His people. Only the priests were to consume this bread (Lev. 24:9).

An additional furnishing mentioned was the lampstand (see Ex. 25:31-40). Some scholars have suggested that the lampstand represented Israel's call to be a light to the Gentiles (see Isa. 60:3).

All of these items were placed in the tabernacle, in the center of the people, as reminders of their identity. In this sense, God not only directed but also used their history to form His people. These reminders allowed them to stay grounded in their identity as His people.

How do you think focusing the Israelites' attention helped them understand God and communicate with Him? How can you better focus your attention on God?

Day 4: God's presence brings comfort.

Read Exodus 40:34-35, looking for a symbol of God's presence.

From this point forward, God would direct the Israelites' journeys by means of the cloud by day and the fire by night. The cloud and fire were visible reminders that the Lord dwelt among them. His presence was real, a comforting reminder during their journey through the wilderness. The cloud was also a sign that God accepted all that His people had done.

In Hebrews we are told that Jesus is the reality to which the tabernacle pointed; He is "the greater and more perfect tabernacle" (Heb. 9:11). In John 2, Jesus said that His body was the temple, the meeting place of God and man (vv. 19-22).

How does this biblical glimpse of God's glory give you comfort and confidence as you look to the future? Why is it important to keep your eyes on the future in the midst of daily struggles?

Day 5: God will guide us to do His work.

Read Exodus 40:36-38, noticing how the Israelites followed the Lord.

The church, like Israel journeying in the wilderness, is the people of God on the way to the greater promised land of the new heavens and new earth. Just as God dwelt in the cloud of Mount Sinai and in the tabernacle, He dwells in and among the church through Jesus Christ. This is central to our understanding of the benefits of salvation. To be in the presence of God is what the gospel is all about. All the by-products of the gospel flow from the reality that in Christ we have the benefit of God's presence in our day-to-day living.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. This is central to the Holy Spirit's daily comfort in our lives. In this sense, we must—like the Israelites—wait and listen for God. It is always wise to patiently and prayerfully look around and see what God is doing and join Him in that work.

How does the certainty of God's presence give you assurance to follow God's mission even when you are uncertain of the outcome?

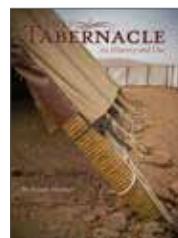
TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Exodus 39 and 40, sharing with two other members of your Bible study group.

What have you done for God this past month? If Moses had inspected your work, would he have blessed you? Why or why not?

When in your life did you most noticeably feel the physical presence of God? How would you explain this to someone who has not experienced God's presence?

When do you know it's time to move on with the Lord? How willing are you to set up shop as the Lord directs?



For additional context, read “The Tabernacle: Its History and Use,” an archived *Biblical Illustrator* article provided on the CD-ROM in the Fall 2017 *Explore the Bible: Leader Pack*.

Session 10

Set Before

God is pleased when His people show Him gratitude and devotion.

Leviticus 1:3-9; 2:1-3; 3:1-5



What does the kind of food served indicate about the importance of an event? How does someone's presence at an event indicate the significance of an event?

Special occasions and events are often marked by the quality of the food served. In fact, meals become markers and reminders of significant occasions, such as proposals, marriage, anniversaries, or retirement. Such meals may be costly, but they are also memorable.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Exodus, God delivered His people from slavery and made a covenant with them to be their God. Leviticus begins with God's dwelling with His people in a special way (Lev. 1:1). While the instructions for constructing the dwelling place for God are given in Exodus, the instructions for dwelling with God are given in Leviticus.

Leviticus addresses the question of how God's sinful people can live in proximity to a holy God. One of the benefits of studying the Old Testament sacrificial system is that it renews our understanding of the seriousness of sin and the cost for which sin is paid. The bloody heinousness of Jesus' cross is a reminder of our deep need for redemption from sin. That God provides for our needs in Christ shows us that we are more sinful than we realize but more loved than we could ever dare to hope. Therefore, sacrifice is simultaneously bloody and beautiful.

Leviticus begins just after the construction of the tabernacle following Israel's exodus from Egypt. The Book of Leviticus deeply explores the relationship between God and Israel that was established on Mount Sinai. The sacrifices remind us that Israel was sinful and impure. The sacrifices also remind us that God provided a way to restore the broken relationship between a holy God and sinful people. The levitical instructions assume that people are sinful but were given to renew humanity's relationship with God.

While Exodus 25–40 gives instructions for construction of the tabernacle, Leviticus 1–7 prescribes the specific offerings that were to be performed in the tabernacle. The sacrificial system provided a way for people to express their need for God's forgiveness.

LEVITICUS 1:3-9; 2:1-3; 3:1-5

1:3 “If his offering is a **burnt offering A** from the herd, he is to bring an unblemished male. He will bring it to the entrance to the tent of meeting so that he may be accepted by the LORD. **4** He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering so it can be accepted on his behalf to make **atonement B** for him. **5** He is to slaughter the bull before the LORD; Aaron’s sons the priests are to present the blood and splatter it on all sides of the altar that is at the entrance to the tent of meeting. **6** Then he is to skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces. **7** The sons of Aaron the priest will prepare a fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. **8** Aaron’s sons the priests are to arrange the pieces, the head, and the fat on top of the burning wood on the altar. **9** The offerer is to wash its entrails and legs with water. Then the priest will burn all of it on the altar as a burnt offering, a fire offering of **a pleasing aroma to the LORD.** **C** [...] **2:1** “When anyone presents a grain offering as an offering to the LORD, it is to consist of fine flour. He is to pour olive oil on it, put frankincense on it, **2** and bring it to Aaron’s sons the priests. The priest will take a handful of fine flour and oil from it, along with all its frankincense, and will burn this memorial portion of it on the altar, a fire offering of a pleasing aroma to the LORD. **3** But the rest of the grain offering will belong to Aaron and his sons; it is **the holiest part D** of the fire offerings to the LORD.” [...] **3:1** “If his offering is a fellowship sacrifice, and he is presenting an animal from the herd, whether male or female, he is to present one without blemish before the LORD. **2** He is to lay his hand on the head of his offering and slaughter it at the entrance to the tent of meeting. Then Aaron’s sons the priests will splatter the blood on all sides of the altar. **3** He will present part of the fellowship sacrifice as a fire offering to the LORD: the fat surrounding the entrails, all the fat that is on the entrails, **4** and the two kidneys with the fat on them at the loins; he will also remove the fatty lobe of the liver with the kidneys. **5** Aaron’s sons will burn it on the altar along with the burnt offering that is on the burning wood, a fire offering of a pleasing aroma to the LORD.”

Passage Outline

The Burnt Offering
(Lev. 1:3-9)

The Grain Offering
(Lev. 2:1-3)

The Fellowship Offering
(Lev. 3:1-5)

Keywords

- a. A young bull, lamb, goat, turtledove, or pigeon, dependent on financial ability. Offered both in the morning and the evening as a sacrifice to God to restore the relationship with Him and to atone for sin.
- b. In the Old Testament, atonement is defined by the covering over of sin through sacrifices offered to God. In the New Testament, it is God’s act of bringing sinners back into relationship with Him through the death and resurrection of His Son and the Messiah, Jesus Christ.
- c. An expression meaning that the Lord had accepted the burnt offering; “a sweet savour” (KJV).
- d. Only a ritually clean priest could eat the holiest part of the sacrifice and must do so near the altar of sacrifice.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

Central to understanding this text is the command that the worshiper must offer a bull without any physical defects, an unblemished male. The presence of a physical defect would make it unworthy as an offering to God. The physical gesture of the worshiper's laying his hand on the head of the animal is deeply symbolic. The laying on of a hand symbolized that the worshiper's relationship with the sacrificial animal was one of atonement.

BIBLE SKILL: Use a Bible dictionary. – Look up the word “atonement” in a Bible dictionary. Review in your Bible some of the Bible passages referenced. Based on the verses you examine and the content found in the Bible dictionary, write in your own words a definition of “atonement.” How does your definition give you a greater understanding and appreciation for what Christ did for you on the cross?

What does the quality of an offering reveal about the one offering it?

The burnt offering was bloody, and the jarring imagery of the offering included slaughtering the animal, throwing its blood against the altar (v. 5), cutting the slaughtered animal into pieces (v. 6), and burning the remains so they were consumed by fire (vv. 7-9). The burnt offering is often considered the most costly of offerings since it was completely burned up with nearly nothing left over. Therefore, this offering is often depicted as symbolic of total dedication to God on behalf of the worshiper.

The bloody nature of the animal sacrifices was a jarring picture of the cost of redemption. How does this imagery bolster our understanding of the seriousness of sin and the cost of a sacrificial life given for sin?

As a sign of gracious instruction, God outlined the requirements and protocol for presenting a grain offering. The costly value of fine flour and frankincense indicated that God's people were to offer their very best to God. The priest was called to burn a portion of the offering as a memorial to the Lord.

How is an offering an act of gratitude to God? How does offering our entire lives to God (see Rom. 12:1-2) relate to our gratitude for Christ's sacrifice for our sin?

In the fellowship offering, only the fatty portions of the sacrifice were consumed by fire. The remainder of the animal was presented to the priests as God's servants. In ancient Israel the fat of the animal was considered the most valuable or flavorful part of the animal. In this sense, presenting it first to God was an act of honoring God as most worthy of such portions. Another emphasis of this offering included the worshiper's eating the meat with the priest (Lev. 7:15-16). Therefore, this act symbolized communion and reconciliation with God.

What is the significance of the priest and the worshiper sharing a meal? How would you describe what it means to be at peace with God?

APPLY THE TEXT

- People should take sin seriously, knowing that the price for sin can only be paid by an acceptable sacrifice.
- Believers should honor God, thanking Him for what He provides for them.
- Through faith in Christ, believers can be assured that they are at peace and in fellowship with God.

Reflect on the symbolic nature of each of the sacrifices covered in this study. How do these sacrifices give you a deeper appreciation for the work of Christ on your behalf? Take time to thank Him for offering Himself on your behalf.

Review Leviticus 6:13. List ways believers today can live out the truth of this verse. What actions can you take to make sure your gratitude and devotion to God keep burning?

As a group, list reasons to express gratitude to God. Discuss as a group ways to better express gratitude to God during time spent with others in the group. What actions does the group need to take in light of this discussion?

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: God wants our best.

Read Leviticus 1:3-4, identifying what makes an offering acceptable.

Malachi 1:8 notes that offering an animal of defect is evil in the sight of God. This reminds us of the proper way to approach God: with our best. In reality, we all have spots and blemishes. However, God's perfect standards in this passage point us forward to the perfect sacrifice that was to come many years after this book was written.

This passage is a bloody and beautiful demonstration of the doctrines of expiation (removal of sin) and propitiation (appeasement of God's wrath against sin). The act of sacrifice noted that the offerer needed to be ransomed from sin and that God's just wrath against sin had to be met. This daily offering was a reminder of the need to confess sin regularly. This reminds us that we should take sin seriously, knowing the price for sin can only be paid by an acceptable sacrifice. However, the hand gesture of communion with the sacrifice points to our solidarity with Christ in His sacrifice for our sin.

What does the quality of your offering reveal about you?

Day 2: Jesus' sacrifice was the ultimate atonement for our sins.

Read Leviticus 1:5-9, paying attention to the details of the sacrifice.

In Leviticus 17:11, we are reminded that the blood of an animal contains life and the animal itself is symbolic of life. The gruesome reality of this sacrificial act would be difficult to erase from the worshiper's mind.

These offerings provide a jolting picture of the sacrifice that Christ would make on behalf of sinners at the cross. The apostle Peter reminds us in 1 Peter 1:18-19 that we were ransomed by the blood of Christ, who was our sacrifice for sin. In other words, the precious blood of Christ is what atoned for our sin, and He was without blemish or spot. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus was without defect and perfectly atoned for our sin. Jesus also offered a whole sacrifice to satisfy God's righteous requirements because of sin. Therefore, there is nothing else left; His sacrifice was once for all (Heb. 10:5-10). Just as the smoke from the offering ascended once the act was complete, so too did Jesus ascend to the Father once His sacrificial act and resurrection were complete (Heb. 9:24).

How does the imagery of the sacrifice bolster your understanding of the seriousness of sin and the cost of a sacrificial life given for sin?

Day 3: Sacrifices are an expression of gratitude.

Read Leviticus 2:1-3, identifying how a grain offering showed honor to the Lord.

Grain offerings were an expression of gratitude to God for His provisions. In the same way, all believers should honor God, thanking Him for what He provides for them. In this sense, this sacrifice is centrally about worship. As God's people, we are to continually offer worship and praise to God as a pleasing aroma. The Israelites' offering of their fruits from the land prefigures Christ's fruitfulness and perfect worship offered to God on behalf of the people. Even where our worship fails, Christ provides the proper worship we need on our behalf.

How does offering your entire life to God (see Rom. 12:1-2) relate to your gratitude for Christ's sacrifice for your sin?

Day 4: Sacrifices lead to reconciliation.

Read Leviticus 3:1-5, considering what fellowship means.

In many ways, the ritual of this offering symbolized the worshiper and God sitting down and eating together at peace with each other. In a similar way, only through faith in Christ can believers be assured that they are at peace and in fellowship with God. The fellowship offering finds its true fulfillment in Christ's act of sacrifice, allowing reconciliation between God and man. Christ gave Himself as food (John 6:52-57; Rom. 5:9-11).

In the totality of the sacrificial acts explained in this passage, we are reminded that Christ is not only the sacrifice, He is also the true and greater priest. Jesus is greater than the Old Testament priests because He is without sin (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:15). Jesus did not have to offer sacrifices to cleanse Himself as the priests in our passage did (Heb. 5:3; Lev. 9:7; 16:2-14). He Himself was the perfect sacrifice (Heb. 5:7-8). Christ was given once for all; no other sacrifices are needed, unlike the repeated sacrifices in Leviticus (Heb. 9:13-14,25-26). Jesus is the complete fulfillment of the covenant and sacrificial system between God and man (Heb. 8:1-2; 9:15). Praise be to God; it is finished.

What is the significance of the priest and the worshiper sharing a meal? How would you describe what it means to be at peace with God?

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Son – Jesus is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man.

Day 5: Sacrifices are purposeful.

Review the types of sacrifices found in Leviticus.

Burnt offering—voluntary; signified propitiation for sin and surrender, devotion, and commitment to God (Lev. 1; 6:8-13).

Grain or cereal offering—voluntary; signified thanksgiving for firstfruits (Lev. 2; 6:14-23).

Fellowship or peace offering—voluntary; symbolized fellowship with God; signified thankfulness or the expression of a vow (Lev. 3; 7:11-36; 22:17-30; 27).

Sin offering—mandatory; made by one who sinned unintentionally or was unclean in order to attain purification (Lev. 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30; 12:6-8).

Guilt offering—mandatory; made by a person who had deprived another of his rights or had desecrated something holy (Lev. 5:14-6:7; 7:1-6; 14:12-18).

How would you define “sacrifice”? Does true sacrifice have to hurt?

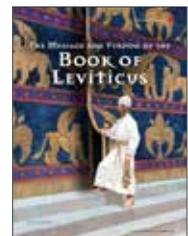
TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Leviticus 1–3, sharing with two other members of your Bible study group.

How do you remain mindful of Christ as the fulfillment of our atonement, devotion, and fellowship with God?

When have you felt most alienated from God? What will you do today to improve relations between you and God?

What can you do to ensure a proper attitude toward giving to the church?



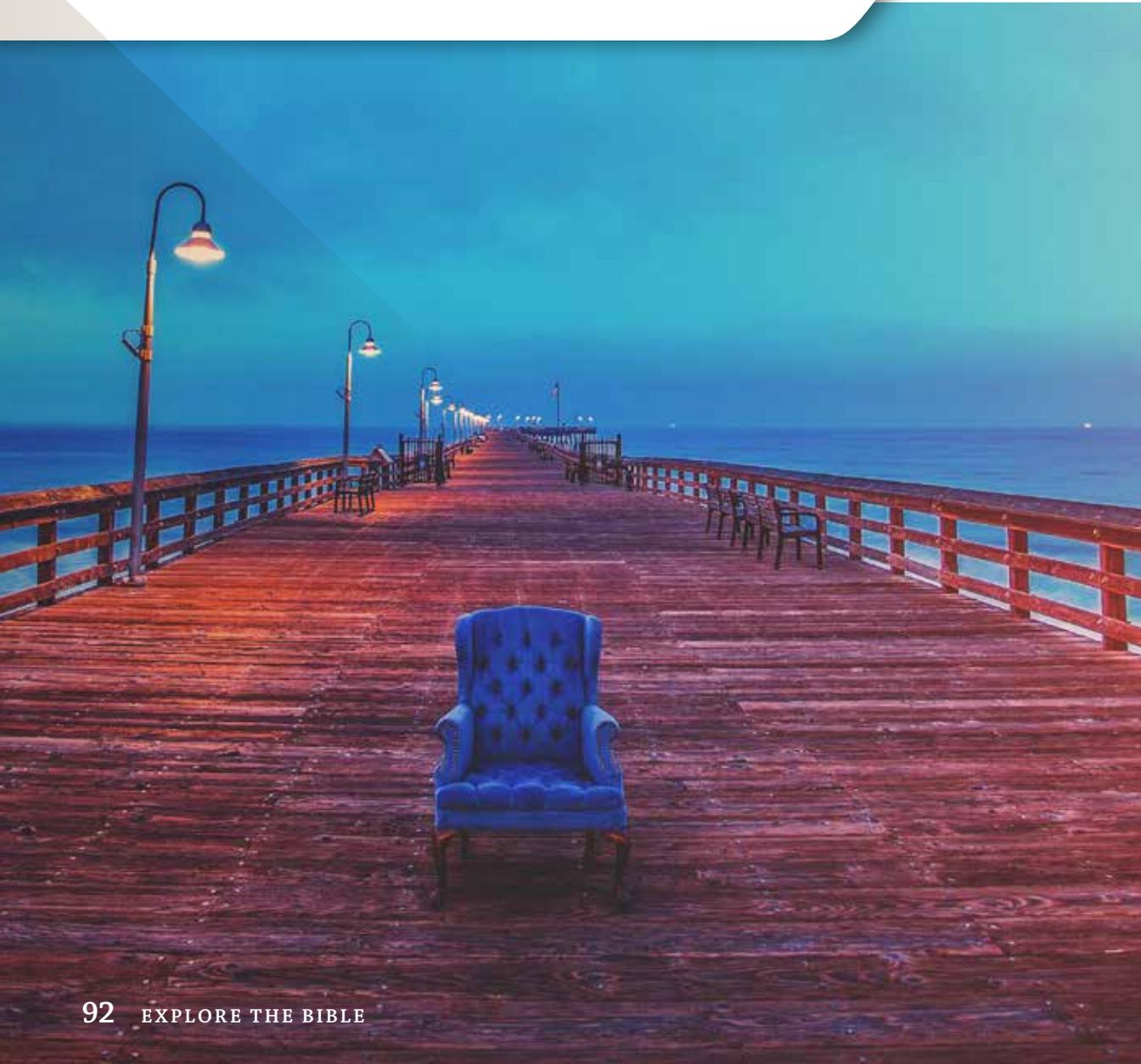
For additional context, read “The Message and Purpose of the Book of Leviticus” in the Fall 2017 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Available at LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator.

Session 11

Set Apart

God's people are to live as a set-apart priesthood.

Leviticus 9:15-24; 10:1-3



What expectations do non-Christians have about the way Christians should live in this world? Do you think they expect Christians to act differently than they do? Explain.

God has delivered us from darkness to light in order to send us back into the darkness to reflect His light to the world. So while we live in this world, how should we live for God? The good news is that God gives us a pattern to follow, expectations to guide us in living holy lives.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Exodus concluded with the instructions for the construction of the tabernacle (Ex. 35–40). Leviticus began with instructions for offering sacrifices within the tabernacle (Lev. 1–7). Chapters 8–10 focus on the work of the priests. Chapter 8 records the public installation of the priesthood; chapter 9 describes the first services that took place in the tabernacle.

Chapter 10, however, records God’s rejection of the priests’ sacrifices because they did not specifically obey the words and instructions of the Lord. There is blessing in following God’s pattern, and there is judgment when we do things our own way. It is because of God’s grace that we have a pattern for holiness; it is by His grace that we are able to obey it.

Being set apart to reflect God’s holiness is a central theme throughout the Old and New Testaments. Holiness is certainly a theme of the Book of Leviticus. The apostle Peter, picking up language from Leviticus 19, exhorted the church to be holy as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

In one sense, we are made holy through the work of Christ when we repent of our sin and believe in Him. In another sense, we are called to holiness in our lives as a worshipful response to God’s grace. Not only is holiness the gift of your salvation, it is also the goal. In fact, it is necessary for your salvation in order to dwell with God. To run hard after holiness is another way of running hard after God. Holiness doesn’t just happen. God both sets us apart and calls us to live set apart.

Thankfully, Leviticus provides the Old Testament pattern to dwell in God’s presence, which is both fulfilled in Christ and modeled in the New Testament. The question the Israelites faced—the question we all face—is whether we will follow God’s pattern for holiness. One of the key indicators that someone is actually part of God’s people is the evidence of fruit in his or her life (Gal. 5:22-23). We do not have to forge our own path to holiness. God has done that for us and has provided the pattern to live in response to His work on our behalf.

LEVITICUS 9:15-24; 10:1-3

9:15 Aaron presented the people's offering. He took the male goat for the people's sin offering, slaughtered it, and made a sin offering with it as he did before. **16** He presented the burnt offering and sacrificed it according to the **regulation**. **17** Next he presented the grain offering, took a handful of it, and burned it on the altar in addition to the morning burnt offering. **18** Finally, he slaughtered the ox and the ram as the people's fellowship sacrifice. Aaron's sons brought him the blood, and he splattered it on all sides of the altar. **19** They also brought the fat portions from the ox and the ram—the fat tail, the fat surrounding the entrails, the kidneys, and the fatty lobe of the liver—**20** and placed these on the breasts. Aaron burned the fat portions on the altar, **21** but he presented the breasts and the right thigh as a presentation offering before the LORD, as Moses had commanded. **22** Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them. He came down after sacrificing the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the **fellowship offering**. **23** Moses and Aaron then entered the tent of meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people, and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. **24** Fire came from the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted and **fell facedown**. **10:1** Aaron's sons **Nadab and Abihu** each took his own firepan, put fire in it, placed incense on it, and presented unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them to do. **2** Then fire came from the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. **3** Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD has spoken: I will demonstrate my holiness to those who are near me, and I will reveal my glory before all the people." And Aaron **remained silent**.

Passage Outline

Cleansed (Lev. 9:15-21)

Blessing (Lev. 9:22-24)

Holy (Lev. 10:1-3)

Keywords

- a. The divine procedure set down by God and carried out by Moses and the leaders of the congregation.
- b. A peace offering associated with thanksgiving, especially in celebration of events, such as the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:63) or spiritual renewal (2 Chron. 29:31-36)
- c. God's revelation of His glory to His leaders among the people was so unmistakably genuine that their reaction was to fall down in humble worship before Him.
- d. Sons of Aaron who were priests consumed by fire because they offered unholy fire before the Lord (Lev. 10:1-7; Num. 26:61).
- e. Aaron's silence verified the fact he knew mourning rites were inappropriate in the sacred sanctuary.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

These verses remind us that the first duty of the priest was to present sacrifices and offerings for the cleansing of God's people from their sins. The sin offering was a sacrifice of repentance for unintentional sin. We often sin without knowing it or intending to because we are sinful by nature. The sin offering was followed by a burnt offering and a grain offering. The burnt offering symbolized the complete surrender of the whole life to God. The grain offering was given in recognition of God's blessings and was a reminder that everyday life is a gift from God. The fellowship offering was given in response to an unexpected blessing, an answer to prayer, or for thankfulness in general.

Why is confession the first step for approaching God? What keeps people from being honest about their need for confession?

After blessing the people, Moses and Aaron then entered the tent together. Their solidarity in this act was an indication that Moses was passing the torch to Aaron as the one who would mediate between God and man. When the two emerged from the tent and offered another blessing, God sent fire and consumed the burnt offering on the altar. The sending of fire indicates that God accepted their offerings. Just as the people responded with praise and worship after Moses and Aaron's offering (Lev. 9:24), believers can rejoice in the blessing of being in God's presence through Christ and should respond in worship of Him.

What effect did God's nearness and response to the sacrifice have on the people? How would you describe the relationship with Him at this point?

BIBLE SKILL: Use a Bible concordance. – Using a Bible concordance, identify passages in which God is characterized as a consuming fire. As you read the passages, make notes about the key idea in each one. How would you describe what it means for God to be a consuming fire? How does your understanding of this terminology give you insight into Leviticus 10:1-3?

Two of Aaron's oldest sons offered an unauthorized offering to the Lord. Nadab and Abihu failed to obey the pattern prescribed by God's law. The offense of presenting a sacrifice to God in their own way cost them their lives; both Nadab and Abihu were instantly killed. Clearly, God cannot allow His holiness to be violated.

Aaron had no justifiable objection to the due penalty of his sons' offense. The holy God of Israel was justified in His judgment. These two brothers were well aware of the expectations they were to meet. This is a clear reminder that God is holy and should be revered as such.

Consider the relationship between God's making us holy and His requirement for holiness in order to dwell with Him. How do they relate? Can you have one without the other?

APPLY THE TEXT

- Confession of sin is the first step toward God.
- Believers can enjoy the blessing of being in God's presence through worship of Him.
- God's people are to live holy lives, reflecting His character.

Reflect on Leviticus 10:10. How does this passage summarize the focus of this study? Memorize this passage.

Examine your life for points of disobedience. In what areas are you falling short when it comes to being holy? Confess your disobedience to God, asking for Him to help you demonstrate His character in your life. (Note: Your first step may be becoming a follower of Christ. Review the information on the inside front cover to discover how to do this.)

Discuss with your Bible study group ways of holding each other accountable for being a holy people. Identify actions the group needs to take to be more accountable. What can you do to help the group complete the actions identified?

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: God provides a way for us to fellowship with Him.

Read Leviticus 9:15-21, noting the ultimate point for each sacrifice.

Step by step, Aaron went through the process of making all the appropriate sacrifices and offerings for God's people so that they might be clean before God. God not only desired His people to be clean from sin, but He also outlined the manner by which they could be made clean and right before their holy God.

We must remember that God has already provided everything we need to have fellowship with Him. He has provided Jesus as our way to Him (John 14:6; Rom. 5:8). Israel had to approach God in accordance with His instructions and provision. In the same way, we too must follow God according to His gracious provision and plan. When we do, we are able to have fellowship with Him. Just as Aaron presented offerings on behalf of the Israelites, Jesus, our Mediator, has done the same by offering Himself. The only difference is that after Jesus' offering there is no need for another priest to represent humanity. We no longer require an earthly priest to approach God.

Why is confession the first step for approaching God? What keeps you from being honest about your need for confession?

Day 2: God has provided a final Mediator.

Read Leviticus 9:22-24. Consider the people's response to the glory of the Lord.

Throughout the Old Testament, God raised up different mediators between Himself and His people. However, these priestly mediators are only pictures of the perfect Mediator who was to come. While the temporary mediators fulfilled their duties provisionally, Christ is the final Mediator between God and man. His work is complete and lacking nothing (Heb. 9:13-14, 25-26). After Christ, there is no need for someone else to pick up the torch.

Just as the people responded with praise and worship after Moses and Aaron's offering, how much more can we as Christians respond in praise knowing that the perfect atonement has been made? How much more can Christians respond with worship knowing that Jesus is the final and eternal Mediator between God and people?

If you were asked to describe the blessings of living a holy life, how would you respond?

Day 3: God demands holiness.

Read Leviticus 10:1, looking for how Nadab and Abihu disobeyed God's commands.

Nadab and Abihu—two of Aaron's oldest sons—each used his own firepan in presenting sacrifices to God. A firepan was a censer used to transport burning coals from one place to another. "Unauthorized" translates a word that means "strange" or "foreign." Thus, it is likely that their fire came from someplace other than the altar of the sanctuary. Leviticus 16:12 instructs the priests to "take a firepan full of blazing coals from the altar before the LORD."

Throughout the Book of Leviticus, the polar opposites of the holy and the profane are contrasted. Not only are there holy people (the priests), there is also a holy space (the tabernacle), holy items to be used during worship in the tabernacle (priestly clothing, vessels, and the altar), and holy times set apart to God (festivals and the Day of Atonement). It is clear that the people had to be careful how they approached God, or they would bring judgment upon themselves and others. The safeguards set in place for the offerings were safeguards for the people.

 **KEY DOCTRINE: God** – God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections.

When you stray away from God's demands of holiness, what effect does it have on your life and relationships—both with God and with others?

Day 4: We must approach God in humbleness.

Read Leviticus 10:2, noticing the Lord's immediate reaction to disobedience.

God responded to Nadab and Abihu's act of foolhardy worship with immediate death. Notice that the text does not say that God rejected or burned up their offerings. Instead, the Word of God states that God burned up and killed the ones who offered it.

This stunning act of God reminded God's people that while God is gracious, showing mercy and grace to the humble and contrite, He will not allow His people to presume upon His holiness. Reckless, casual worship is an offense to God and does not please Him. If we approach God with an arrogant and self-sufficient attitude, God will not accept our worship.

How did Nadab and Abihu's disobedience reflect a lack of faith in God? How does your disobedience reflect a lack of faith in God?

Day 5: God reveals His glory in Christ.

Read Leviticus 10:3, noting what God specifically says He will demonstrate and reveal to His people.

God's requirements for entering and dwelling in His presence must be observed. No one can approach God by his or her own invention. Christ is the only way to God (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Moreover, as we read in Hebrews 7:26-28, Christ is the perfect, holy, innocent, and unstained Priest who presents us to God. The definitive demonstration of God's presence with His people comes in Jesus Christ, who dwells in our midst, perfectly revealing the glory of God (John 1:14; 2:11; 2 Cor. 4:6). In Christ, God's glory is revealed to be so wonderful that His people cannot help but fall before Him and give Him glory.

What implications do you see for yourself in the truth that Jesus is the only way to the holy God?



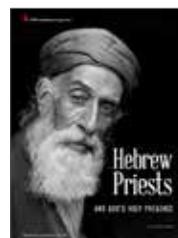
TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Leviticus 9 and 10, sharing with two other members of your Bible study group.

In light of these verses in Leviticus, how does thinking of Jesus as our High Priest help you understand a little more about who He is?

Identify one area of your life in which God is calling you to be more obedient. What steps can you take to put your faith in God and follow Him in obedience?

Collectively, how would you describe the blessings of living a holy life?



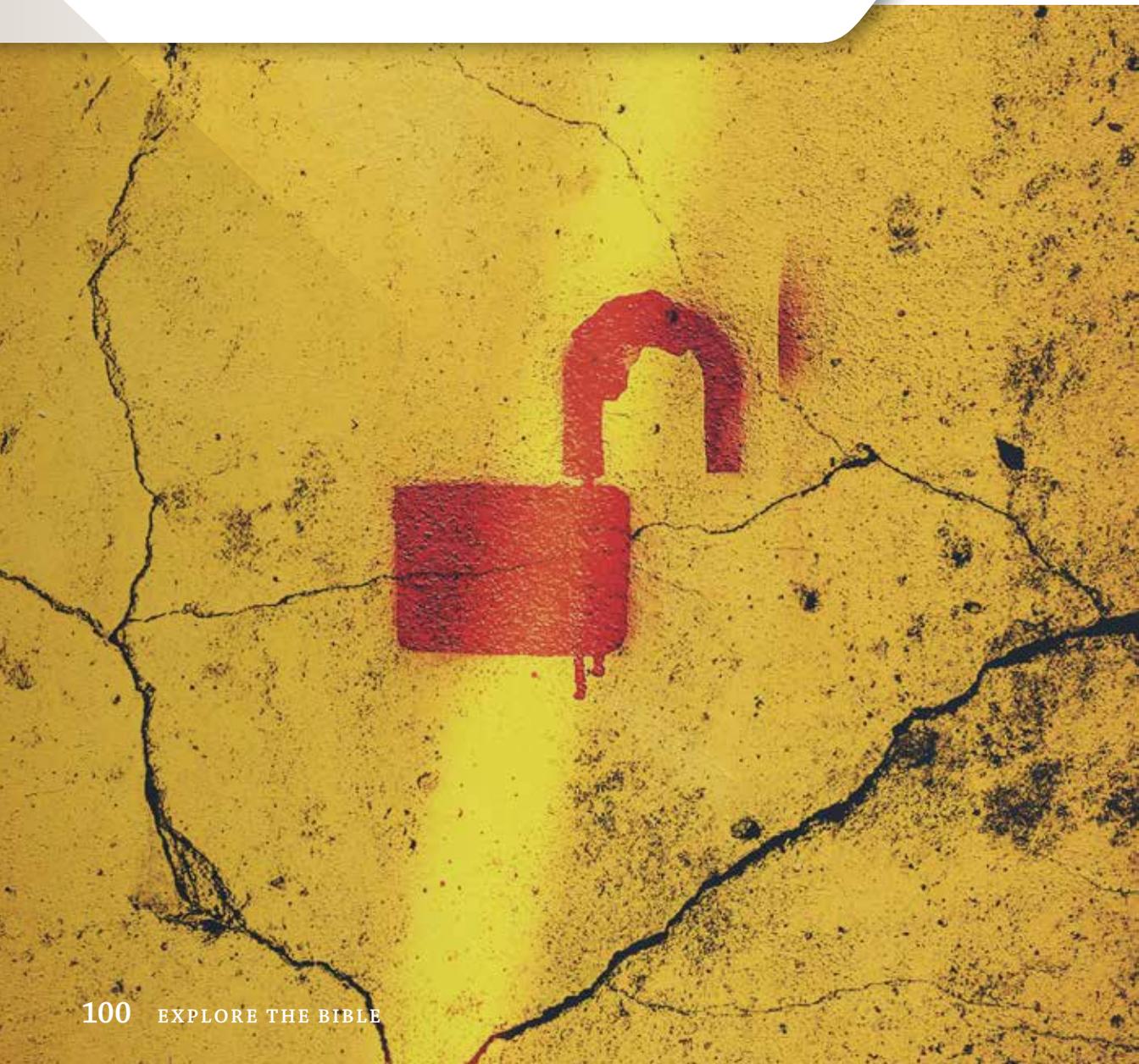
For additional context, read "Hebrew Priests and God's Holy Presence" in the Fall 2017 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Available at LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator.

Session 12

Set Free

God promised a way for His people to be free from the guilt of sin.

Leviticus 16:3-10,29-30



Why do many people have a difficult time coming to terms with their sinfulness? Do you think people today have a more lax view of sin than people did one hundred years ago? Explain.

Most people think of themselves as imperfect but have a difficult time thinking of themselves as sinners in need of a Savior. When sin is not faced as sin, grace is not seen as amazing. A weak teaching on sin leads to cheap grace, and both abandon the central message of the gospel.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Leviticus 10:10, God told Aaron that the function of priests involved distinguishing “between the holy and the common, and the clean and the unclean.” Then, in chapters 11–15, God gave specific instructions regarding what is clean and what is unclean.

The Lord set apart some animals as clean or acceptable to eat and designated other animals as unacceptable to eat (11:1-23). He then instructed Moses and Aaron regarding uncleanness by contamination and the proper rites of purification (11:24–15:33).

In chapter 16 God instituted the Day of Atonement. This annual ceremony was celebrated on the tenth day of the seventh month (16:29). On that day the high priest entered the most holy place in the tabernacle to make sacrifices for the entire nation (16:16-28). As we will see, the sin offerings in chapter 16 point us forward to the work of Christ on the cross (Heb. 9:7-14).

Many people have a hard time striking a biblical balance between the justice of God and the love of God. God requires atonement because He is holy, but He provides atonement because He is love. The reality of God’s holiness is required for us to properly understand what it means to enter into and dwell in God’s presence. As we will see, this passage in Leviticus 16 ultimately points us forward to the work of Christ on the cross. It is at the cross where God’s just requirement for holiness is met with His love in providing atonement for sin. As Christians, we understand that only Jesus can make everlasting atonement for our sin. Thanks be to God that Christ’s work is complete and lacking nothing. There is no more need for sacrifice. Christ made atonement once and for all.

LEVITICUS 16:3-10,29-30

3 “Aaron is to enter the **most holy place** **A** in this way: with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. **4** He is to wear a holy linen tunic, and linen undergarments are to be on his body. He is to tie a linen sash around him and wrap his head with a linen turban. These are holy garments; he must bathe his body with water before he wears them. **5** He is to take from the Israelite community two male goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering. **6** Aaron will present the bull for his sin offering and **make atonement** **B** for himself and his household. **7** Next he will take the two goats and place them before the LORD at the entrance to the tent of meeting. **8** After Aaron **casts lots** **C** for the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other for an uninhabitable place, **9** he is to present the goat chosen by lot for the LORD and sacrifice it as a sin offering. **10** But the goat chosen by lot for an uninhabitable place is to be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement with it by sending it into the wilderness for an uninhabitable place.” [...] **29** “This is to be a permanent statute for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month you are to practice self-denial and do no work, both the native and the alien who resides among you. **30** Atonement will be made for you on this day to cleanse you, and you will be clean from all your sins before the LORD.”

Passage Outline

Preparing to Sacrifice
(Lev. 16:3-6)

The Chosen Goat
(Lev. 16:7-10)

The Day of Atonement
(Lev. 16:29-30)

Keywords

- a. “The sanctuary area” (NLT); God’s sacred dwelling place. Neither Aaron nor his descendants were to enter that place except once a year, on the Day of Atonement.
- b. “Making them right with the LORD” (NLT). Atonement was made for the high priest and his household before he could bring the sacrifice to the nation.
- c. Likely a stone or pebble, these lots were cast to help with decision-making. Today we use God’s Word and indwelling Holy Spirit (which weren’t available at that time) to determine God’s will.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

Leviticus 16:1 recalls Aaron's two sons who died when they did not approach God in a proper way to offer sacrifices to the Lord (see 10:1-3). God gave the instructions concerning the Day of Atonement in chapter 16 in response to their sinful actions.

The Day of Atonement was established for communal repentance and cleansing. The guidelines were also given to protect Aaron's priestly family from the same fate as Nadab and Abihu. That God gave these guidelines demonstrates that He loves and desires to dwell among His people.

How does an understanding of God's requirements for purity provide us a greater appreciation of God's grace?

First, Aaron was to prepare the offering. Second, Aaron was to prepare himself. Aaron was not only to bathe his body but also to put on the proper holy garments for the offering. The priestly preparations were to make sure that Aaron was cleansed and consecrated before acting on behalf of the people. Unlike Aaron, Christ needed no prior act to cleanse Himself before His sacrificial offering. Jesus is the perfect Priest (Heb. 7:27).

Is it more difficult to prepare the internal or the external when it comes to preparing to be in God's presence? Explain.

Aaron was to prepare two goats for the sin offering. The two goats had distinct purposes in this ritual offering. One was offered to the Lord to atone for the people's sin; the other was sent to an uninhabitable place. God instructed Aaron to cast lots to determine which animal would be sacrificed on the altar and which animal would be the scapegoat. The priest was then to lay his hands "on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the Israelites' iniquities and rebellious acts—all their sins" (v. 21). Then the priest would send the goat away into the wilderness to "carry all their iniquities into a desolate land" (v. 22). The act of atonement in Leviticus 16 is beautifully symbolic of the atonement of Christ in Hebrews 9:7-14.

BIBLE SKILL: Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage – Review Hebrews 9 and 10, looking for ways the writer of Hebrews connected Jesus to the Day of Atonement. Note words and phrases that appear in both Hebrews 9–10 and Leviticus 16. Record your discoveries. How does Hebrews 9–10 help you understand the significance of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16?

How does Jesus' death give a believer confidence and humility at the same time? How does one strike the proper balance between confidence and humility?

God established the Day of Atonement as an annual ceremony. The purpose of this most holy of days was to make atonement for the sins of Israel. In the Book of Hebrews, the writer makes it clear that Jesus' crucifixion was the definitive Day of Atonement (see Heb. 9:7-14).

APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers are to diligently prepare themselves to enter into God’s presence.
- Believers can be confident that Jesus’ death on the cross removed the guilt of their sin.
- Only Jesus can make everlasting atonement for our sin.

Evaluate how you usually approach God. In what ways are you too casual or too confident when it comes to approaching Him? How might you prepare to humble yourself before God?

Summarize what this passage teaches about God’s desire for us to have a right relationship with Him. What keeps you from accepting His provision for establishing that relationship? What do you need to remove in your life that gets in the way of having a deeper relationship with Him?

Reflect on Leviticus 16:30. Read the verse aloud, substituting your name for “you.” Record the emotions you feel as a result. Thank Him for providing His Son so you can be clean before Him.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: God wants your heart.

Read Leviticus 16:3-6, paying close attention to the exact preparations Aaron had to make.

Believers are to diligently prepare themselves to enter into God's presence. This shows us that God is not only concerned with the proper preparation of the offering but also of the one making the offering. The external act is not the only thing that matters; it only reveals the participant's heart. Over and over again throughout the Bible, it is clear that God is primarily concerned with the heart. It is as if God proclaims, "Give me all of you! I don't want so much of your time, your talents, your money, or your work. I want you!" In exchange for this, God declares, "I will give you Myself." Dwelling with God is the reward of this great exchange. Getting God is the good news of the gospel. And in getting God, we get His love and His will, and His heart becomes our heart.

Is it more difficult for you to prepare yourself internally or externally when it comes to preparing to be in God's presence? Explain.

Day 2: God provided a scapegoat for our sins.

Read Leviticus 16:7-10, highlighting the word "atonement."

You can almost feel the relief and thankfulness of the Israelites as they stood and watched the scapegoat disappear over the horizon to die alone. The animal symbolically carried their sin and guilt far away, never to return. They then would turn back toward the camp, where God dwelt and where they could dwell with God.

The releasing of the goat graphically portrayed the complete removal of the Israelites' sins. David gave expression to this act of atonement in the psalms: "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12).

This act of atonement is symbolic of the atonement of Christ. Not only did Jesus sacrifice Himself in a gruesome death on the cross to pay for the sins of the people, He also went "outside the camp" and bore the disgrace of sin on their behalf. Therefore, believers can be confident that Jesus' death on the cross sufficiently removed the penalty and guilt of their sin.

How does Jesus' death give you both confidence and humility? How do you strike the proper balance between confidence and humility?

Day 3: God is not only concerned with our outward expressions of faith.

Read Leviticus 16:29, noting the instruction to practice self-denial.

Chapter 16 highlights the various acts of rites of purification that took place on the Day of Atonement. However, as we see in verse 29, for these rites to be acceptable, the Israelites needed to offer them with repentant hearts.

The people of God (and foreigners) were commanded to humble themselves by self-denial, probably through fasting and prayer. However, God is not merely concerned with outward expressions—He wants inward repentance accompanied by obedience. In this sense, God’s instruction regarding the Day of Atonement was not only concerned with external acts but also with the people’s sincerity of heart.

What are your motives for following a religious practice? How does that practice help you inwardly?

Day 4: Jesus provided the final atonement.

Read Leviticus 16:30, underlining the second half of the verse.

Jesus’ sacrificial death was the long-awaited and final fulfillment of the purification offerings, by which He cleansed believers from sin through the shedding of His own blood (Heb. 9:12,14,24). Jesus was also the true and greater scapegoat in that He bore our sins away, taking them outside the camp (Heb. 9:28). As for the fulfillment of the burnt offerings, once again, Jesus made perfect and final atonement for our sins. As Christians, we look to Christ not only for repentance of our sin but also with great joy, for His sacrifice cleanses us so that we can draw near to God with the full assurance of acceptance.

KEY DOCTRINE: Salvation – Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer.

**What does the need for an annual sacrifice reveal about the nature of humanity?
What does Jesus’ once-and-for-all sacrifice teach us about Him?**

Day 5: Christ's priesthood is superior.

Review this week's passage. Reflect on how Christ fulfilled the requirements of atonement once and for all.

- On the Day of Atonement, the high priest offered the blood of animals; Jesus offered His own blood (Heb. 9:12).
- The high priest entered an earthly tent; Jesus offered His sacrifice in the presence of God in heaven itself (Heb. 9:24).
- The high priest had to offer sacrifices for his own sins; Jesus had no sin (Heb. 7:26-27; 9:7).
- The high priest had to offer sacrifices repeatedly; Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice once and for all (Heb. 9:25-26; 10:11-12).
- The old covenant sacrifices were “a shadow of the good things to come” (Heb. 10:1); Jesus abolished the old covenant and established the new covenant in His sacrifice on the cross (Heb. 8:13).

How well are you living in the freedom that Jesus' atonement for our sin brings?

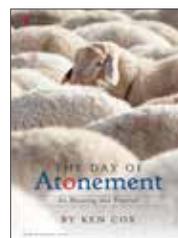
TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Leviticus 16, sharing with two other members of your Bible study group.

How did Jesus fully complete the practice and purpose of the Day of Atonement in our past, present, and future?

What are the benefits of practicing regular reflection on God's work in your life?

Why is it crucial for people to recognize the truth of God's holiness and their own sin?



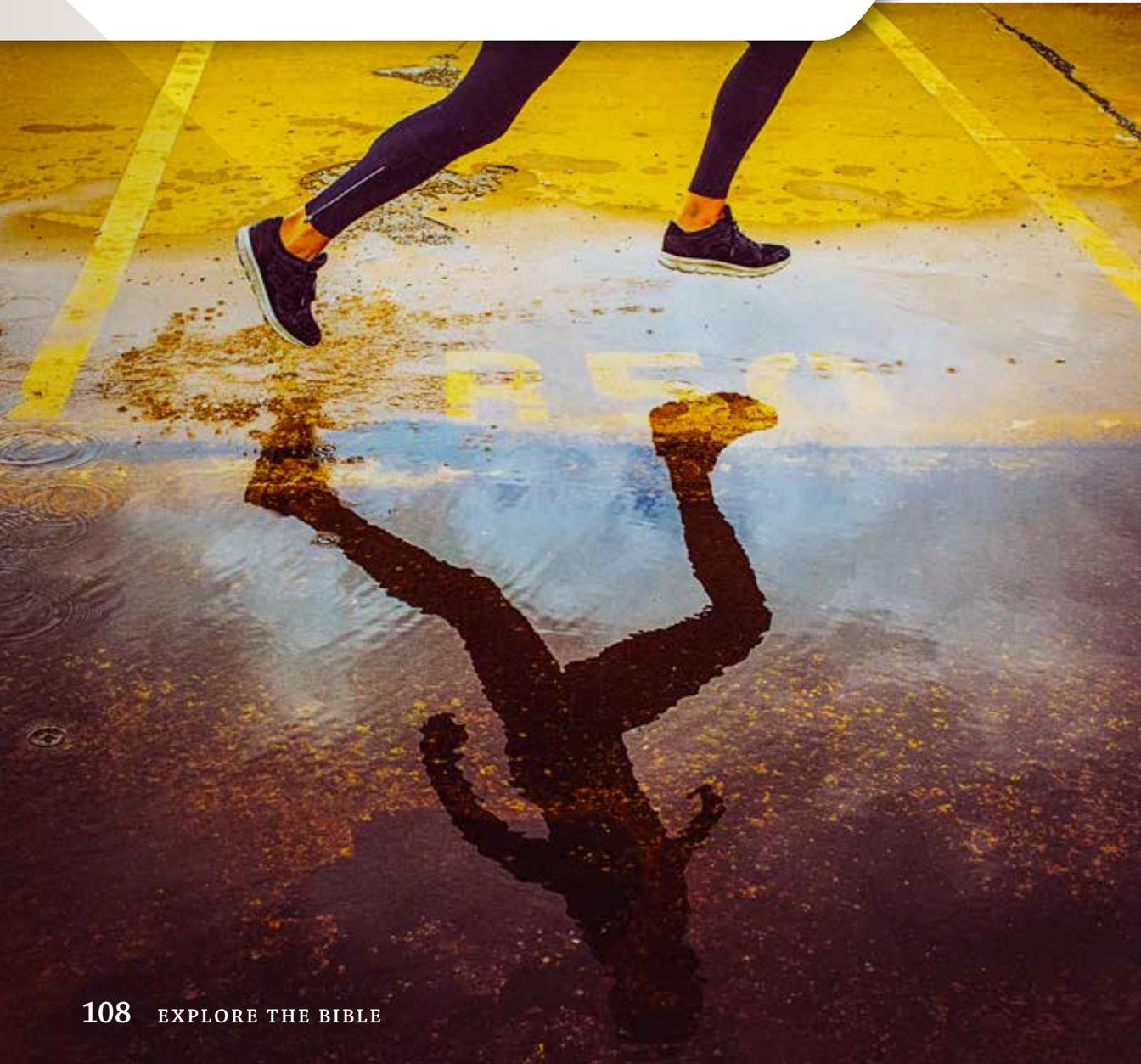
For additional context, read “The Day of Atonement: Its Meaning and Practice” in the Fall 2017 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Available at LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator.

Session 13

Set Futures

God promises to bless those who are faithful to Him and discipline those who are not.

Leviticus 26:3-16,40-45



What do you do that requires intentional practice? What benefits have you seen as a result of that intentional practice?

Most of us enjoy watching athletes perform at the highest level. A gymnast executing a perfect routine, a basketball player hitting the game-winning basket, or a football player making a one-handed catch will bring us to our feet in amazement. That one event or play may become a defining moment, but hours of intentional practice were behind that one moment.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

One of the clear teachings of Scripture is that God's people are to be holy because He is holy. The pattern for holiness is made clear in God's commands to His people. Not only are God's commands a direct revelation of His expectations, but they are also the best way to live in the world that God designed to function in a certain way.

The first major section of the Book of Leviticus focuses on the laws concerning sacrifices and offerings (chaps. 1–7). The second main section focuses on the ministry of priests (chaps. 8–10). The third major section of Leviticus is concerned with purity laws—how to distinguish between what is clean and what is unclean (chaps. 11–15). The focal point of the Book of Leviticus is chapter 16; it deals with the Day of Atonement. As we saw in last week's session, the Day of Atonement points to Jesus' death on the cross that made atonement once and for all for the sins of humanity.

The final major section of Leviticus deals with God's requirements for holy living. This is the longest section of the book (chaps. 17–27). These chapters have been titled the "Holiness Code" because they consist of a list of regulations related to holy living. The instructions contained in this section may be categorized under ten headings: sacrifice and blood (17:1-16), sexual prohibitions (18:1-30), interpersonal relationships (19:1-37), capital offenses (20:1-27), worship and holiness (21:1-22:33), holy days (23:1-44), consecration and desecration (24:1-23), the Sabbath and the Year of Jubilee (25:1-55), blessings and curses (26:1-46), and vows and offerings (27:1-34).

LEVITICUS 26:3-16,40-45

3 “If you follow my **statutes A** and faithfully observe my commands, **4** I will give you rain at the right time, and the land will yield its produce, and the trees of the field will bear their fruit. **5** Your threshing will continue until grape harvest, and the grape harvest will continue until sowing time; you will have plenty of food to eat and live securely in your land. **6** I will give peace to the land, and you will lie down with nothing to frighten you. I will remove **dangerous animals B** from the land, and no sword will pass through your land. **7** You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall before you by the sword. **8** Five of you will pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand; your enemies will fall before you by the sword. **9** I will turn to you, make you fruitful and multiply you, and confirm my **covenant C** with you. **10** You will eat the old grain of the previous year and will clear out the old to make room for the new. **11** I will place my residence among you, and I will not reject you. **12** I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people. **13** I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, so that you would no longer be their slaves. I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to live in freedom. **14** But if you do not obey me and observe all these commands— **15** if you reject my statutes and despise my ordinances, and do not observe all my commands—and break my covenant, **16** then I will do this to you: I will bring terror on you—wasting disease and fever that will cause your eyes to fail and your life to ebb away. You will sow your seed in vain because your enemies will eat it.” [...] **40** “But when they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers—their unfaithfulness that they practiced against me, and how they acted with hostility toward me, **41** and I acted with hostility toward them and brought them into the land of their enemies—and when their **uncircumcised hearts D** are humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, **42** then I will remember my covenant with Jacob. I will also remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. **43** For the land abandoned by them will make up for its Sabbaths by lying desolate without the people, while they make amends for their iniquity, because they rejected my ordinances and abhorred my statutes. **44** Yet in spite of this, while they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject or abhor them so as to destroy them and break my covenant with them, since I am the LORD their God. **45** For their sake I will remember the covenant with their fathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God; I am the LORD.”

Passage Outline

Promise (Lev. 26:3-13)

Warning (Lev. 26:14-16)

Return (Lev. 26:40-45)

Keywords

- a. “Decrees” (NLT; NIV); laws or rules from God given to His people generally regarding nature (Job 28:26; Jer. 5:22; 31:35-36) or what is allocated to His people (Gen. 47:22; Ex. 29:28). Life under God’s covenant required honest dealings—and accountability when those laws were violated.
- b. Savage beasts, except for snakes and scorpions, have not been much of a problem in Palestine for many years. God promised to drive out the Canaanites gradually so that the dangerous animals would not multiply unduly (Ex. 23:30).
- c. A binding pledge; God would continually walk with His people and bless them if they were faithful in keeping the covenant they had made with Him.
- d. Hearts that had not been transformed by the spiritual circumcision of repentance and faith.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

According to these verses, the promises of abundance are tied to Israel's obedience to the word of God. These blessings included rain, abundant crops, good harvest, and protection from enemies. God also promised that Israel would enjoy divine protection and victory over their enemies if they observed His commands. Also, if they were obedient, God would allow the people to be fruitful and multiply. In this passage we are reminded that God desires His people to experience blessing. But we must be careful not to think that God's blessing is something earned; blessing is the proper implication of being made the people of God. All of God's blessings are a sign of His grace.

How does the future promised by God motivate a person to pursue obedience and holiness in this life here and now?

The opposite of blessing is cursing. God warned Israel that if they disobeyed His commands, they would face His discipline, which would include defeat at the hands of enemies. Even today we recognize the downward cycle of disobedience and the curses that follow.

The personal curses of disobedience relate to inner turmoil, wasting disease, and heartache. The curse of disobedience would also include difficulty with harvesting from the land and the inability to ward off enemies, who would eat the fruits of the Israelites' labor. Their rejection of God's commands would result in their subsequent ejection from the blessings of God's favor.

What do you think motivates a person more—a blessing or a warning? Can you have one without the other? Explain.



KEY DOCTRINE: God the Father – God is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Thankfully we see that God's rejection of Israel was not final. If the people confessed their sin and humbly returned to God in faith and obedience, He would restore them. The problem that Israel faced—that we all face—is a problem with the heart. In verse 41 it is clear that even though the people had been circumcised in the flesh, their hearts could be far from God.

How does knowing that God is patient, desiring that all come to repentance, give comfort when struggling with obedience?

According to verses 44-45, even the worst discipline was not intended as a final judgment but was a means of turning God's people back to Him. God is faithful even when His people are not. In this passage God clearly states that He remembered His promises to the forefathers of the faith. Ultimately, those promises would find their fulfillment in Christ Jesus.

Why is it important for Christians to view repentance as a constant pursuit in their daily lives?

APPLY THE TEXT

- God offers a future and peace to those who follow Him out of obedient love.
- Believers should expect God's discipline when they disobey His commands.
- All people can find hope in the fact that God offers forgiveness to all who turn to Him in repentance.

What blessing have you experienced as a result of being obedient to God? Remember that some blessings are found in what you avoided rather than in what you gained. Share these with your group, taking time to thank God for all He provides through salvation in His Son.

When have you experienced God's discipline? What did you (or are you) learning as a result of His discipline? Take time to ask God to reveal any areas in your life that need to be changed. Then ask Him to help you be obedient to Him in that area. With whom can you share this commitment?

Memorize Leviticus 26:45. Reflect on how this passage relates to you as a follower of Jesus. Thank God for always being true to His promises.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: God's promises are a sign of His grace.

Read Leviticus 26:3-6, considering God's promises of abundance.

In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were able to enjoy an abundance of food from God's hand. One of the results of the fall was the cursing of the very ground from which people would harvest their food (Gen. 3:17-19). The curse of the ground is a reminder of the impact of sin on all creation. Because of sin, the harmonious relationship between man and nature was thwarted.

God's promise of abundance, however, was a sign of His favor and grace in light of His people's obedience to His word and their trust in Him. Likewise, the promise of harmony between man and beast in our Leviticus passage (v. 6) points back to man's initial dominion over the beasts of the land (Gen. 2:20).

What promise of God motivates you the most? What does your answer reveal about your values?

Day 2: God promises His presence to those who follow Him.

Read Leviticus 26:7-13, paying close attention to verses 12-13.

All of the blessings in these verses were visible reminders of God's presence among His people. In other words, when the Israelites lived according to God's commands, they would enjoy the privileges that were included in being God's newly formed people whom He had delivered from Egypt.

One of the realities that becomes clear through the story of Israel—and is readily attested to in our own lives—is that the people of God cannot live according to God's laws perfectly. The endless cycle of God's giving the law, and the people's responding, then disobeying, then finally being brought to repentance, attests to our need for a Savior. Praise be to God that Jesus perfectly lived in accordance with God's laws. The good news of the gospel is that in Christ we receive the blessings He deserved because He took on the punishment for sin that we deserve. Therefore, the promise of God in Leviticus 26:11-12 finds an ultimate "amen" in Christ and will be experienced at the end of the age (Rev. 21:1-7).

God promised to sustain life and give peace to those who follow His commands faithfully. God offers a future and peace to those who follow Him out of obedient love.

How does the future promised by God motivate you to pursue obedience and holiness in this life here and now?

Day 3: Discipline allows us to repent.

Read Leviticus 26:14-16, identifying God's promised actions that result from our disobedience.

Believers today should expect God's discipline when they choose to disobey His commands. Since God is the Creator of life, and since His commands establish the proper way to live within the world He created, then disobedience to Him naturally results in hardship.

Persistent and willful disobedience to God ultimately results in eternal cursing, found in the fires of hell (Rev. 20:14-15). Thankfully, in Christ, sin does not have the last word while there is still time for repentance. The reality of the curse points us to Christ as our only hope. He became a curse for us (Gal. 3:13-14). In this sense, even the imminent curses of hardship and defeat are signs of grace before the final judgment. In fact, all judgment before the final judgment is mercy, because in the midst of judgment there is an opportunity for repentance and turning toward obedience.

How is facing a hardship as discipline an act of God's mercy?

Day 4: God longs for our obedience from the heart.

Read Leviticus 26:40-43, underlining verse 42.

God longs for obedience from the heart. He desires His people to be faithful inwardly. The apostle Paul spoke of a spiritual circumcision of the heart (Rom. 2:29). This is not something that can be manufactured by human willpower. Thankfully in Christ we receive the promise of Ezekiel 36:26 that says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."

BIBLE SKILL: Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a biblical

doctrine. – Read the following verses about God's disciplining His children:

Psalm 94:12; Proverbs 3:12; Judges 2:1-2; Hebrews 12:5-7; 1 Peter 1:15-16. What do these passages reveal about God and His desire for His children? How do these verses change your perspective on God's discipline?

How does knowing that God is patient, desiring that you come to repentance, give you comfort when you struggle with obedience?

Day 5: God's grace is worthy of constant repentance.

Read Leviticus 26:44-45, noting God's grace toward His people.

Jesus takes upon Himself the curses that our sin deserves. Moreover, in His sacrifice, He provides a way for us to enter into the blessings of His perfect obedience (Gal. 3:8-14).

The proper response to God's grace toward us is repentance and obedience. Wise believers will seek to live faithfully for God, thus avoiding the need for His discipline. Those who presume on God's promise to forgive by adopting a sinful lifestyle need to grasp more fully what God has done for them in Christ. Genuine love for the Lord demonstrates itself in obedience to Him.

Why is it important that you view repentance as a constant pursuit in your daily life?



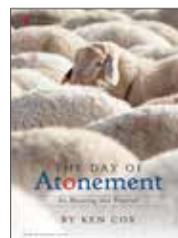
TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Leviticus 26, sharing with two other members of your Bible study group.

Consider God's provision to the Israelites throughout their journeys in Exodus and Leviticus. What have their experiences taught you about God's restoration and care for His people?

What have you learned about God's holiness that is exciting? What have you learned about God's holiness that is troubling?

How does the certain promise of restoration through Jesus Christ give you hope for yourself and your community?



For additional context, read "The Day of Atonement: Its Meaning and Practice" in the Fall 2017 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Available at LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator.

LEADER HELPS

Using the Daily Discipleship Guide to Lead a Bible Study Group

The *Daily Discipleship Guide* was created for the purpose of building disciples. As the leader of the group, you play a major role. You can build disciples through the group Bible study time, encouraging daily Bible engagement, facilitating smaller groups, and apprenticing future leaders.

Building Disciples through the Group Time

Leading the group Bible study time is the most direct way you will build disciples. Each week, you will introduce the group to the Bible passage, examine the key message in that passage, and challenge the group to act on that passage. Doing so requires preparation. Here is a way to prepare that gives you adequate time to study the lesson and will make the session fresh in your own life.

Early in the Week (Sunday or Monday)

- Ask God to open your mind and heart to His Word as you study.
- Study the Bible passage.
 - Read the passage in your Bible, listing key words, phrases, places, and people.
 - Review the first five pages of the *Daily Discipleship Guide* for that session and the commentary provided in the Leader Helps for that session. On your list, add information discovered about the words, phrases, places, and people listed.
 - Consult the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* for additional insight.
 - Consult *Biblical Illustrator* for articles that give biblical backgrounds to the passage.
- Pay careful attention to the Apply the Text section for that session, looking for ways you need to apply the Bible in your own life.



Through the Week

- Ask God to direct your creation of the group plan.
- Create a group plan.
 - Review the group plan in the back of the *Daily Discipleship Guide*.
 - Adjust the plan to fit the needs of your group.
 - Consult *QuickSource* for additional ideas.
 - Review the weekly Adult Extra idea on the Explore the Bible blog (Blog. LifeWay.com/ExploretheBible/Adults/LeaderExtras).
 - Note: You can create custom plans using the DOC file provided on the CD-ROM included in the Leader Pack—it's the same content printed in the Leader Helps.
- Complete the Daily Exploration activities in the days leading up to the group time.
- Meet with a group of three to four other teachers to share and pray for each other. Use Talk It Out to start your conversation.
- Start gathering items you plan to use in the group time.
- Pull needed posters from the *Explore the Bible: Leader Pack* (or create your own using Visual Ideas on pages 160–161).

The Day before Group Study Time

- Pray for specific group members and their needs.
- Review your group plan, making any additional adjustments.
- Make sure you have all your resources gathered.

The Day of the Group Study Time

- Arrive early.
- Pray for the study and the group members.
- Lead the study, adjusting as you go.

Continued on next page

After the Group Study Time

- Consider the After the Session idea at the end of the group plans.
- Contact all group members, encouraging them to complete the Daily Exploration section and sharing gathered prayer requests and other appropriate information.
- Record insights gained about teaching, group members, and Scripture.
- Do it all again.

Building Disciples by Encouraging Daily Bible Engagement

As teachers, we have taken on the responsibility of encouraging everyone on our ministry list (class roll, membership list, etc.) to engage daily in Bible study. We can't make them do it, but we can provide them with a tool and encourage them to use it.

Here are some ways to encourage your group to engage with the Bible daily.

- **Ask them.** That seems simple, but the simple is not always easy. Learn to comfortably ask if group members are studying the Bible. You may want to use a statement instead of a question, such as, "I hope you took a look at the Day 3 activity for this week." It's a question disguised as a statement, so it's not as threatening.
- **Tell them.** Let them know that you are using the Daily Exploration section as well. Set the standard.
- **Show them.** Point to the Daily Exploration section at the conclusion of the group study. From time to time, demonstrate how to use the section, guiding them through Day 1 as a group.
- **Invite them.** Call on pre-enlisted volunteers to share with the group what they are learning and how they are using the Daily Exploration section.

Building Disciples through Smaller Groups

Peter became the spokesman for the early church, preaching a sermon that registered three thousand decisions in one day. John, the youngest disciple, would live the longest of the Twelve and would be used to write a Gospel and to give us a glimpse into eternity through the Book of Revelation. James, John's older brother, was the first of the Twelve to be martyred. These three men were the three people that Jesus seemed to invest in the most. They were the three taken up to the mountain to see His transfiguration. They were the three called on to go further into the garden as He prayed awaiting His betrayal. The lives and deaths of Peter, James, and John remind us of the importance of smaller groups of three to four meeting to hold each other accountable for spiritual growth.

At the end of every session, you will find a section entitled Talk It Out. This section is designed for smaller groups of three to four people to meet weekly. The goal of the smaller groups is simple: holding ourselves and others accountable for living a Christ-honoring life.

Create smaller groups:

- Explain the importance of the smaller groups, emphasizing the goal.
- Allow group members to form their own initial groups of three by gender (men's smaller groups and women's smaller groups). This tends to work better than assigning groups.
- Allow groups to add one person from the names on the ministry list of people who are not present.
- You may want to encourage the groups to form based on neighborhoods or proximity to work.
- Make sure some of the groups have extra space for new group members and guests.
- As the Bible study group grows, you may need to reorganize the smaller groups, but try not to regroup too often so that trust can be built within each smaller group.

Support the smaller groups:

- Provide opportunities for the members of the smaller groups to pray with each other during the group time.
- Make study assignments in the weekly group time based on the smaller groups.
- Pre-enlist a volunteer to share with the larger group how participation in the smaller group is impacting his or her life.
- Periodically organize fellowship events built around the smaller groups. The smaller groups could be the basis for teams during the event.

Be in a smaller group:

- Meet with two or three other Bible study leaders as part of your weekly preparation.
- Be part of a smaller group within your class.
- Host a smaller group for guests and new group members.

Continued on next page

Building Disciples by Apprenticing Other Leaders

Starting new groups is critical to the life of your church and the lives of the individuals in your group. There are people in your group who need to be challenged to take on a greater role in your church. Providing the opportunity to do so helps them grow and removes the largest barrier to starting new Bible study groups—finding a leader for a new group. You can make a difference in the growth of individual group members and in the future growth of your church by apprenticing potential group leaders. Here's how you can use the *Daily Discipleship Guide* to make this happen.

- **Step 1:** Ask a group member to follow along in the Leader Helps for that session as you lead the group. Tell him or her to note what you did and what you adjusted. You are not providing a different book; you're just encouraging your apprentice to use the book he or she has in a different way. Ask this person to do this before arriving for the weekly group time.
- **Step 2:** After that group experience, spend time with the group member going over what you did and how you adjusted the leader material for the group.
- **Step 3:** Invite him or her to do this again in a few weeks.
- **Step 4:** Ask him or her to lead a group time or part of one using the suggestions in the Leader Helps for that session. You may be away that week, or you can simply observe as a group member. Offer to help him or her prepare if needed.
- **Step 5:** As your apprentice gains confidence, allow him or her to teach more in the near future.
- **Step 6:** As a need for a new group surfaces, prepare to move on to lead the new group, with the apprentice becoming the leader of the current group (which tends to work best), or commission the apprentice and a few others from the group to start a new group. Either way, the apprentice will be using the book he or she already uses, just in a different way.
- **Step 7:** Do it all again.

Not everyone in the group will become a Bible study leader. For those who do, you can become a mentor to potential leaders, extending your teaching ministry and demonstrating discipleship.

RELUCTANCE

Exodus 3:4-14; 4:13-16

FOCUS ATTENTION

INQUIRE: *Would you rather be the new CEO of a struggling company looking for a new direction or the new CEO of a very successful company with high expectations for the future? Explain.* After the group has arrived, call attention to the first paragraph and the question at the top of page 13. Challenge the group to look for how God addressed Moses' doubts in this week's Scripture passage.

TRANSITION: Explain that over the next few weeks, the group will examine significant passages in Exodus and Leviticus. Call attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of Exodus; Leviticus*). Summarize Understand the Context (p. 13).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Direct the group to listen for Moses' response to what he saw and heard as you read Exodus 3:4-6.

- **(3:4)** Though sovereign and self-sufficient, God graciously includes us in His divine purposes. He calls us to be co-laborers in His redemptive plans (see 1 Cor. 3:9). When God was ready to deliver His people, He called an ordinary man through whom He would accomplish this great task.
- **(3:5)** The word "holy" conveys the idea of being set apart or separated. When used of God, it describes His perfect moral purity. In the ancient world, to remove one's sandals in the presence of a monarch was a sign of humility and reverence. Further, direct contact with God could be deadly. (See Ex. 19:21-24; Judg. 13:20-23.) While the bush was not consumed, God's grace kept Moses from being consumed by His presence. The place where Moses encountered God was not intrinsically holy; it was holy because of the presence of God.
- **(3:6)** The God of the patriarchs called Moses, emphasizing God's grand story of redemption that He initiated in Abraham (Gen. 12), promised in Isaac (Gen. 17), and fulfilled in Jacob (Gen. 26). God was calling Moses to deliver His people out of bondage so that they might fulfill His plan of redemption and continue His purpose of salvation that would one day culminate in Jesus (Matt. 2:13-15).

CHART: On a whiteboard, create a chart with the headings "God" and "Moses." Invite the group to call out the actions taken by God and by Moses in this passage, adding the actions identified under each column.

EMPHASIZE: God took the initiative to reveal Himself to Moses. Highlight items included on your chart that relate to God's taking the initiative.

DISCUSS: *What do people's responses to God reveal about their view of God? About their view of themselves?* (p. 15)

READ: Direct the group to read Exodus 3:7-10 silently in their Bibles, looking for the progression of the events. (Possible responses include: problem, cry, hearing, solution, plan enacted.)

- **(3:7)** The terms "observed" and "heard" indicated God's readiness to act. The word translated "observed" carries the meaning of "I have paid very close attention to." The words "I know about" indicate personal knowledge.
- **(3:8)** The Hebrew word translated "rescue" describes a sudden snatching away. Pharaoh believed he had the Israelites in his tight grasp, but God would snatch His people from Pharaoh's hands.
- **(3:9)** Perhaps like other Israelites, Moses wondered why God had waited so long to act. Yet God had been acting by preparing Moses his entire life. Moses learned Israelite traditions from his mother, who served as his nurse. He received an education in the Egyptian royal court. His father-in-law, the priest of Midian, perhaps gave Moses insight into serving God. God planned to send Moses to face Pharaoh and to lead the Israelites out of slavery and into a beautiful land as a free nation.

DISCUSS: Add actions taken by God in this passage on the chart created earlier. Ask: *What do these actions reveal about God?*

READ: As you read aloud Exodus 3:11-14, encourage the group to consider the real question behind the questions Moses posed.

- **(3:12)** God gave Moses three promises: (1) God would be with him; (2) God would bring the people out of Egyptian bondage; and (3) once they were set free from Egyptian bondage, the Israelites would "worship God at this mountain." God's purpose in setting the Israelites free was not simply for freedom's sake; God set His people free so that they might freely worship and serve Him.
- **(3:13)** Given the polytheism (a plurality of gods) and pantheism (god is in all and is one with nature) of the Egyptian culture, it was critical to know the identity of the one true God. The God Moses would represent was not just any god or one god among many gods. Instead, God was and is the only true God.
- **(3:14)** "I AM WHO I AM." This phrase can also be translated "I am because I am," "I will be who I will be," or "I cause to be what is." In essence, God was saying that He has no reference point, He had no beginning point, and He will have no end. He alone defines Himself. God is unchanging and all powerful. It was this God who was calling and empowering Moses for an otherwise overwhelming task. God told Moses to say to the Israelites, "I AM has sent me to you." The name I AM anticipates the "I am" sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John, which show His deity. (See, for example, John 8:58.)

CHART: Call for the group to add to the chart the actions Moses took in this passage. Suggest that Moses' questions for God were basically "who am I" and "who are You." Lead the group to identify God's response to both questions. On the chart, add how God responded.

DISCUSS: Lead the group to discuss the relationship between God’s promised presence and His identity. Ask: *How did knowing God’s identity bring assurance to Moses? How does God’s promised presence enable us to trust Him?* (p. 15)

TRANSITION: Summarize Exodus 3:15–4:12, highlighting other excuses given by Moses.

READ: Read aloud Exodus 4:13. Invite volunteers to paraphrase Moses’ last excuse. Characterize Moses as offering the services of anyone as long as that anyone was not him.

- **(4:13)** While angry, God reminded Moses that He would be with him and would speak through him. The good news for Moses was that God’s call on his life to be used as an instrument in the deliverance of God’s people came with all the resources he would need—namely, God Himself.

READ: Direct a volunteer to read aloud Exodus 4:14-16, while the others characterize the response.

DISCUSS: Highlight the provisions God gave Moses (Aaron, signs, presence). Point to how the provisions were related to Moses’ weaknesses or perceived weaknesses. Ask: *How did God plan on demonstrating His power through Moses’ weaknesses? What does this passage teach about how God uses our weaknesses to accomplish His purposes?* (p. 15)

CHART: Allow volunteers to suggest items that need to be added to the chart. Explain that after the exchange with God, Moses informed Jethro (his father-in-law) and departed for Egypt. Add “left for Egypt” to the chart under Moses.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Call attention to the statements under Apply the Text (p. 16). Lead the group to identify actions on the chart that relate to each statement.

RESPOND: Lead the group to respond to the questions under Apply the Text (p. 16). Distribute paper and pencils. Guide the group to illustrate one of the provisions given to Moses by God that would help Moses succeed (Aaron, God’s presence, staff, etc.). Then guide the group to illustrate a provision given by God today that could help a believer succeed in a God-given assignment.

PRAY: Read the summary statement for this session under the title on page 12. Lead the group in prayer, thanking God for inviting and empowering the members of the group to serve His purposes and praying that they would be faithful in fulfilling that purpose.

AFTER THE SESSION

Look for people who may be potential leaders in your group or who could lead another group within your church. Ask that God use you to develop and encourage them. Affirm those who are already serving.

CONFRONTATION

Exodus 7:1-13

FOCUS ATTENTION

LOCATE: Provide newspapers and magazines. As group members arrive, direct them to locate news stories that reflect stubbornness in some way. You may direct them to use electronic devices to search the Internet for stories as well. As stories are located, encourage the person who located the story to share how stubbornness is demonstrated in that story.

DISCUSS: Lead the group to define the word “stubborn.” Ask: *When can stubbornness be good? When can it be bad?* Highlight the potential dangers of stubbornness. Lead the group to discuss the relationship that may exist between stubbornness and pride or arrogance. Ask: *Think about a time when you let your stubbornness get the best of you. How did that experience open the door for you to learn about God and His power?* (p. 21)

TRANSITION: In today’s study, we will discover how Pharaoh’s stubbornness would prove to be costly for his country. Challenge the group to look for how God demonstrated His power through the stubbornness of a human.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

DISCOVER: Create three teams (an individual can be a team). Assign to each team one of the following Scripture passages: Exodus 7:1-2; Exodus 7:3; Exodus 7:4-5. Direct each team to review the assigned passage. Encourage the teams to identify the promise made and insights about that promise. After allowing each team to work, call for a volunteer from each team to share.

- **(7:1-2)** God would give Aaron to serve as Moses’ prophet. Moses doubted his effectiveness as a speaker (see 4:10; 6:30). In response, God called Aaron to speak on Moses’ behalf. As God called Moses to be His instrument, He also called Aaron to be the instrument through whom Moses would speak. Here, Aaron is specifically called a prophet. Aaron would speak God’s message both to the Israelites and to Pharaoh.
- **(7:3)** The Lord repeated His intention to harden Pharaoh’s heart (see 4:21). He would do this to accomplish His purposes for Israel. This raises the question: if God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, was Pharaoh responsible for his actions? We are introduced here to the mystery of the intersection of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Before Moses left for Egypt, God stated He would harden Pharaoh’s heart so that Pharaoh would not free the Israelites (4:21). Exodus 9:12; 10:1; 10:20; 10:27; 11:10; and 14:8 then tell us that God did what He said He would do—God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. Yet the Bible also states that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (see 8:15,32). Both God and Pharaoh hardened Pharaoh’s heart. How can this be? While many have speculated in

positive and meaningful ways about how divine sovereignty and human responsibility can coexist, in the end, it is a mystery that we must embrace with humility and faith.

- **(7:4)** God used Pharaoh's hard heart to multiply His signs and wonders in Egypt, judging the Egyptians for enslaving His people and demonstrating His control over all creation. The plagues would demonstrate the Egyptian gods' inability to protect their nation. God's accomplishing His will would demonstrate His sovereignty and power. God's plan did not depend on Pharaoh's cooperation. Pharaoh might refuse to obey God, but he could never prevent God from delivering His people. Neither Pharaoh nor the Egyptian army could stop God from accomplishing His will, and neither could the Egyptian gods.

DISCUSS: Remind the group of the three promises God made (Aaron as a mouthpiece, Pharaoh's heart hardened, and God will deliver). Lead them to discuss how each of these promises could have been a source of encouragement for Moses. Ask: *How important do you think it was for God to explain to Moses that Pharaoh would become more defiant? How could knowing the end result help Moses endure the defiance of Pharaoh?*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Exodus 7:6-7.

- **(7:6-7)** Moses and Aaron fully obeyed God's directions, doing exactly what they were told to do. There is a kind of physical and spiritual tenacity to the faith of Moses and Aaron. Verse 7 draws attention to the ages of Moses and Aaron. When most were moving into retirement age, Moses and Aaron spent the next forty years of their lives actively involved in ministry, leading, instructing, and shepherding God's people.

CHALLENGE: *Why do you think it was so important for the ages of Moses and Aaron to be included in the passage?* Lead the group to identify the potential strengths and weaknesses of being in their eighties. Ask: *What role does age play in being obedient to God? How does it make it easier? More difficult?*

DISCUSS: Remind the group that obedience to God never stops. Ask: *What attitudes toward God are demonstrated by Moses and Aaron's obedience? How are their attitudes toward God in opposition to the attitude seen in Pharaoh?* (p. 23)

READ: Direct the group to read Exodus 7:8-13 silently, noting the progression of the action.

- **(7:8)** When Moses and Aaron requested that Pharaoh let Israel go in 5:1-3, they had not yet performed any of the signs from the Lord demonstrating His sovereign power. Exodus 7:8-13 narrates the sign of turning Aaron's staff into a serpent. This was the first sign Moses and Aaron demonstrated to Pharaoh before the ten plagues were unleashed on Egypt and the instructions were given to the Israelites (7:14–13:16).

- **(7:11-12)** The Egyptian magicians functioned as mystical priests in the service of the Egyptian gods. The text does not provide any explanation for the means by which these magicians performed their signs. It makes it clear, however, that Aaron's staff swallowed their staffs, indicating God's supreme power over the magic of man.
- **(7:13)** No matter the signs and wonders Moses and Aaron did, Pharaoh increasingly hardened his heart. As a result, things went from bad to worse for Pharaoh and for the Egyptians. Yet Pharaoh continued to harden his heart, refusing to listen to the voice of God and set God's people free. Pharaoh was without excuse, as is everyone who sees evidence of God's power and presence, yet does not respond in faith.

DO: Invite volunteers to present the progression they discovered. Emphasize that the action was unfolding just as God said it would. Lead the group to propose what the actions included in this Scripture passage reveal about God. Highlight responses that relate to His sovereignty. Help the group understand that God and God alone is worthy of our praise.

DISCUSS: Call attention to **Pack Item 6** (*Poster: The Ten Plagues*). Review the content included on the Pack Item, identifying the plagues that will follow. Briefly summarize Exodus 7:14–10:29, characterizing Pharaoh as agreeing to release the Israelites and then changing his mind as each plague subsided. Ask: *How does Pharaoh's repeatedly going back on his word mirror characteristics of false repentance? What is the difference between false repentance and true repentance?* (p. 23)

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Call attention to the summary statement under the session title on page 20 (*God displays His power, reminding all that He alone is worthy of worship*). Call for volunteers to suggest ways this truth is demonstrated in today's Bible passage. Point to the bulleted statements under Apply the Text (p. 24). Lead the group to propose how each bulleted statement relates to the session summary statement.

MEMORIZE: Call attention to **Pack Item 11** (*Poster: Exodus 6:7*) and the memory verse (Ex. 6:7). Challenge everyone to memorize the verse as a way of remembering that God is the only One worthy of our worship.

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God for working in our world. Express praise for His power and for how He is working in the lives of the group members to bring about His purposes.

AFTER THE SESSION

Take time to examine your life for areas where you have fallen short in simple obedience. Ask God to give you the courage to act and be an example for the group you lead.

LIBERATION

Exodus 12:1-13

FOCUS ATTENTION

DISPLAY: As the group arrives, call attention to a display of the following items: clean cotton balls, a bottle of red paint, a pair of running shoes, and a blindfold. Invite volunteers to suggest what these items might reveal about a person's identity if they were seen in the back seat of that person's car.

DISCUSS: After most of the group arrives, propose other items that could be added to the display that might reveal something about a person's identity. Ask: *What are some of the common identity markers that define us and communicate who we are to others?* (p. 29) Explain that today the group will examine an event that defined the Israelites.

TRANSITION: Call attention to **Pack Item 6** (*Poster: The Ten Plagues*), reviewing the list of plagues. Highlight the last plague, stating that Moses was given specific directions in preparation for the administration of the final plague. Challenge the group to look for different ways the Israelites were called upon to trust God in their preparation.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Direct the group to read Exodus 12:1-5 silently, looking for characteristics of the lamb. Call attention to the cotton balls in the display.

- **(12:3)** The commemoration of God's deliverance of His people from Egypt featured a special meal. Every household needed to select a lamb or a goat from the flock on the tenth day of the month. Since the animal would not be slaughtered until the fourteenth day of the month (v. 6), each household would have to care for the animal for four days.
- **(12:4)** Not all Israelite families in Egypt or in later times would be able to eat a whole animal in one night. God allowed neighboring families to join together and share one animal. By eating together, the Israelites symbolized their unity under God and their commitment to obey Him.
- **(12:5)** Families could select either a lamb or goat from the flock as long as it was an unblemished animal, a year-old male. Sickly or injured animals could not rightly symbolize the perfect deliverance of His people by the perfect God. Shepherds usually kept a few males in the flock for breeding purposes, while selling or eating the others. Securing a year-old animal would constitute a sacrifice, but God would enable the flocks to rebuild and even increase.

DO: Provide a Bible dictionary and lead the group in completing the Bible Skill activity (p. 31). Guide them to create a consensus statement as to how Jesus fulfilled the requirements of being our Passover Lamb.

DISCUSS: Lead the group to identify words or phrases in the passage that point to some type of preparation. Ask: *How does preparation for a tradition add to the significance of that tradition? What preparations could a person add to a religious practice like the Lord's Supper?* (p. 31)

READ: Direct the group to read Exodus 12:6-7 silently to discover what was to be done with the lamb. Call attention to the red paint or drink included in the display.

- **(12:6)** Eating the sacrificial animal took place after nightfall (Ex. 12:8). Jewish historian Josephus noted in the first century that the common time for the sacrifice of the Passover lambs was three p.m., which was the approximate time of Jesus' crucifixion (Mark 15:33-34).
- **(12:7)** The Israelites believed life resided in the blood. When people lost too much blood, they died, so blood must carry the life-sustaining force. Atoning for sin required blood to be shed (see Lev. 17:11), so the blood of an animal substituted for the blood of a sinful human. No animal sacrifices could ever truly atone for human sin, however, so God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to shed His blood as the perfect sacrifice to make possible our atonement from sin. The blood at Passover protected a family from physical death. The blood of Christ provides forgiveness and eternal life to all who believe in and follow Him.

DISCUSS: Highlight the blood placed on the door. Ask: *How would you describe the importance of applying blood to the doorposts and lintels?* Help the group understand that the sacrifice required to save a life must be of equal value—thus, a blood sacrifice. Ask: *How does the sacrifice of the lamb point to Jesus?*

TRANSITION: *God gave additional directions about how the sacrificed lamb was to be eaten.*

READ: As you read aloud Exodus 12:8-11, encourage the group to listen for words or phrases that reference being in a hurry. Highlight the running shoes in the display.

- **(12:8)** Roasting the meat over a fire was the quickest way to cook the meat since the process required no drawing and boiling of water and thus no cleaning of cook pots or utensils. Unleavened bread was made without yeast and thus required no time for rising. Bitter herbs could easily be found, quickly gathered, and served with the meat and bread. The bitter herbs would also serve as a reminder of the bitterness of the Israelites' bondage.
- **(12:10)** God commanded the Israelites to burn any remaining meat. The people did not need to keep the meat because they would be leaving soon and could depend on God to provide for their needs.
- **(12:11)** When people traveled or worked, they tucked their cloaks into their belts so as not to hinder the movement of their legs. People typically removed their sandals when at home, but God commanded them to wear their sandals. A shepherd did not carry his staff inside the house, but God declared that the people needed to have their staffs in hand.

DISCUSS: *How does the manner in which the Israelites ate the sacrifice serve as a demonstration of faith in God? What does this teach us about obedience to God?* (p. 31) Help the group understand that obedience anticipates God's acting on His promise.

TRANSITION: *God then reminded Moses of what would happen during the Passover meal.*

READ: Direct a volunteer to read aloud Exodus 12:12-13, while the group listens for the promises God made. Call attention to the blindfold in the display, explaining that God promised to pass over (not see) those whose house was distinguished by the blood when exacting His judgment.

- **(12:12)** The tenth plague punished the Egyptians for their harsh treatment of the Israelites, but it was also a divine judgment against all the gods of Egypt. God's actions demonstrated to the Israelites and the Egyptians that He alone is the one true God; faith in the Egyptian gods was futile.
- **(12:13)** When He passed through the land, striking all firstborn males, God would see the blood on the houses of His people and pass over them. The blood of the lamb served as a distinguishing mark of God's people. Similarly, through Christ's shed blood, God has marked us out as belonging to Him (see Rev. 7:13-14).
- **(12:13)** From the Hebrew verb translated "pass over" came the Hebrew name of the festival, *pesach*. The English word "passover" derives from the meaning of the Hebrew verb. Both terms commemorate God's grace in sparing His people by passing over them.

DO: Lead the group to underline all the uses of "I will" in this passage. Invite volunteers to call out the promise that follows each "I will." Then lead the group to determine the significance of God's saying "I will" the number of times He did. Affirm responses about God's being in control of the situation and how He can be trusted to keep His promises.

DISCUSS: *What does this passage teach about God's judgment and salvation? (p. 31)* Emphasize God's sovereignty during the discussion.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Read the three bulleted statements under Apply the Text (p. 32). Invite the group to propose additional insights that could be added to the list.

REFLECT: Call attention to the second question set under Apply the Text (p. 32). Lead the group to complete the actions listed, reflecting and recording responses to the question. Assure them that you will not be asking them to share their responses aloud.

PRAY: Close by leading a time of directed prayer, calling for the group to silently thank God for sending His Son as a sacrifice for our sin.

AFTER THE SESSION

Collect future calendar dates from the church office for observing the Lord's Supper. Share those dates with your group, reminding them that the Lord's Supper is a way of remembering Christ's sacrifice for us.

VICTORY

Exodus 14:13-28

FOCUS ATTENTION

SHARE: As group members arrive, direct them to share a challenge they have faced and overcome in their life. Encourage them to also share what they learned from that experience. After most members have arrived, ask: *How does overcoming a difficulty or challenge help a person face other difficulties or challenges?* (p. 37)

FOCUS: Comment that the Israelites had exited Egypt but would face multiple challenges as they began their journey to the promised land. The first challenge would be Pharaoh's chariots that pursued them. Challenge the group to look for lessons learned as the Israelites faced this challenge.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

TRANSITION: Explain that the Israelites had been liberated and journeyed out of Egypt, only to be cornered by the Egyptian army. Using **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Route of the Exodus*) and the map on the inside back cover, trace the movement of the Israelites from Egypt to the Red Sea. Note that once at the Red Sea, they saw no way of escape and were certain that they would be slaughtered or would drown.

READ: Direct the group to read Exodus 14:13-18.

- **(14:13)** Moses told the Israelites to “stand firm and see.” The verb rendered “stand firm” means to position oneself or to take one’s stand. Thus far they had seen only the Egyptian army and their own predicament. Moses encouraged them to open their eyes in faith and to see God at work. God did not deliver His people from bondage only to let them die in the wilderness.
- **(14:16)** God then instructed Moses to lift up his staff and stretch his hand out toward the sea. Moses had used this staff in bringing the first and second plagues (7:17-20; 8:5-6). At the Red Sea, Moses again would lift his staff above a body of water. This time God would divide the water of the sea. Moses’ staff possessed no magical properties. The staff represented God’s power and presence.
- **(14:18)** God’s purpose included more than punishing the Egyptians. Pharaoh and the Egyptians consistently had trusted in their own gods and military might. God’s destruction of their army would lead the Egyptian people to realize the worthlessness and powerlessness of their false gods, to recognize Him as the one true God, and to turn to Him in worship and faith.

DISCUSS: *What role did trust play in the situation the Israelites faced?* Reinforce the necessity for Moses to trust God as leader and for the people to trust both Moses and God.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Exodus 14:19-20, as the rest of the group listens for the actions taken by God.

- **(14:19-20)** As the army of Pharaoh approached, the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of them, moved and went behind them. The pillar of cloud stood between Pharaoh's army and God's people. God's people were being led and protected by God's angelic emissaries. How confident God's people must have felt as God protected them all night long while they prepared to cross the Red Sea. God would need to continually remind His people that He was both leading and protecting them even when they felt trapped and boxed in.

DO: On a whiteboard, write "Cloud = God's _____." Invite the group to suggest different ways of completing the equation (possible responses: glory, guidance, protection, presence). Lead group members to determine how the cloud functioned in the ways listed in this passage. Emphasize how God's presence also serves as God's protection for His people.

DISCUSS: *How does the promise of God's presence give a person hope? How does the promise of His presence impact a person's faith?* (p. 39)

READ: Read aloud Exodus 14:21-22, as the group looks for the timing of the events.

- **(14:21)** It must have been astonishing to God's people to see Moses stretch out his arms, staff in hand, and to watch God part the sea. While it is simply referred to as "the sea," we know from Exodus 13:18 and 15:4 that the body of water Israel was about to cross was the Red Sea.
- **(14:22)** God used His mighty winds to drive back the waters to either side, forming a passageway for God's people to cross over on dry land. This was clearly a supernatural event. Israel did not achieve any of this; it was all the work of God. God delivered His people through a series of miracles, from the plagues to the parting of the Red Sea, and through a variety of miracles He would perform throughout their forty years in the desert.

LIST: Lead the group to identify each step taken. Call on them to list each action identified in the passage as you record the steps on a whiteboard. Note how each step led to the next and was contingent on the previous action being taken. Lead the group to identify the role faith played in each step. Lead them to identify how faith was needed in each action and in whom faith was being placed. Record insights on the whiteboard as well.

DISCUSS: *What is the relationship between faith and obedience? Can a person have one without the other? Explain.* (p. 39) Emphasize the importance of a faith that is demonstrated by obedience.

READ: Direct the group to read Exodus 14:23-28 silently, looking for ways God was working.

- **(14:23-25)** When the Egyptian chariots pursued the Israelites into the dry seabed, God caused them to swerve and stall, confusing both the men and the horses. Though the Egyptians finally recognized that God was fighting for the Israelites, it was too late. The way of salvation for the Hebrews became the way of judgment for the Egyptians.

- **(14:28)** The sight of the destruction of Pharaoh’s army must have been awesome to behold. God’s power and justice were on full display before the people of God in the judgment of Egypt. Israel was learning that God is a gracious, delivering God. Yet, they were also learning that God is a God of justice. God will bring justice to unrepentant sinners in His time and in His own way. This is still true today. God remains true and just even in our modern era. God is not only a God of love and grace, He is also a God of truth, wrath, and judgment (Rom. 1:18; Eph. 2:1-3; Col. 3:6).

DO: Lead the group to identify words or phrases that point to God at work. Highlight words or phrases that reinforce the truth that God won the victory for His people. Invite volunteers to share other examples from Scripture where God won the victory for His people (possible responses: Jericho, Gideon, Elijah and the Baal worshipers, Jesus’ resurrection). Lead the group to consider how witnessing God’s display of power might have impacted the Israelites that day. Ask: *How can witnessing a display of God’s power cause us to gain a deeper understanding of God?*

MINI-LECTURE: Briefly present a summary of Exodus 14:29–15:21. Highlight Moses’ song of praise. Call attention to **Pack Item 12** (*Poster: Exodus 15:2*), identifying the verse as part of Moses’ song of praise and as the memory verse for this session. Lead the group in repeating the verse, using a preferred Bible translation. Challenge the group to memorize the verse this week. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 5** (*Bookmark: Memory Verses*) as a reminder.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Draw attention to the events recorded in today’s passage by reading the passage outline (p. 38). Invite volunteers to share insights gained as you call out each passage section title.

REFLECT: Call attention to the four bulleted statements listed under Apply the Text (p. 40). Lead the group to propose ways each statement is also seen in today’s world. Highlight the first statement (*God delivers His people, providing a way of escape*). Review the information found on the inside front cover, offering to be available to visit about salvation with anyone who wants to know more.

PRAY: Thank God for delivering His people from sin through His Son. Praise Him as the victorious One who will defeat all His enemies and the enemies of His people.

AFTER THE SESSION

Review prayer requests shared by group members over the past month, looking for requests that reflect hopelessness to some degree. Send a note of encouragement, including the memory verse for this week (Ex. 15:2).

SUFFICIENT

Exodus 16:1-5,11-20

FOCUS ATTENTION

DISCUSS: Call attention to the first paragraph on page 45. Ask: *When is adversity a good thing? How does adversity shape people?* (p. 45)

FOCUS: Write “Challenging Circumstances” somewhere prominent in the room. Invite volunteers to name examples of challenging circumstances when we might question God about the way things are going. Explain that in today’s study, we will see the Israelites questioning God in difficult circumstances. Encourage them to listen for God’s response to their questions and needs.

TRANSITION: Call attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of Exodus; Leviticus*), **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Fall 2017*), and the outline (p. 9). Direct attention to the major outline points. Summarize the information in Understand the Context (p. 45) to show the connection between God’s provision for the people and their obedience to Him.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Read aloud Exodus 16:1-3, highlighting the people’s complaint against Moses and Aaron. Use **Pack Item 4** (*Time Line: Exodus; Leviticus*) to help the group understand that this grumbling took place very early in their travels toward the promised land.

- **(16:1-3)** Spiritual leaders are often the first target for those who complain. In fact, the people spent much of their time in the forty years of wilderness wanderings complaining against God and the leadership. Sometimes, Moses complained to God about the people. But in every case, the people and Moses were reminded of God’s faithfulness. God was faithful to His people in spite of their grumbling and complaining because He is a covenant-keeping God.

DISCUSS: *Why do people sometimes prefer the old to the new? How is accepting God’s provision for today an act of trust and faith?* (p. 47)

TRANSITION: *The people had voiced their doubts and worries. Now listen for God’s response.*

READ: Direct a volunteer to read aloud Exodus 16:4-5,11-12, as the group listens for the way God provided for the people’s needs and the test of the people’s obedience.

- **(16:4-5)** What was God’s response to His complaining, skeptical people? He declared to Moses that He would provide food and that the provisions would include a test of the people’s obedience to Him. God would provide daily bread, but only daily bread. Any extra bread gathered for the next day, except for the Sabbath day, would spoil.

- **(16:11-12)** The provision of daily bread would test Israel's faith in God. The Hebrew word translated "test" (v. 4) occurs in the Old Testament only with an intensive meaning, because testing implies an intense experience. God did not test the Israelites so they would fail. He tested them so they would realize they could always depend on Him to provide.

LIST: Call for the group to name God's simple instructions for the Israelites in verses 4-5 and 11-12.

Ask: Why was it so important for the people to trust and obey God in these simple instructions regarding the food? Which is more challenging—to obey God in the simple things or to obey in the hard things? Explain.

DISCUSS: *What is the connection between obedience and trust? Can you have trust without obedience? How is obedience without trust different from obedience with trust? (p. 47)*

TRANSITION: *God's desire is that we obey, and as we do this we strengthen our trust in Him. Now see how God's provision matched the people's needs perfectly.*

READ: Direct someone to read aloud Exodus 16:13-18, noting the ways God provided for the people's needs.

- **(16:13)** God fed the people with quail only twice during the wilderness wanderings (see also Num. 11:31-32). Some Bible students explain that the quail likely were migrating from their winter habitat in Africa and landed in the camp exhausted from their long flight. God could have used the natural movements of the quail to feed His people, but the biblical text emphasizes that the quail constituted a miraculous gift from God. The quails' migration would not necessarily have taken them over the Israelite camp.
- **(16:14)** Some Bible students have identified manna as an excretion of a particular insect in the Sinai wilderness. The insect consumes the juices of the fruit of tamarisk trees, thereby producing a yellowish-white flaky substance. In the early morning the flakes can be gathered, but as the day goes on, the sun's heat melts the flakes away. The substance, still eaten by people in the area today, has a sweet taste and is a good source of carbohydrates and sugars. The Bible is clear, however, that the manna came as a miraculous provision by God. Apparently, it wasn't present until after God declared He would send it. Manna constituted a special, miraculous gift of God to sustain His people for forty years in the wilderness. Theologically, it pointed to Jesus, who would come as the Bread of life (John 6:33)

DISCUSS: *How can not knowing what something is or how it was provided cause a person to question that provision? How can a person's focus on what was provided get in the way of being thankful for that provision?*

TRANSITION: *God's provision was sufficient, but let's see how the Israelites did regarding God's specific instructions.*

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud Exodus 16:19-20, instructing the rest of the group to look for Moses' instruction to the people.

- **(16:19-20)** The pattern of Israel's questioning God's faithfulness and goodness would remain a continual pattern that would land them in a great deal of trouble. The cycle of Israel's life with God became very predictable. Israel would cry out to God for help. God would rescue them in some miraculous fashion. Israel would experience a season of peace, security, and obedience. With the passage of time, however, Israel would forget the goodness and faithfulness of God. The forgetfulness of God's people would send them into a season of complacency and spiritual neglect. Soon thereafter, this kind of backsliding would land them in trouble from which they would cry out to God for deliverance. And so the cycle would go. This is why God constantly called His people to remember Him.

NAME: Write these two headings on a large sheet of paper or on a whiteboard: "Disobedience" and "Consequence." Call for the group to name how the people disobeyed God's instruction, listing answers under the "Disobedience" heading. Then call for the group to name the consequence for their disobedience, listing responses under the "Consequence" heading.

DISCUSS: *Why do you think the people disobeyed this simple instruction from Moses? In what ways did the people's lack of obedience reveal a lack of trust in God?*

GUIDE: Instruct the group to silently read the last paragraph on page 47. Stress that by not saving manna to eat the next day, the people would show their trust in God.

ASK: *How does God's daily provision foster dependence on and trust in God? (p. 47)*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

DISCUSS: *What lesson can we take away from this story about the Israelites and their questioning in the wilderness? Remind the group that we face the same kinds of decisions about whether to fully trust God to meet our needs today.*

RESPOND: To close the session, direct the group to examine the first question set under Apply the Text (p. 48): *In what areas of your life do you have the most difficulty obeying God? How does that challenge relate to your willingness to trust God? For what do you need to trust God as the next step in your obedience to Him?* Challenge group members to look for opportunities to trust God more in their daily choices and plans.

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God for His perfect provision and praying that group members would respond in obedience to God in every aspect of their lives.

AFTER THE SESSION

Send an email or text message to the group, encouraging them to look for ways God provides to meet their needs as the week unfolds.

COMMANDED

Exodus 20:1-17

FOCUS ATTENTION

DRAW: As the group arrives, invite volunteers to draw a line that is 12 inches long on a large sheet of paper or on the whiteboard (as close as they can come to 12 inches) without using a ruler or any other measuring device. Then provide a ruler to show how close the lines on the board are to 12 inches. Emphasize that without a clear standard to guide us (i.e., a ruler or yardstick), it can be very difficult to hit the mark for an exact 12 inches.

EXPLAIN: *In today's Bible passage, we will see that God has given us a clear standard for holy living.*

TRANSITION: Remind the group that we continue to move through significant passages in Exodus and Leviticus, and today we will examine God's Ten Commandments. Call attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of Exodus; Leviticus*) and **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Fall 2017*). Focus attention on the major outline points. Point out the location of Mount Sinai (labeled and also known as Jebel Musa) on **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Route of the Exodus*), where the events in today's study took place. Briefly summarize the information in *Understand the Context* (p. 53) to describe the connection between the law and the gift of salvation that comes through Jesus.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Direct a volunteer to read aloud Exodus 20:1-2, as the group listens for the way God describes Himself.

- **(20:1)** *God is a speaking God.* Other than the character of God Himself, the revelation of God as a speaking God is the most significant self-revealing truth about God. Why? Because it means that God does not leave His people in doubt about what He desires of them. He has written it in a book, the Bible—inspired, inerrant, authoritative, and sufficient.
- **(20:2)** *God is the only God.* God knew that His people would live in a pluralistic world with many claims to deity. The Lord wanted them to know that He alone was the great I AM. God had identified Himself to Moses as the great I AM in Exodus 3:14. God wanted the Israelites to know that the God they served was unique; therefore, they were unique.
- **(20:2)** *God is a delivering God.* Verse 2 ends with God's self-identification as the God "who brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt." This phrase would be repeated often, reminding them that the God who had delivered them could be trusted and obeyed. Obedience to the commandments was the means by which God's people enjoyed and responded to what the Lord had already done by delivering them from Egypt and taking them as His possession.

CHART: On the whiteboard or a large sheet of paper, create a chart with these three headings: "Who God Is," "How I Relate to Him," and "How I Relate to Others." Invite the group to name what we learn about who God is in verses 1 and 2. List their responses under the proper heading.

DISCUSS: *How do the Ten Commandments relate to Israel's relationship with God? How do they relate to Israel's mission to the world around them?* (p. 55)

TRANSITION: *God identified Himself and established His authority. Next, we'll examine God's standard for living, which we also call the Ten Commandments.*

READ: Call on a volunteer to read aloud Exodus 20:3-11, encouraging the group to listen for the way these commands describe our relationship with God.

- **(20:3)** God's people were to remember that there is but one God. Later, the understanding of God would be expanded to be God and Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit. He is the one, true, triune God.
- **(20:4-6)** The second commandment argues that to make any attempt to replace the one true God is idolatry. An idol can be material in nature. An idol can also be an idea of God that is less than or unworthy of God Himself. Either way, whether material or mental, idolatry is sin.
- **(20:7)** To misuse God's name can mean at least three things. First, it can mean we use God's name as a curse word. Second, we can wrongly use God's name as a tool to cover our sins or as a covering to accomplish our own purposes under the guise of doing something for Him. Third, we may identify ourselves as God's people yet not live up to that name.
- **(20:8-11)** We are unlike God; He does not need rest or relaxation. We need rest. We need worship. Rest reminds us that we are needy. Worship reminds us that God is the One who gives us rest, who redeems and restores our souls. Worship is critical, necessary, and essential.

CHART: Refer to the chart and call for group members to use their own words to describe the four commandments in these verses as they relate to our relationship with God. Record their responses on the chart under "How I Relate to Him." Then direct attention to **Pack Item 9** (*Chart: Ten Commandments*) and use it to supplement your discussion of these first four commandments.

DISCUSS: *God gave additional directions about how the sacrificed lamb was to be eaten. How is keeping the first four commandments a way of demonstrating love for God?* (p. 55) *How are these commands a response to God's identity as the One who delivered Israel?*

TRANSITION: *Following these first four commandments helps us as we strive to give God first place in our hearts and lives. Next, we'll turn to the commandments that guide our relationships with other people.*

READ: As a volunteer reads Exodus 20:12-17, lead the group to listen for the ways these commands describe our relationships with other people.

- **(20:12-17)** The remaining commandments address how we should relate to one another. How we relate to God determines how we will relate to others. Conversely, how we relate to others reveals what we think and believe about God and His commands. Further, the commandments that address our relationship with God and the commandments that address our relationships with others form the basis of all the other principles and precepts that are revealed throughout the entirety of God's Word. God wanted Israel to look at His commandments as a whole rather than as individual parts. While each of the commandments is essential, God did not want His people to focus on the individual parts and lose focus of the entirety of the purpose of the law. How we relate to God and to others form two parts of a whole that cannot be separated. Together they form the basis of how we are to love God and others (Matt. 22:34-40).

CHART: Refer to the chart and call for group members to use their own words to describe the six commandments in these verses as they discuss our relationships with each other. Record responses under the "How I Relate to Others" heading. Supplement the discussion, pointing to **Pack Item 9** (*Chart: Ten Commandments*).

DISCUSS: *What do we learn from the last six commandments about our relationship with each other? What are practical ways we can show respect and dignity when we relate to others?*

DISCUSS: Instruct the group to work in pairs or groups of three to discuss these questions: *Is there an issue not covered in this set of laws? If so, what? To what level are all other laws based on these?* (p. 55) Then ask: *How would you describe a society that fully followed these commands?* Invite volunteers to share their responses with the whole group.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

DISCUSS: *Do we give holy living the priority it should have in our lives today? Explain. What are practical steps can we take to pursue holy living in the days ahead?*

CHALLENGE: Guide the group to examine the second question set under Apply the Text on page 56: *Paul explained that the law points us to our need for Christ (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:19-26). How do these commandments point you to Christ? With whom can you share that the commandments show our need for a Savior? Pray with other members of your group, asking God to give you opportunities to share about the need for Christ.* Lead the group to talk about how these commandments point us to Christ. Challenge them to think about and pray for others they know who need to hear the gospel's good news. Encourage them to be bold in sharing.

PRAY: Reread Exodus 20:3, and close in prayer that everyone would focus on obedience and faithfulness to God.

AFTER THE SESSION

Send the group an email or text message encouraging them to pray for each other this week, that they may love God and love others well.

EQUIPPED

Exodus 25:1-9; 31:1-6

FOCUS ATTENTION

NAME: To introduce the session, invite the group to show by raised hand if they have ever been involved in a renovation or remodeling project of any kind. Call for the group to name some of the things needed when you undertake a renovation or remodeling project (examples: tools, materials, skilled workers, money to fund it, permits, etc.). Ask: *Consider the work of your Bible study group. What skills and abilities are needed for the group to function well? What kind of financial resources are needed for the group to function?* (p. 61)

EXPLAIN: Point out that in today's session we will examine a building project in Exodus 25—the building of the tabernacle. Encourage the group to look and listen for the ways God equipped His people for the big job in front of them.

TRANSITION: Remind the group that we continue to move through significant passages in Exodus and Leviticus. Call attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of Exodus; Leviticus*) and **Pack Item 4** (*Time Line: Exodus; Leviticus*) as visual guides to aid your discussion.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Briefly summarize the information in Understand the Context (p. 61). Then invite a volunteer to read aloud Exodus 25:1-7, as the group listens for God's plan for gathering the supplies needed to build the tabernacle. Use **Pack Item 10** (*Poster: Tabernacle Items*) to help your discussion.

- **(25:1-2)** God loves cheerful and lavish givers. The apostle Paul wrote, "Each person should do as he has decided in his heart—not reluctantly or out of compulsion, since God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7). We are not told how this offering was collected, but we do know that God appointed a day for His people to set aside offerings to be given for the purpose of building a tabernacle.
- **(25:3-7)** God could have made something out of nothing. Instead, He chose to give to His people, then through His people, all the resources needed to build the tabernacle. This was a lesson in stewardship. Through their giving, the people of God would demonstrate the infinite value of God over the finite value of material wealth.

GUIDE: Write the words "Willing Hearts" on the whiteboard or on a large sheet of paper. Invite the group to consider the importance of heart attitudes in giving. Ask: *What was the people's role in building the tabernacle? Why was it important that they gave from willing hearts?*

HIGHLIGHT: Under the words “Willing Hearts” on the whiteboard, add the words “Costly Giving.” Point out that the items required for the tabernacle were valuable (vv. 3-7). Explain that the Israelites fled Egypt with great wealth. They had the resources to gather the materials that God required.

DISCUSS: *How do believers honor God by participating in willful and costly giving toward His purposes? Give an example of how God provided for a specific need through His people.* (p. 63)

TRANSITION: *God had given the people the list of what He required for building the tabernacle. Next, God helped the Israelites better understand His purpose for the tabernacle.*

READ: As a volunteer reads aloud Exodus 25:8-9, invite the group to listen for how God explained His purpose in leading the people to build the tabernacle.

- **(25:8)** Our gracious God wanted to dwell among His people. God is holy. He gave very specific instructions about how to approach Him in worship, instructions that if violated would lead to the death of those involved. Yet, it remains astonishingly gracious that the God of the universe did not choose to rule His people from Mount Sinai. Instead, He chose to be among His people. The law was revealed on a mountain, yet God would govern His people by dwelling among them.
- **(25:9)** Ultimately, the purpose and design of the tabernacle were a reflection of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Further, the tabernacle was to foreshadow God’s indwelling presence in His people as they would eventually become the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 8:5). God’s presence would dwell first in the tabernacle, then the temple, and eventually in the hearts of God’s people, the church. The holy of holies, the most holy place of God’s dwelling among mankind, would give way to God’s dwelling in the hearts of His people.

DISCUSS: *If the people did their part in building the sanctuary, what did God promise? Why was following God’s pattern important?*

EMPHASIZE: *Following God’s instructions was for the Israelites’ good and for their protection. The carefulness of following God’s pattern was important as a heart check for Israel. Use **Pack Item 10** (Poster: Tabernacle Items) to supplement your discussion on the tabernacle.*

DISCUSS: *Is there a relationship between our obedience and God’s presence? Explain.* (p. 63)

EMPHASIZE: *As believers, we are thankful for having God’s presence through the Holy Spirit’s dwelling in us.*

TRANSITION: *Not only did God provide the resources, He also provided the leaders.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Exodus 31:1-6, as the group listens for the names and qualifications of the leaders God identified.

- **(31:2)** First, God named the leaders—Bezalel and Oholiab. These two men were to gather and supervise the best craftsmen from among God’s people to build the tabernacle. These leaders were individuals with names, with families, and with the needed skills that could be used for the glory

of God. It is important to remember that leaders are people and that their authority is a derived authority. Leaders derive their authority from God's authority. This truth keeps leaders humble and keeps them from thinking that they have authority of their own.

- **(31:3)** Second, God filled them with His Spirit. It was God who would give them every skill needed to accomplish the task of building the tabernacle. Too often, leaders operate within their own strengths, thinking that the accomplishment of God's purposes rests on their shoulders. This is contrary to biblical leadership. We often make the mistake of looking at leadership in worldly terms. While many skills are needed in order to be effective, God first and foremost looks at the heart. God used the prophet Samuel to choose a king for Israel. While others looked at outward appearances, God told Samuel to look at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). Biblical leaders seek the Lord, are filled with the Spirit of God, and exercise God-given authority as needed for their God-given task.

DISCUSS: Invite the group to name the specific ways found in these verses that God equipped these people for the job of constructing the tabernacle. Refer back to **Pack Item 10** (*Poster: Tabernacle Items*) to supplement your discussion as you talk about the tabernacle.

ASK: *How does God's provision of skills and talents give both confidence and humility in doing His work?* (p. 63)

IDENTIFY: Read the last summary statement under Apply the Text on page 64: *God provides skills and talents that can be used for His honor and glory.* Suggest that the group consider the skills God has given to the people within this small group. Ask: *What kind of variety do you see in the gifts and skills God gives us?* List these on the whiteboard and remind the group to be thankful for the way God has prepared each of us to do His work.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

DISCUSS: *How can we apply what we've learned about the building of the tabernacle as we work in our jobs, homes, and church in this coming week? As a group, how can we encourage each other in the work God calls us to do?* Stress that we can bring confidence to our tasks, knowing that God has equipped us for the job.

RESPOND: Lead group members to discuss their responses to the first question set under Apply the Text (p. 64): *Discuss as a group the needs seen in your church or community that could be met with the resources and talents available in the group. What will be the next steps in meeting these needs?*

PRAY: Close in prayer that group members would be obedient when God calls them to use their skills and abilities for His glory.

After the Session Consider your own life. Are there skills and talents you are not yet using for God's purposes?

REBELLION

Exodus 32:1-6,11-14

FOCUS ATTENTION

DISCUSS: To introduce the session, call attention to the questions at the top of page 69: *What is one thing that would devastate you if you lost it? What is one thing that you think would bring you contentment if you gained it?*

EXPLAIN: Read the first paragraph on page 69. Explain that in today's study, we will see how the Israelites grew restless, turned their hearts away from God, and turned toward the temporary pleasure of worshipping an idol.

TRANSITION: Remind the group that we continue to move through significant passages in Exodus and Leviticus. Direct attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of Exodus; Leviticus*) and **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Fall 2017*). Call attention to the major outline points. Briefly summarize the information in Understand the Context (p. 69) to help the group better understand this event that occurred at Mount Sinai.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: As a volunteer reads Exodus 32:1-4, direct the group to listen for how the people's restlessness and impatience in waiting for God's plan for them led to rebellion.

- **(32:1)** The rebellion of God's people against Him came in several layers. First, it began with impatience. While Moses remained on the mountain for forty days, God's people at the foot of Mount Sinai became restless and impatient. Impatience is a close cousin to the sins of faithlessness and doubt. Second, the rebellion continued with a demand laid upon Israel's leaders. The people wanted a god, and they wanted it now! Rebellious people can often place undue pressure on God's leaders to cave in to their fleshly desires. Two of the greatest temptations for the church and its leaders are to either get ahead of God or delay action for God. Third, the rebellion of God's people continued with what may be called a lack of knowledge. Perhaps they speculated that a tragedy had occurred and that Moses would never return. Their speculation could also indicate a lack of concern for his welfare.
- **(32:2-4)** Fourth, rebellion is often accompanied by the presence of a complicit leader. Confronted by the demands of a discontented population, Aaron made no protest. Rather than assume leadership, he submitted to the will of the majority. The man chosen to represent the Lord as high priest before the people had condescended to substituting human superstition for divine revelation and the work of his hands for the providence of the Lord. Furthermore, since gold would be needed in building the tabernacle, his actions were a misappropriation of the Lord's provision.

CHART: On a large sheet of paper or on the whiteboard, create a chart with these four headings: "Request," "By Whom," "For What," and "Result." Ask: *What evidence do we see of the people's disobedience? What evidence do we see of Aaron's disobedience?* From the responses, begin to fill in the information under the four headings on the chart.

EXPLAIN: *Moses had been on the mountain forty days receiving instructions from God. During this time, the people grew tired of waiting.*

ASK: *What role does a person's impatience play in idolatry? What would you consider the greater influence—impatience, or the desire for a leader? (p. 71) What can we do to encourage each other toward greater patience in our relationship with God?*

TRANSITION: *Impatient with the timing of God's plan, the people rebelled and built a god who pleased them. Now let's see how their rebellion progressed.*

READ: Request that the group listen as someone reads aloud Exodus 32:5-6 to discover what Aaron and the people did after they made the golden calf.

- **(32:5)** Aaron had the audacity to call for a festival to the Lord. But which Lord? It was not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Instead, Aaron declared a day of worship for a deaf, mute, powerless, nonexistent god.
- **(32:6)** Not only did God's people give of their gold to make the golden calf, not only did Aaron call for a day of worship and praise, not only did they build an altar for the worship of the golden calf, but they actually offered treasured gifts to this false deity. This is the height of idolatrous rebellion. The people did not want accountability to God; they wanted to worship a god that would provide for their every need without making any demands on them for obedience and holiness.

DISCUSS: Ask: *What is the relationship between idolatry and foolishness? Why is it so hard for people who trust in idols to see the foolishness of their actions?* Allow the group to respond. Then note that in verse 5, Aaron announced a day of celebration and called it a festival or feast to the Lord, yet it involved idol worship. Ask: *How can we avoid the trap of mixing dangerous false teachings or false practices with our worship of the true God?*

TRANSITION: *The Israelites' foolishness was on display as they offered sacrifices to their golden calf. God's anger against their foolish rebellion was swift—He wanted to destroy the people. Let's see how Moses reacted.*

READ: As a volunteer reads Exodus 32:11-14, encourage the group to look for how Moses interceded on behalf of the people.

- **(32:11-12)** Moses' plea to God to be merciful to His people was not based on the credibility of the people but on the merciful compassion of God. Moses was more concerned with God's reputation than the condition of the people. In other words, Moses was appealing to God for God's own sake.

- **(32:14)** The Lord is a righteous and holy God who does not tolerate sin. The penalty for sin is death. The Lord's pronouncement of judgment was an appeal for repentance. When Moses actually confronted the people, some immediately turned back to the Lord and lived. Others did not and died. Deliverance from the Lord's judgment is the result of a personal choice, how one responds to the Lord's offer of mercy. Whenever people respond with repentance, the Lord always grants forgiveness. But when people do not repent, the penalty for His verdict eventually will be carried out.

CHART: Call attention back to the chart and direct the group to call out the information to add to the chart concerning Moses' request and God's response.

DISCUSS: *How does God's being faithful to His promises give us comfort today? How is God's mercy seen in this passage?* (p. 71)

TRANSITION: *In the end, God's grace shone through—the same grace He offers to us today, wanting all people to have the opportunity to repent.*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Draw attention back to the chart created during the session. Then direct attention to the summary statements under Apply the Text (p. 72) and call for a volunteer to read them aloud: *Believers must stand against any acts that are in rebellion against God. Any attempt to worship any person or object other than the one true God will lead to foolishness. Believers can intercede on behalf of the disobedient, asking for God to give them an opportunity to repent.* Comment that we may be able to recall times in our own lives when we have chased after rebellious choices, yet God showed Himself to be faithful, extending His grace and forgiveness toward us. Allow volunteers to share briefly any times like these.

HIGHLIGHT: Remind the group to complete the Daily Exploration sections each day this week to gain a deeper understanding of this passage.

READ: Call attention to **Pack Item 13** (*Poster: Exodus 33:14*) and then lead the group to read aloud together this week's memory verse (Ex. 33:14). Discuss what it means to you to have the Spirit with you and giving you rest. Encourage volunteers to share times when they've been comforted by God's Spirit. Challenge the group to review and memorize this verse in the coming week.

PRAY: Close in prayer that the group would focus on solely worshiping the one true God and that each person would feel His presence throughout the coming week.

AFTER THE SESSION

Contact anyone who was absent today and encourage him or her to read the Daily Exploration sections for this session.

HIS PRESENCE

Exodus 39:42-43; 40:1-4, 34-38

FOCUS ATTENTION

GUIDE: To introduce the session, direct attention to page 77. Invite a volunteer to read aloud the first paragraph. Discuss: *How would you describe the desire for assurance when facing a difficult task or unsettling situation? What sources do people seek for assurance?* (p. 77)

EXPLAIN: Emphasize that in today's Bible passage, we will see the work on the tabernacle completed. Challenge the group to look for what God did once the job was complete.

TRANSITION: Explain that this session continues the study of passages in Exodus and Leviticus. Call attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of Exodus; Leviticus*) and **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Fall 2017*). Direct attention to the major outline points.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Direct a volunteer to read aloud Exodus 39:42-43, highlighting the inspection and blessing Moses gave to the completed tabernacle. Use Apply the Text (p. 80) and **Pack Item 4** (*Time Line: Exodus; Leviticus*) to explain where today's Bible passage fits into the bigger story of the Book of Exodus. Call attention to verse 43, and ask: *How does obeying the directives of God give us pleasure and satisfaction?* (p. 79)

- **(39:42-43)** God's people did all the work. This is important. They could have easily decided to take things into their own hands and do it their way. Instead, they finished the work God's way. The work was done so well that God's people were unafraid of accountability. When the work was finished and the inspection was completed, Moses blessed them. Nothing is more satisfying than a job well done, especially when the one handing out the blessings is God.

ASK: *How do past acts of disobedience drive us to acts of obedience?* (p. 79)

TRANSITION: *The people of Israel could enjoy the satisfaction of finishing the work God had assigned. Next we'll see God's instructions to Moses regarding the setup of the tabernacle.*

READ: Call for a show of hands from anyone who has ever struggled to assemble an item that had confusing instructions. Then read aloud Exodus 40:1-4, directing the group to listen for the plan to set up the tabernacle. Note the clear, precise instructions God gave Moses.

- **(40:2-4)** First, the structure was to be assembled on the first day of the month. Second, the ark of the covenant was to be placed in the holy of holies, veiled by a beautifully crafted curtain. Third, all of the furnishings for the inside of the tabernacle were to be brought in and placed

exactly where God designed them to be placed. Finally, the outer court was to be furnished and arranged according to God's purposes.

DISCUSS: *How does being obedient to God in the small things help us to be obedient to Him in the bigger things? Then ask: What were the dangers if Moses failed to assemble the tabernacle according to God's directions? What are the dangers today of failing to follow God's directions? (p. 79)*

TRANSITION: *The Israelites did not have to be puzzled or confused. God provided the specific directions needed to complete the tabernacle. Next we will see how God revealed Himself to the people in the completed tabernacle.*

READ: Ask someone to read aloud Exodus 40:34-35, encouraging the group to listen for how God filled the tabernacle with His glory. Emphasize that the cloud was the physical symbol showing that God was there with His people.

- **(40:34-35)** Once the tabernacle was finished, God filled it with His presence. The same cloud that had guided God's people through the wilderness now hovered over the tabernacle, filling it with the presence and power of God. God's glorious presence was so real and powerful that Moses was unable to approach or enter the tabernacle. Though Moses was unable to enter the tabernacle due to the overwhelming presence of God, his desire to meet with God is noble. More importantly, God's desire to dwell among His people is a manifestation of His grace.

DISCUSS: *How does this biblical glimpse of God's glory give us comfort and confidence as we look to the future? Why is it important that we keep our eyes on the future as we endure the struggles of daily life? (p. 79)*

LIST: Write these words on the whiteboard: "Then" and "Now." Point to "Then" and explain that when God showed His glory in the tabernacle He was letting the people know that He accepted their work and desired to be with them. Next, point to the word "Now."

DISCUSS: *While we have not experienced a tabernacle filled with God's glory, as believers we do enjoy God's presence in our lives today. In what ways do we experience God's presence with us today?*

EMPHASIZE: *Having God's presence in our lives through the Holy Spirit is reason for us to celebrate.*

DISCUSS: *How does having God's Holy Spirit at work in our lives change everything?*

TRANSITION: *When God's glory filled the tabernacle, He showed the Israelites His desire to be with His people. With the tabernacle completed, we will see how God led His people on their journey.*

READ: Direct a volunteer to read aloud Exodus 40:36-38, as the group looks for the physical signs God used to lead the Israelites.

- **(40:36-38)** The cloud that represented God led the Israelites, not the other way around. In other words, God's people didn't set out and then hope that God would lead and provide. Instead, they waited for God to move; when God moved, they moved. God's presence and leadership through

the wilderness and His abiding presence in the tabernacle were intertwined. In essence, the presence of God, the leadership He provided for His people, and the worship of God's people could not be disconnected. To follow God's leading is to worship Him; to worship God is to know His presence. God's presence, His leadership, and our worship are essentially bound together.

- **(40:36-38)** God's leadership is the same in our day, but maybe more personal. We know who God is generally through nature (Ps. 19:1-6) and more specifically through His Word (Ps. 19:7-14) and through the person and work of Jesus Christ (John 1:14,17). In addition, the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are His children (Rom. 8:16). As we worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24), the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to perform spiritual surgery on us (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12), pruning our shortcomings, leading us for His glory, producing in us the character of Christ (Gal. 5:22) as well as every spiritual gift we need to serve Him (1 Cor. 12; 14).

DESCRIBE: Write this sentence on the whiteboard or on a large sheet of paper: "Seeing is believing." Call for volunteers to describe examples in which seeing something helps you believe it. Explain that for the Israelites traveling toward the promised land, "seeing was believing," as God provided direction and comfort through the visible, physical reminders of the cloud and the fire.

DISCUSS: *How do you think the visible cloud was a help or a comfort to the people of Israel at that time? In what ways are God's Spirit and God's Word a help and a comfort to us today?*

ASK: *How does the certainty of God's presence give someone assurance to follow God's mission even when the outcome is uncertain? (p. 79)*

TRANSITION: *We don't have a visible cloud guiding us, but we have the confident assurance of God's Word and His Spirit giving us direction.*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

IDENTIFY: Instruct group members to silently read the Apply the Text bulleted summary statements (p. 80). Direct them to circle the statement that is most meaningful to them personally with the things going on in their lives right now.

CHALLENGE: Encourage the group to discuss the third question set under Apply the Text (p. 80): *What can your group do to better place itself in a position to be ready for God's presence? What is it doing well already? How can you build upon what is already in place? Allow time for volunteers to respond. Encourage group members to prepare themselves to be ready for God's presence.*

PRAY: Close in prayer that the group would find comfort and encouragement for the future in God's Spirit with us.

AFTER THE SESSION

Send a message to the group that includes this session's memory verse (Ex. 39:42) as a reminder to follow God's instructions to us in His Word daily.

SET BEFORE

Leviticus 1:3-9; 2:1-3; 3:1-5

FOCUS ATTENTION

GUIDE: To introduce the session, lead the group to discuss the questions at the top of page 85: *What does the kind of food served indicate about the importance of an event? How does someone's presence at an event indicate the significance of an event?* Then ask a volunteer to read the first paragraph on page 85 ("Special occasions ...").

EXPLAIN: Note that in today's Bible passage, we move into the Book of Leviticus. Briefly summarize the information in *Understand the Context* (p. 85) to help the group better understand the Book of Leviticus and its importance to the Israelites.

TRANSITION: *With the tabernacle now complete, God gave to Moses specific instructions about the sacrifices that were to be offered.* Call attention to **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Fall 2017*) and **Pack Item 4** (*Time Line: Exodus; Leviticus*), directing attention to the events in history surrounding Leviticus.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Leviticus 1:3-9, instructing the group to listen for God's requirements for the burnt offerings.

- **(1:3)** The burnt offering was preeminent in the sacrificial system. Only the sacrifice offered on the Day of Atonement was more important. The animal offered was based upon the ability of the person to give, so even a bird could be offered. The choice of a sacrifice was dependent on the worshiper's economic status. Wealthy people gave expensive bulls. Poor individuals offered doves or pigeons (see 1:14). The Israelite of average means offered a sheep or goat.
- **(1:4)** Prior to burning the offering, the worshiper was to lay his hand on the head of the animal, symbolizing that the animal died in his place.
- **(1:5)** The animal was to be killed before the Lord. The phrase "before the LORD" indicates that the slaughtering of the animal took place in the courtyard of the tabernacle. The blood of the animal was to be splattered by the priest on all sides of the altar.
- **(1:6-9)** After killing the animal, the worshiper skinned it, cut it into pieces, and washed it. The priest arranged the sacrificial animal properly on the fire. If done properly, this sacrifice would please God and atone for sin.

HIGHLIGHT: Call attention to **Pack Item 8** (*Chart: Jewish Sacrifices*) to help the group better understand the importance of the unblemished animal and the gesture of laying a hand upon the animal.

ASK: *What does the quality of an offering reveal about the one offering it? (p. 87)*

STUDY: Lead the group to learn more about atonement. Allow time to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 87. Make sure to discuss the last question: *How does your definition give you a greater understanding and appreciation for what Christ did for you on the cross? (p. 87)* Point to **Pack Item 14** (Poster: *Leviticus 16:30*) displayed in the room to aid in your discussion of atonement. Say: *As you consider your life, what words describe the emotions this verse evokes within you?*

DISCUSS: Instruct the group to work in pairs or groups of three to talk about and respond to this question: *The bloody nature of the animal sacrifices was a jarring picture of the cost of redemption. How does this imagery bolster our understanding of the seriousness of sin and the cost of a sacrificial life given for sin? (p. 87)* Allow time for group members to share and then call for volunteers to summarize their responses.

COMPARE: *How is Jesus, our sacrifice, like the Old Testament animal sacrifice? How is Jesus not like the animal sacrifice?*

EMPHASIZE: *Christ's sacrifice on the cross, as a payment for our sins, was once for all. Unlike the Old Testament sacrifices, His sacrifice would never need to be repeated.*

TRANSITION: *With the burnt offering that atoned for the people's sins, God showed that sin was a serious matter. An acceptable sacrifice was required to pay for sin. Next we will look at a different offering—the grain offering.*

READ: Direct someone to read aloud *Leviticus 2:1-3*, as the group listens for God's requirement for the grain offering.

- **(2:1)** The offering consisted of fine flour mixed with oil and frankincense.
- **(2:2)** Unlike the burnt offering, only a portion of this offering, a handful, was burned on the altar.
- **(2:3)** The remainder of the offering went to the priests. They were to eat it in the courtyard of the tabernacle (6:16). Since the priests were dependent on the people's provision, the grain offering was a significant portion of their income.

STUDY: Direct a volunteer to look up and be prepared to read *Romans 12:1-2*. Ask: *How is an offering an act of gratitude to God? How does offering our entire lives to God (see *Rom. 12:1-2*) relate to our gratitude for Christ's sacrifice for our sin? (p. 87)*

EMPHASIZE: Call for the group to name aloud the things for which they are thankful to God. Ask: *How can we intentionally show gratitude to God through our words and actions? How can we weave thankfulness and gratitude to God into our everyday actions and habits?*

TRANSITION: *The grain offering was the people's way of saying thank you to God for all of His provisions. The third and last offering we will explore today is the offering that represented peace with God—the fellowship offering.*

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud Leviticus 3:1-5, as the group listens for the requirements of the fellowship offering.

- **(3:1)** The fellowship offering or peace offering was unique in that the worshiper ate a portion of the sacrifice. This offering usually accompanied the burnt offering of Leviticus 1:3-9. In Leviticus 3:1-5, the parameters of the fellowship offering are clearly outlined. In contrast to the other offerings involving animal sacrifice (1:3; 4:3; 5:18), either a male or female animal from the worshiper's herd could be offered (v. 1).
- **(3:2)** The priests were to splatter the blood on all sides of the altar. The procedures described in verse 2 are essentially the same as that prescribed for the burnt offering in 1:3-5.
- **(3:3-5)** The fat surrounding the entrails was removed and burned on the altar along with the burnt offering.

DISCUSS: Point out that for the fellowship offering, the worshiper and the priest ate the meat together. Ask: *What is the significance of the priest and the worshiper sharing a meal? How would you describe what it means to be at peace with God?* (p. 87)

TRANSITION: *Today we enjoy the confidence and assurance in knowing that through our faith in Christ, we can have peace and fellowship with God.*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

DISCUSS: *We don't present burnt, grain, or fellowship offerings to God today, so how can we show Him our love and devotion through our words, attitudes, and actions?*

DIRECT: Call attention to the third question set under Apply the Text (p. 88): *As a group, list reasons to express gratitude to God. Discuss as a group ways to better express gratitude to God during time spent with others in the group. What actions does the group need to take in light of this discussion?* Allow time for responses. Encourage group members to make it their priority to look for fresh ways to express gratitude.

REMINDE: Encourage the group to attend the next session as you examine some of Aaron's duties as a priest and then talk about God's call on our lives as the priesthood of believers. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 5** (*Bookmark: Memory Verses*) to those who need a copy.

PRAY: Close in prayer that the group would be intentional about showing thankfulness to God in all circumstances this week.

AFTER THE SESSION

Encourage group members to memorize Leviticus 6:13 and seek after actions that keep their gratitude and devotion to God burning.

SET APART

Leviticus 9:15-24; 10:1-3

FOCUS ATTENTION

LIST: Before the session, write “Do’s” and “Don’ts” as headings on paper and post them prominently in the room. As the group arrives, call for volunteers to name some do’s and don’ts that people outside the church might think Christians should follow. Point out that sometimes people view religion as just a list of difficult rules that people attempt to follow.

DISCUSS: Call attention to the first paragraph on page 93. Ask: *What expectations do non-Christians have about the way Christians should live in this world? Do you think they expect Christians to act differently than they do? Explain.* (p. 93)

TRANSITION: Stress that in today’s Bible passage, we will see how God’s people are called to live holy lives—not just to try to follow a list of do’s and don’ts. Point out that we are continuing our study of significant passages in Exodus and Leviticus. Use **Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of Exodus; Leviticus*) and **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Fall 2017*) to explain and draw attention to the major outline points.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud Leviticus 9:15-21, encouraging the group to listen for how Aaron presented the offerings on behalf of the people. Briefly summarize the information in *Understand the Context* (p. 93) to help the group comprehend the purpose of this first tabernacle service described here in chapter 9.

- **(9:15-21)** These verses remind us that the first duty of the priest was to present the people’s offering to God. Verse 15 records that Aaron took a male goat and made a sin offering. This was followed by the burnt offering in verse 16 and the grain offering in verse 17. In addition, verses 18-21 note that Aaron offered an ox and a ram as a fellowship or peace offering for God’s people. Step by step, Aaron went through the process of making all the appropriate sacrifices and offerings for God’s people so that they might be clean before God. God not only desired for His people to be clean from sin, He also outlined the manner by which they could be made clean and right before Him.
- **(9:15-21)** It must have been tedious for God’s people to relentlessly and continually make sacrifices and offerings to God for their sins. When they were faithful to make these proper sacrifices to Him, He was faithful to forgive and cleanse them of their sins. The sacrificial offerings to God were the means by which God renewed His covenant with His people and the manner by which the people of God were made clean before their holy God.

- **(9:15-21)** The Old Testament patterns point forward to the New Testament realities. Just as Aaron presented offerings on behalf of the Israelites, Jesus, our Mediator, has done the same by offering Himself. The only difference is that after Jesus' offering there is no need for another priest to represent humanity.

ASK: *Why is confession the first step for approaching God? What keeps people from being honest about their need for confession?* (p. 95) Point out that God was using the sacrifice offerings to show His people the way to return to Him.

EMPHASIZE: *As believers today, we have no need for an earthly priest to help us approach God, because Jesus is our Mediator.*

TRANSITION: *We know that confessing our sin is the first step toward God. Next we will see the blessing that Aaron offered for the people.*

READ: Direct a volunteer to read aloud Leviticus 9:22-24, as the group listens for Aaron's blessings upon the people and God's response.

- **(9:23)** Whatever happened while Aaron and Moses were before the Lord in the tabernacle must have had an incredible impact on both of them. These two dimensions of God's presence—the blessing of God and the glory of God—may have been the two most cherished desires of God's people. What more could the people have wanted than to receive the blessing of God and to see the glory of God?
- **(9:23)** The fire of the Lord fell on the offerings Aaron had made. Deuteronomy 4:24 says that God is a consuming fire. Fire symbolized the holiness of God and the purifying, cleansing power of God. The fire consumed all the offerings on the altar. This meant that what Aaron had offered was acceptable before God as an atonement for the sins of the people.

LIST: Create a chart with these three headings: "Aaron," "Moses and Aaron," "God." Instruct the group to silently scan verses 22-24 again and name the recorded actions (what Aaron did, what Moses and Aaron did, what God did). Record the actions under the respective headings on the board. Point out that when Moses and Aaron entered the tent together, their actions indicated that Moses was passing the torch to Aaron, who would be the one to mediate between God and the people. Also, note that the fire showed that God had accepted their offerings.

DISCUSS: Emphasize that as believers, one of the blessings we enjoy is being in God's presence when we worship Him. Ask: *If you were asked to describe the blessings of living a holy life, how would you respond?*

TRANSITION: *We have just seen the blessing the people experienced as Moses and Aaron led them in worshiping God. Next we will see the consequences of disobedience.*

READ: Direct someone to read aloud Leviticus 10:1-3, as the group listens for God's response when Aaron's sons presented God with an unauthorized offering.

- **(10:1)** Nadab and Abihu arrogantly approached God in ways that God Himself had not authorized. To approach God in inappropriate ways dishonors God and places the worshiper in danger of demeaning and diminishing the glory of God.
- **(10:2)** Notice that the text does not say that God rejected or burned up their offerings. Instead, the Word of God states that God burned up and killed the ones who offered it. This stunning act of God reminded God's people that God is a gracious and a holy God. He shows mercy and grace to the humble and contrite but will not allow people to presume upon His holiness.
- **(10:3)** Aaron was supposed to have been God's representative for the people. He was God's spokesman. But notice who did the speaking after Aaron's sons offered strange fire to God. Moses was God's mouthpiece to speak to Aaron and the people. God said that He would show Himself to be holy and glorious to all the people. Further, He would not allow His holiness to be violated by an unholy act of worship.

DISCUSS: *In what ways do we face the same temptation as Nadab and Abihu? When people stray away from God's demands of holiness, what effect does it have on their lives and relationships—both with God and others? To enhance the discussion, refer to **Pack Item 9** (Chart: Ten Commandments). Discuss the benefits of following each of these commandments.*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Call for a volunteer to read aloud Hebrews 7:26-28. Then call for the group to summarize those three verses in their own words. Stress that we can be thankful that Christ is the only holy, perfect priest we need and that through His sacrifice on the cross we have access to God.

DISCUSS: Direct someone to read aloud the summary statements under Apply the Text (p. 96): *Confession of sin is the first step toward God. Believers can enjoy the blessing of being in God's presence through worship of Him. God's people are to live holy lives, reflecting His character.* Lead the group to discuss the difference between God's granting us holiness and God's requirement for holiness in order to dwell with Him. *How do they relate? Can you have one without the other?*

REPORT: Call attention to the third question set under Apply the Text (p. 96): *Discuss with your Bible study group ways of holding each other accountable for being a holy people. Identify actions the group needs to take to be more accountable. What can you do to help the group complete the actions identified?* Allow time for the group to share responses.

PRAY: Encourage group members to pray for one another as they pursue being a holy people. Pray that they would regularly identify the blessings of living a holy life to remain focused on following God's Word.

AFTER THE SESSION

Text or email the group. Remind them to pray for each other as they seek to be God's holy people.

SET FREE

Leviticus 16:3-10,29-30

FOCUS ATTENTION

PREPARE: In advance, secure light leg weights or hand weights. Display these weights, and ask for a volunteer to strap on the leg weights or pick up the hand weights. Note that these weights are relatively light and most people would not have trouble lifting them. Then point out that if a person had to wear the leg weights or carry the hand weights everywhere he or she went, then soon it would become more tiresome carrying those weights.

EXPLAIN: Stress that the guilt of sin can feel like a weight we carry with us everywhere we go. Emphasize that in today's Bible passage, we will see how God promised a way for His people to be free from the guilt of sin.

DISCUSS: Call attention to the first paragraph at the top of page 101, and ask: *Why do many people have a difficult time coming to terms with their sinfulness? Do you think people today have a more lax view of sin than people did one hundred years ago? Explain.* (p. 101)

TRANSITION: Remind the group that we are nearing the end of this unit on Exodus and Leviticus. Call attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of Exodus; Leviticus*) and **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Fall 2017*). Direct attention to the major outline points.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Direct someone to read aloud Leviticus 16:3-6, as the group identifies Aaron's preparation for the special sacrifice. Use the information in Understand the Context (p. 101) to describe the importance of the Day of Atonement. Pay special attention to the burnt offerings and sin offerings described on **Pack Item 8** (*Chart: Jewish Sacrifices*).

- **(16:3)** The first step in the Day of Atonement was for Aaron and the priests to prepare themselves for worship. God gave instructions to Moses regarding how the priests were to prepare themselves for the Day of Atonement. Aaron was not allowed to come into God's presence on his own terms.
- **(16:3)** Aaron had to offer an offering for himself and his family.
- **(16:4)** Aaron was to dress in the proper attire as the high priest, bathing and cleansing himself before he dressed himself for his priestly duties.
- **(16:5-6)** In addition, Aaron was to offer a sacrifice for the sins of the people.

IDENTIFY: Write on the board: "What must he bring?" "What must he wear?" "How must he prepare?" Direct attention to verses 3-4 and instruct the group to identify and name the things Aaron

had to bring, wear, and do to prepare when he entered the most holy place. List their responses under the three questions on the board.

DISCUSS: *How do Christians rightly prepare themselves to enter into God's presence?*

COMPARE: Point out that in verses 5-6, God instructed Aaron regarding the sacrifices he would bring on this Day of Atonement—two goats and one ram. Consider the way that we prepare ourselves for worship today, compared with Aaron's preparation on the Day of Atonement. Ask: *Is it more difficult to prepare the internal or the external when it comes to preparing to be in God's presence? Explain.*

TRANSITION: *Just as Aaron prepared himself to enter God's presence, God's desire is that our hearts be ready and right with Him when we come to worship. Now let's look at the sacrifice Aaron brought.*

READ: Have a volunteer read aloud Leviticus 16:7-10, as the rest of the group listens for the plans involving the two goats. Briefly summarize the information on page 103 to describe the purpose of the goats.

- **(16:7-10)** The Hebrew word translated "uninhabitable place" at the end of verse 8 is *azazel*. This word occurs in the Old Testament only in Leviticus 16. Bible scholars have proposed various interpretations of its meaning. One view focuses on the origin of the word. It comes from a compound Hebrew word combining the word for "goat" and "going away," meaning the goat that goes away. This view fits the context of Leviticus 16. Another interpretation, developed by rabbis, suggests that *azazel* means a "rough, difficult terrain"—that is, an uninhabitable place. As such, it refers to the goat's destination. This view also fits the context of Leviticus 16.
- **(16:7-10)** Regardless of the precise meaning of the term *azazel*, the meaning of the passage is clear. The releasing of the goat graphically portrayed the complete removal of the Israelites' sins. David gave expression to this act of atonement in the psalms: "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12).

ASK: *How does the picture of the two goats give us a visual reminder of God's grace and forgiveness?*

CONSIDER: *In what ways was the Day of Atonement a temporary fix to the guilt and sin of the people of Israel? In what ways is Jesus' death on the cross a permanent solution to our sin problem?* Emphasize that while one goat was an offering for the people's sins and the other goat demonstrated God's gracious removal of Israel's guilt and sin, year after year the sacrifice was repeated. Stress that Jesus' death on the cross was the permanent solution to the guilt and sin of everyone who accepts God's gift of forgiveness.

DISCUSS: *How does Jesus' death give a believer confidence and humility at the same time? How does one strike the proper balance between confidence and humility? (p. 103)*

TRANSITION: *We can live confident that Jesus' death on the cross means we no longer need to carry the guilt of sin. Now let's read God's words as He established the Day of Atonement for His people.*

READ: Have someone read aloud Leviticus 16:29-30, as the group listens for God's instructions regarding the Day of Atonement.

- **(16:29-30)** Every aspect of the Day of Atonement—the preparation, the sacrifices, the cleansing, the sending away of the goat for the sins of the people—was permanently fulfilled and completed in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

HIGHLIGHT: Point to **Pack Item 14** (*Poster: Leviticus 16:30*). Lead the group to discuss what they've learned about atonement these past few sessions. *How has your understanding of atonement changed throughout this study?*

DISCUSS: Emphasize that with Jesus' death on the cross, He made atonement once and for all time, for all who accept the gift of forgiveness and salvation. Ask: *What does the need for an annual sacrifice reveal about the nature of humanity? What does the need for an annual sacrifice reveal about our need for Jesus?*

TRANSITION: *Because all of us are sinners, we needed a sacrifice. Only Jesus could make the everlasting atonement for sin that people so desperately needed.*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

DISCUSS: *What obstacles keep people from seeing their need for a Savior? What could you say or do to help someone who is carrying the guilt of sin as a heavy burden?*

REPORT: Lead the group to share responses to the first question under Apply the Text (p. 104): *Evaluate how you usually approach God.* Then encourage group members to write a private response to the second and third questions in their book: *In what ways are you too casual or too confident when it comes to approaching Him? How might you prepare to humble yourself before God?* Offer to talk with anyone who has never made the decision to have a relationship with God but would like to think about doing that now.

PRAY: Close in a prayer of thankfulness to God for providing everlasting atonement through His Son, Jesus Christ.

AFTER THE SESSION

As part of your personal worship this week, complete the third question set under Apply the Text (p. 104): *Reflect on Leviticus 16:30. Read the verse aloud, substituting your name for "you." Record the emotions you feel as a result. Thank Him for providing His Son so you can be clean before Him.*

SET FUTURES

Leviticus 26:3-16,40-45

FOCUS ATTENTION

LIST: As group members arrive, direct attention to the first paragraph on page 109. Invite them to name a skill they have that requires practice. List these skills on the whiteboard. Then ask: *What do you do that requires intentional practice? What benefits have you seen as a result of that intentional practice?* (p. 109) Lead the group to discuss benefits of practicing a skill or talent.

DISCUSS: Summarize the information under Understand the Context (p. 109), and ask: *Read Leviticus 26:3-16,40-45 in your Bible. Notice the promises made in these verses. How is a warning a form of a promise?* Call attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of Exodus; Leviticus*) and **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Fall 2017*). Direct attention to the major outline points.

TRANSITION: Stress that today, as we conclude our study in Leviticus, we will see how God promises to bless those who are faithful and obedient to Him and to discipline those who are not.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Leviticus 26:3-13, while the group listens for God's promises to the Israelites. Note the abundance of benefits God would provide to the people in return for their faithful obedience to Him.

- **(26:3-13)** These promises are practical, personal, comprehensive, and particular. He promised to bless their crops with rain (vv. 3-4). He promised to bless the fruit of the land with growth (vv. 4-5). He promised peace and rest to the people (v. 6). God promised His people victory over their enemies (vv. 7-8). He promised fruitfulness, fertility, and a continual supply of what is fresh and new (vv. 9-10). Finally, God pledged that He would dwell among His people (v. 11).
- **(26:11)** God offered to sustain life and give peace to those who followed His commands faithfully, but the greatest promise was God's presence.

IDENTIFY: Write on the board: "If ...," "Then" Call for the group to identify and name the "If" that God asked of the people of Israel. List this condition under "If ...," and then call for them to identify the "Then ..."—the promises God made. List these promises under "Then ..." on the board.

DISCUSS: *How does the future promised by God motivate a person to pursue obedience and holiness in this life here and now?* (p. 111)

TRANSITION: *God offered a bright future and a secure peace to those who faithfully obeyed His statutes and commands. Now let's look for the warnings God issued.*

READ: Direct someone to read aloud Leviticus 26:14-16, as the group listens for God's warnings. Note the devastation and heartache that would come as the consequences of disobeying God.

- **(26:14-16)** The curse of disobedience would include inner turmoil, wasting disease, and heartache. The Israelites would sow their seed in vain because their enemies would eat the fruits of their labor. Thus, the people would be without food. The warnings in these verses are frightening and devastating. However, the initial discipline described here would only increase in severity if the Israelites refused to repent and instead chose to persist in their stubborn rebellion (see vv. 18-39).

IDENTIFY: Instruct the group now to identify the "If ..." and "Then ..."—the conditions and promises God made—in verses 14-16. List these on the board under the appropriate heading.

DISCUSS: *What do you think motivates a person more—a blessing or a warning? Can you have one without the other? Explain.* (p. 111) Then ask: *How is facing a hardship as discipline an act of God's mercy?*

TRANSITION: *God's warning against disobedience was clear: personal hardship and defeat at the hands of enemies would be the result. Now let's look for the grace and hope that God offers, even when His people choose disobedience.*

READ: Have a volunteer to read aloud Leviticus 26:40-45, while the group listens for evidence of God's grace. Call attention to the emphasis God placed on remembering His covenant with His people back through the generations.

- **(26:40)** God's people could not hide behind the excuse that they simply did not know His demands. God made both His promises and His warnings clear to His people. God's promises are precious, and the warnings of God are serious. God knew His people would not always be faithful, just like He knew beforehand that Pharaoh would harden his heart in not allowing God's people to leave their Egyptian bondage (see Ex. 3:19).
- **(26:45)** Why would God forgive and restore His repentant people? He would do it for their sake but, more significantly, for His glory so that they might know that He alone is the Lord.
- **(26:42-45)** All of this was conditional on their confession and repentance. God would not tolerate the attitude that says, "I can live as I want because I know God will forgive me." This is a dangerous and deadly attitude. Believers who have such an attitude are either not true believers to begin with, have a faulty understanding of grace, or are critically immature in their faith. God has promised to hear the confession of His disobedient people and to restore fellowship with them. Just as God promised to punish disobedience, He has promised to graciously forgive and restore a humble and repentant people.

IDENTIFY: Again, call for the group to identify and name the "If ..." and "Then ..."—the conditions and promises God made—in verses 40-45. List these on the whiteboard under the respective headings. Say: *God is faithful even when His people are not. In this passage God clearly states that He remembered His promises to the forefathers of the faith. Ultimately, those promises would find their fulfillment in Christ Jesus.*

DISCUSS: *Why is it important for Christians to view repentance as a constant pursuit in their daily lives? (p. 111)*

TRANSITION: *God's grace and forgiveness are not a license for us to go on sinning because He will forgive. God's best plan for our lives includes a lifelong, loving obedience to Him.*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

DISCUSS: Direct attention to the summary statements under Apply the Text (p. 112) and call for a volunteer to read them aloud: *God offers a future and peace to those who follow Him out of obedient love. Believers should expect God's discipline when they disobey His commands. All people can find hope in the fact that God offers forgiveness to all who turn to Him in repentance.* Then ask: *How can we encourage each other toward faithful obedience to God in daily living? How can we demonstrate to the next generation that obedience to God is the best choice in all we do?*

REPORT: Call attention to the first question set under Apply the Text (p. 112): *What blessing have you experienced as a result of being obedient to God? Remember that some blessings are found in what you avoided rather than in what you gained. Share these with your group, taking time to thank God for all He provides through salvation in His Son.* Allow time for the group to share responses. Encourage the group to remember to be thankful in words and actions for all the blessings of our salvation.

REFLECT: Give the opportunity for everyone to share one insight they gained from the study of Exodus and Leviticus.

PRAY: Close in prayer that the group will regularly turn in repentance to God and commit to being obedient to Him.

AFTER THE SESSION

Check in with any members of the group who serve in other areas of the church and cannot meet with the group regularly. Let them know you appreciate their work, and ask if they have any prayer requests they would like shared with the group.

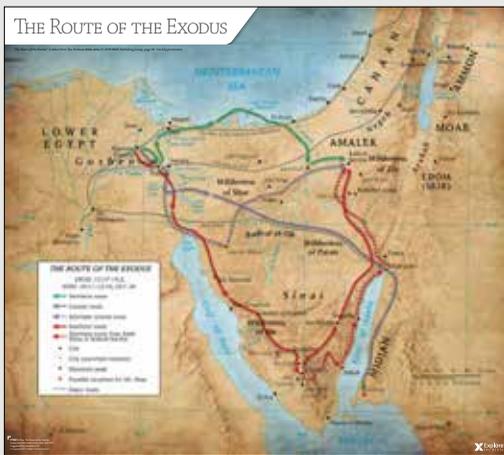
VISUAL IDEAS

These items are available on the CD-ROM in the *Explore the Bible: Leader Pack* as PDFs where you may use the text to create your own handouts or PowerPoints for your group.

Item 1: Sessions 1-13

Map: The Route of the Exodus

Locate a map in a Bible atlas that shows Egypt, the Wilderness of Shur, Sinai, Midian, and Amalek (see Ex. 13:17–19:3; Num. 10:11–12:16; 33:1-36).



Explore the Bible: Leader Pack Sample

Item 2: Sessions 1-13

Outlines of Exodus; Leviticus

Refer to the outline printed on page 9.

Item 3: Sessions 1-13

Poster: Fall 2017

Create a sign to post on the door where your group meets to welcome members to the study of Exodus and Leviticus.

Item 4: Sessions 1-13

Time Line: Exodus; Leviticus

Locate a study Bible with a time line of the major people and events in Exodus and Leviticus (from 1500 BC to 1400 BC). Use it as a reference during this study.

Item 5: Sessions 1-13

Bookmark: Memory Verses

Make a list of these suggested memory verses to distribute to your group:

Exodus 3:14; Exodus 6:7; Exodus 13:3;
Exodus 15:2; Exodus 16:12; Exodus 20:3;
Exodus 31:6; Exodus 33:14; Exodus 39:42;
Leviticus 6:13; Leviticus 10:10; Leviticus
16:30; Leviticus 26:45

Item 6: Sessions 2,3

Poster: The Ten Plagues

Review Exodus 7–12, and create a poster that displays the ten plagues Egypt faced.

Item 7: Session 3

Chart: Jewish Feasts

Use a Bible dictionary to learn about the various Jewish feasts, including Passover (Ex. 12:2-20; Lev. 23:5), Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:6-8), Feast of Weeks (Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:15-21), Feast of Trumpets (Lev. 23:23-25; Num. 29:1-6), Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:26-32; Ex. 30:10), Feast of Booths (Lev. 23:33-43;

Num. 29:12-39; Deut. 16:13), Feast of Dedication (John 10:22), and Feast of Purim (Esth. 9). Note the significance of each.

Item 8: Sessions 10,12

Chart: *Jewish Sacrifices*

Use a Bible dictionary or commentary to learn about the Jewish sacrifices: burnt offering (Lev. 1; 6:8-13), grain offering (Lev. 2; 6:14-23), fellowship offering (Lev. 3; 7:11-36; 22:17-30; 27), sin offering (Lev. 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30; 12:6-8), and guilt offering (Lev. 5:14-6:7; 7:1-6; 14:12-18). Create a poster that lists the elements and significance of each sacrifice.



Jewish Sacrifices

NAME	REFERENCE	ELEMENTS	SIGNIFICANCE
Burnt Offering	Leviticus 1:6,8-13	Bull, ram, male goat, male dove, or young pigeon without blemish. (Always male animals, but species of animal varied according to individual's economic status.)	Voluntary. Signifies propitiation for sin and complete surrender, devotion, and commitment to God.
Grain Offering (also called Meal or Tribute Offering)	Leviticus 2:6,14-23	Flour, bread, or grain made with olive oil and salt (always unleavened), or incense.	Voluntary. Signifies thanksgiving for sustenance.
Fellowship Offering (also called Peace Offering) includes (1) Thank Offering, (2) Vow Offering, and (3) Freewill Offering	(1)Leviticus 3:7,11-36; 22:17-30; 27 (2)Leviticus 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30; 12:6-8 (3)Leviticus 22:17-30; 27	Any animal without blemish. (Species of animal varied according to individual's economic status.) Can be grain offering.	Voluntary. Symbolizes fellowship with God. (1) Signifies thankfulness for a specific blessing; (2) offers a ritual expression of a vow; and (3) symbolizes general thankfulness to be brought in one of three required religious services.
Sin Offering	Leviticus 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30; 12:6-8	Male or female animal without blemish—see follows; bull for high priest on congregation; male goat for king; female goat or lamb for common people; dove or pigeon for slightly poor; tenth of an ephah of flour for the very poor.	Mandatory. Made by one who had sinned unintentionally or was unclean in order to attain purification.
Guilt Offering	Leviticus 5:14-6:7; 7:1-6; 14:12-18	Ram or lamb without blemish	Mandatory. Made by a person who had either deprived another of his rights or had desecrated something holy. Made by lepers for purification.

PHOTO: Eighty century BC reconstructed altar also at Be'er Sheva. The altar measures 75 feet square by 45 feet tall.

Adapted from Hebrew Bible at BibleHub.com, Maps, and Illustrations (Hebrew), 100 Hebrew Reference, 1000, by Xplore

Explore the Bible: Leader Pack Sample

Item 9: Sessions 6,11

Chart: *Ten Commandments*

Create a poster of the Ten Commandments that lists the Old Testament passages and Jesus' teachings about each one.

Item 10: Sessions 7,9

Poster: *Tabernacle Items*

Use a Bible dictionary or commentary to create a list of the items for the tabernacle and the importance and placement of each item: ark of the covenant, curtain, table of shewbread, golden lampstand, altar of incense, altar of burnt offering, and laver.

Item 11: Session 2

Poster: *Exodus 6:7*

Display Exodus 6:7 on a whiteboard or large sheet of paper.

Item 12: Session 4

Poster: *Exodus 15:2*

Display Exodus 15:2 on a whiteboard or large sheet of paper.

Item 13: Session 8

Poster: *Exodus 33:14*

Display Exodus 33:14 on a whiteboard or large sheet of paper.

Item 14: Sessions 10,12

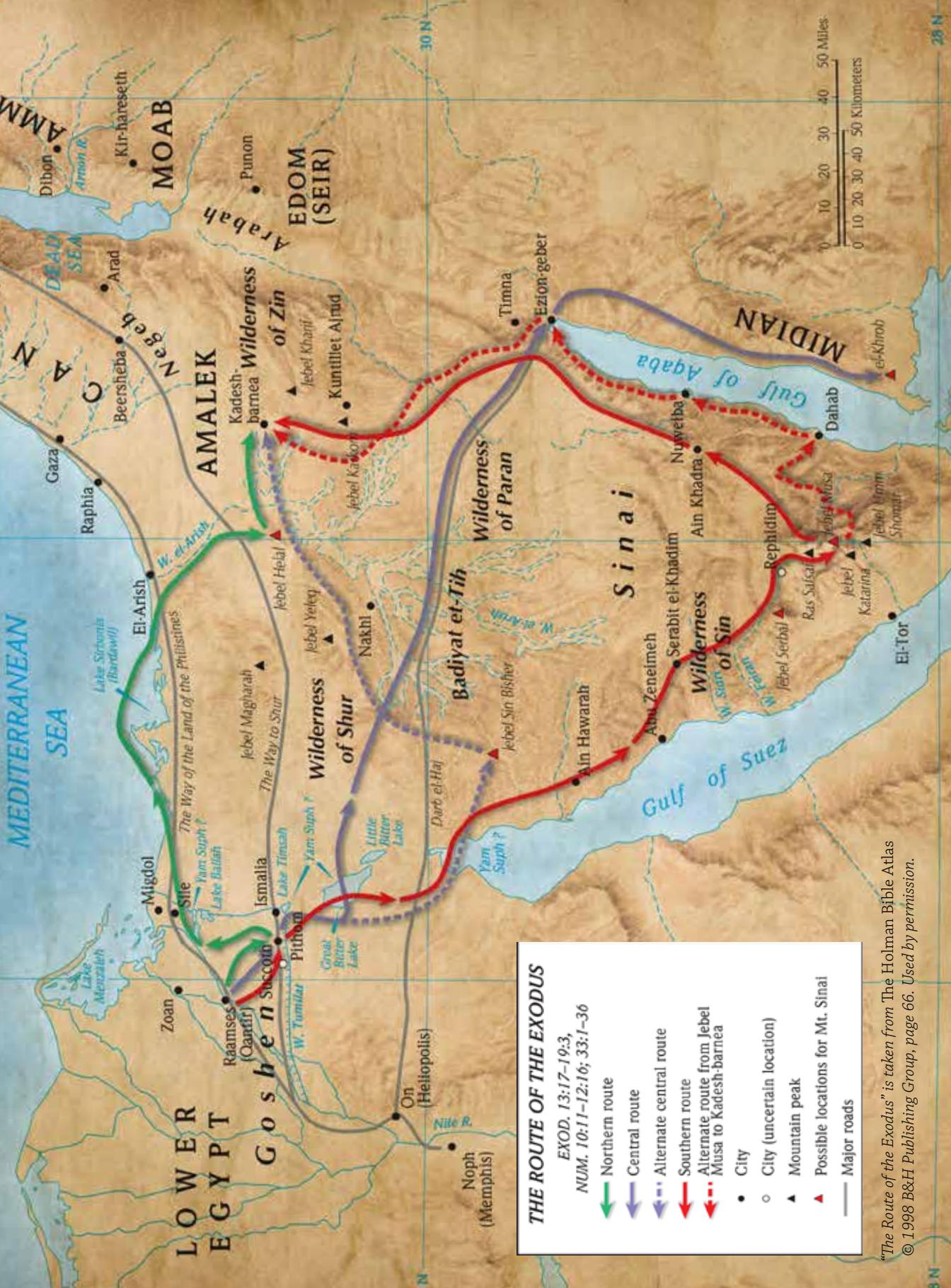
Poster: *Leviticus 16:30*

Display Leviticus 16:30 on a whiteboard or large sheet of paper.

COMING NEXT QUARTER

Acts 13–28

- Session 1** **The Gospel Message** (Acts 13:26-39)
- Session 2** **Misguided Worship** (Acts 14:8-20)
- Session 3** **Available to All** (Acts 15:6-11,24-31)
- Session 4** **The Promised One** (Luke 2:25-38)
- Session 5** **Strengthened** (Acts 15:36-41; 16:1-5)
- Session 6** **A Changed Family** (Acts 16:22-34)
- Session 7** **The Unknown Known** (Acts 17:22-34)
- Session 8** **Value All** (Acts 16:16-19; Psalm 139:13-16)
- Session 9** **Incomplete Picture** (Acts 18:24-28; 19:1-7)
- Session 10** **Delivered** (Acts 20:22-35)
- Session 11** **The Testimony** (Acts 22:3-8,15-22)
- Session 12** **Answering Critics** (Acts 26:19-29)
- Session 13** **Always on Mission** (Acts 28:17-28)



THE ROUTE OF THE EXODUS

EXOD. 13:17-19:3,
NUM. 10:11-12:16; 33:1-36

- Northern route
- Central route
- Alternate central route
- Southern route
- Alternate route from Jebel Musa to Kadesh-barnea
- City
- City (uncertain location)
- ▲ Mountain peak
- ▲ Possible locations for Mt. Sinai
- Major roads

"The Route of the Exodus" is taken from The Holman Bible Atlas © 1998 B&H Publishing Group, page 66. Used by permission.

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