

# Explore the Bible.®

Fall 2017 > Steve Gaines, General Editor



## *Exodus; Leviticus*

LifeWay | Adults

# LIFE BY DESIGN

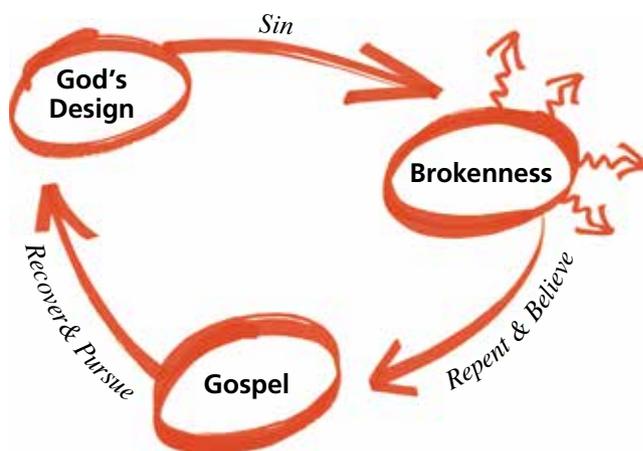
**We live in a broken world. This brokenness is seen in suffering, violence, poverty, pain, and death around us. Brokenness leads us to search for a way to make LIFE work.**

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.

Excerpted from *Life on Mission: A Simple Way to Share the Gospel*.

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\*Evangelistic Emphasis

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QUICKSOURCE LEADER GUIDE

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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 “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14). At conception, we begin to live. As we grow, we learn how to live.

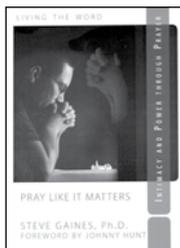
This quarter we will study the Books of Exodus and Leviticus. These biblical books are about life. That is why they go together. Exodus describes the new life the Israelites received when the Lord rescued them from Egypt. Leviticus explains how God further taught them to live holy lives for His glory.

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 from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm ... 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!

**Steve Gaines**



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# TWO WAYS TO USE QUICKSOURCE

## ➤ AS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE EXPLORE THE BIBLE LEADER GUIDE

1. After completing your study using the commentary provided in the Explore the Bible Leader Guide, consult the Exploring Key Words section and the Talking Points page for additional insight or as a review.
2. After creating your initial plans for guiding the group time using the suggestions included in the Leader Guide, supplement and refine your plan using the ideas found in QuickSource. You will also want to consult the Explore the Bible blog ([LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible](http://LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible)) or Explore the Bible MinistryGrid page ([MinistryGrid.com/web/ExploreTheBible](http://MinistryGrid.com/web/ExploreTheBible)) for additional ideas.

## ➤ AS YOUR PRIMARY RESOURCE FOR PREPARING TO LEAD A SMALL BIBLE STUDY GROUP

### 1. Read and study the core passage.

Use Exploring Key Words on the first page of the session content to gain an understanding of the passage. Consult a study Bible and a Bible commentary like the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* (available at [LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible](http://LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible) in both print and digital formats) to gain additional insight into the passage.

### 2. Review the outline provided on the Talking Points page (page 2 of each session).

Record ideas and insights gleaned from your personal study time. Note: You may want to make a photocopy of the Talking Points page so you can use *QuickSource* again in the future.

### 3. Review the questions on the Discussion Plan page (page 3 of each session).

Identify the questions you believe would work best with the group you are leading. Reword the selected questions to reflect your personality and the personality of the group. Record the reworded questions on the Talking Points page (or the photocopy you made of the page) next to the point related to the question. Remember to arrange the questions so that you are leading the group to a conclusion or action.

#### **4. Consider ways of using the Object Lesson idea (page 4 of each session).**

Brainstorm other ideas sparked by the object lesson suggestion.

#### **5. Read the Dig Deeper feature (page 4 of each session).**

Add insights gained from this page to the Talking Points page.

#### **6. Use the *Personal Study Guide* (PSG).**

Scan a copy of the *Personal Study Guide* (PSG), looking for additional questions and the Bible skill feature. Consider ways of incorporating the Bible skill into the session, recording your ideas on the Talking Points page. Record additional questions from the PSG on the Talking Points page as well.

#### **7. Review and refine.**

Consult the Explore the Bible blog ([LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible](http://LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible)) or Explore the Bible Ministry Grid ([MinistryGrid.com/web/ExploreTheBible](http://MinistryGrid.com/web/ExploreTheBible)) for additional ideas.

#### **8. Arrive early.**

The group time starts when the first person arrives. Make sure you are that person so you can set the tone and direction for the group Bible study time.

#### **9. Lead the group in a time of Bible study.**

Carry the Talking Points page into the class, using this page as your guide for leading the group.



# INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS; LEVITICUS

The Books of Exodus and Leviticus complement one another. Exodus describes how God sets His people free; Leviticus describes how free people are to live. Exodus highlights the grace and mercy of God in action; Leviticus highlights how grace and mercy are lived out in practicality. Both contain law and both demonstrate God's grace. Exodus and Leviticus not only belong together, but they form two parts of a five part whole called the Pentateuch. The exciting Book of Exodus and the Book of Leviticus belong together like hand in glove. Law and grace meet in Exodus and Leviticus.

## » EXODUS

Exodus was written by Moses, most likely during Israel's wanderings in the wilderness. The book begins by locating Israel in Egypt (Ex. 1:1–2:25), exposing their oppression under the heavy hand of Pharaoh. God hears the cries of His people for deliverance, calling Moses to lead God's people from Egyptian bondage (Ex. 3:1–4:31). The calling of Moses and his aid, Aaron, to deliver God's people is followed by a confrontation with Pharaoh, a confrontation that produces a hardened heart in Pharaoh and the further oppression of God's people. God responds to Pharaoh's stubborn pride by sending a series of plagues that culminate in God's judgment of death on the first born (Ex. 7:8–15:21). God then delivers and provides for His people through a series of miraculous interventions (Ex. 15:22–18:27). Exodus culminates as God's people receive the Law from God at Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:1–40:38).

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.

Exodus reminds us that our great God is a God who longs to set people free through His power and grace. He longed to set the Israelites free from bondage to the Egyptians, and He longs to set us free from our bondage of sin through the Person of Jesus Christ.

Further, Exodus reminds us that God uses strong leaders, sometimes with feet of clay, to lead His people. Moses' God-enabled faithfulness is a reminder that God is faithful to provide leadership for His people.

## » LEVITICUS

Leviticus was written by Moses as well, most likely during the same time period as the writing of Exodus. 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. 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.

Leviticus begins by defining a series of worship offerings (Lev. 1:1–6:7), followed by how those same offerings are to be handled and administered (Lev. 6:8–7:38). Leviticus 8:1–10:20 lays out the establishment of the priesthood, a priestly model that foreshadows the priestly person and work of Jesus Christ (Heb. 8). Concerned about cleanliness and holiness, laws concerning what is clean and unclean (Lev. 11:1–15:33) are followed by the establishment of the details of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:1–34), the handling and meaning of blood (Lev. 17:1–16), and a call to holiness (Lev. 18:1–22:33). Further, the processes of the holy seasons where the people of God would actually participate in the feasts is outlined (Lev. 23:1–25:55), accompanied by a series of blessings and curses (Lev. 26:1–46) and a series of vows and dedications (Lev. 27:1–34).

If Exodus clarifies God’s desire to set His people free so that they might faithfully serve Him, Leviticus unfolds and codifies the nature of that relationship in great detail. Leviticus is unafraid to acknowledge that God’s people are sinful and unfaithful at times. Yet, it also describes in great detail God’s gracious provision for forgiveness and restoration.

Admittedly, much of Leviticus seems strange and disconnected from the 21st-century world. Perhaps no book of the Bible elicits this kind of response more than the Book of Leviticus. Its very name may erect mental barriers in even the more diligent Bible student.

Yet the book is valuable. When asked about the most important commandments, Jesus quoted Leviticus 19:18 as being second only to loving God (see Matt. 22:35–40). The repetitious edict in Leviticus to be holy is repeated in 1 Peter 1:14–16. In fact Peter was clear. God’s demand for His people to be holy is not nullified by His grace as expressed in Jesus Christ. Being holy remains an essential aspect of our relationship with the Lord. We are called to be separate from worldliness and to live an ethical lifestyle in conformity to God’s Word. Further, Paul affirmed that “all Scripture is inspired by God” (2 Tim. 3:16). “All Scripture” includes Leviticus; therefore, Leviticus is “profitable for teaching” (v. 17).

## » SUMMARY

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. God is not only interested in our freedom (Exodus), but He is interested in how we live once set free (Leviticus). Both Exodus and Leviticus foreshadow the Person and work of Jesus Christ. 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)

## SESSION 1

# RELUCTANCE

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

**3:4** When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, **God called out to him from the bush**, **A** “Moses, Moses!” “Here I am,” he answered. **5** “Do not come closer,” he said. “Remove the sandals 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.”**

**B** **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**. **E** I know about their sufferings, **8** and I have come down to **rescue** **F** 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** **G**—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** **H** 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?”** **I** **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.** **J** 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** **K** 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. **17** And take this staff in your hand that you will perform the signs with.”

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** God gets our attention in different ways when He wants to reveal His will to us (Heb. 1:1). God used as His platform an insignificant desert bush that suddenly burst into flames.
- b** God connected this event with the past by naming the patriarchs.
- c** Convinced this desert fire was an evidence of God’s presence, Moses dared not look into something so holy and supernatural. What Moses saw was “the form of the LORD” (Num. 12:8).
- d** God’s words to Moses revealed His compassion on His suffering people. God’s love for them caused Him to deliver them from the Egyptians.
- e** The Egyptians enslaved God’s people. They were brutal and unrelenting in their treatment of the Israelites.
- f** Here the word literally means to “snatch or take away from,” “deliver,” or “defend.”
- g** Currently occupied by pagan peoples, this was the fertile, productive, and beautiful land of Canaan.
- h** The powerful, pagan ruler of Egypt. God promised Moses that when he appeared before Pharaoh, He would be with him and that His people would come back to the land He had promised them.
- i** Moses was a fugitive from Egyptian justice because he had tried, by his own power, to deliver someone from a cruel oppressor (Ex. 2:14). He fled Egypt and lived for 40 years in the desert.
- j** God was essentially 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.
- k** From the tribe of Levi, he was the brother of Moses and Miriam. His parents were Amram and Jochebed.

## NOTES

### » 1. THE APPROACH (Ex. 3:4-6)

- Having seen a bush on fire yet unconsumed by it, Moses encountered the presence and call of God from the bush.
- Moses responded to the encounter with reverent fear, hiding his face.

### » 2. THE ASSIGNMENT (Ex. 3:7-10)

- God stated that He had heard the prayers of His suffering people and revealed that He was about to act on their behalf.
- God also revealed that He would use Moses as an instrument in the deliverance of the Hebrews.

### » 3. THE AUTHORITY (Ex. 3:11-14)

- To answer Moses' reluctance to obey His call, God revealed to Moses His covenant name and promised to be with Moses.

### » 4. THE ASSURANCE (Ex. 4:13-16)

- After presenting reasons why he was not fit for the job, Moses asked God to send someone else instead.
- God assured Moses of His assistance, including using Aaron to speak for Moses when needed.

### » SUMMARY STATEMENTS

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

- 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.



## FOCUS ATTENTION

**Think of a time when you were completely out of your comfort zone. What fears did you have during those moments?**

- God gives many strengths and talents to His people, but sometimes He calls us to act in areas where we feel the weakest or least confident. God desires that we remain obedient, trusting Him despite our reluctance or fear.
- Though Moses feared public speaking, what people would think, and repercussions of facing his past, God promised to provide everything Moses needed, asking him to trust and obey.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### EXODUS 3:4-6

**How would you characterize Moses' initial response when he observed the burning bush and realized it was something only God could do?**

- Moses' first response of reverence and fear of the Lord made him attentive to further conversation with God. God first established His identity and His holiness to Moses. Everything else God unfolded and called Moses to do flowed from these foundational truths.
- God asks us to entrust everything we are and have experienced to Him. A daily attitude of worship and reflecting on what God has done prepares us to respond to Him quickly.

**What was the significance of God identifying Himself as the God of Moses' father, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?**

- Moses had likely been exposed to many impostor gods in his lifetime. He needed to have firm clarity regarding God's identity as the covenant God of Moses' forefathers.
- God showed Moses this was something bigger than just the present situation. God personally brought Moses into His plan to dwell with His people and bring them into a whole new way of life.

### EXODUS 3:7-10

**Consider all God did or said He would do in these verses. How have you experienced God doing each of these things in your own life? What did God ask Moses to do in this passage?**

- Moses focused more on the one thing God asked of him than on God's character, compassion, and promises.
- We see a pattern throughout Scripture of a sending God who asks people to trust and obey Him. God is at work in the past, present, and future to bring about His will. We can trust that when He invites people to respond to Him He is already preparing the person and working in the circumstances.

**How does this passage convey God's compassion and attentiveness to His people? His sovereignty in timing?**

- As God made His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:13-16), He showed Abraham the bondage and deliverance that He would bring about, generations before it came to pass. God planned to bring the people out of bondage and into a new land after 400 years in slavery. God knew their suffering and responded to it.
- While we can't fully understand our circumstances, we can hold to truths based in God's character and ways.

### EXODUS 3:11-14

**How can God's response to Moses give you confidence to do what He has asked you to do?**

- God used the previous years and experiences of Moses' life to prepare him for the task. Moses' past failures did not disqualify him from being used by God in a great way.

### EXODUS 4:13-16

**What causes people to hesitate doing what God has called them to do? How do these compare with Moses' excuses?**

- As we often do, Moses relied on his own ability and gifts rather than on God. Even as we acknowledge God as the giver of our gifts and strengths, we still struggle to rely fully on Him, His Word, and His provision.
- We must be careful to obey God, even if He calls us to a task in which we feel weak. Often the preparation and strengthening God gives comes after surrender to Him rather than before.

**Aaron was on the way before Moses ever knew God sent him to help. How does God meet our fears of obedience like He did with Moses? How do you see God affirming spiritual community in this passage?**

- God calls every believer to walk with Him in faith. What He asks us to do, He will empower us to complete and bring support. He relates to us individually and as a people.

## SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

**What holds us back from surrender and obedience? The cost? The fear of failure? Risking the approval of others? What do our excuses reveal about our faith in God?**

- Obedience is never wasted or useless. It is a tool God uses in beautiful ways we could never imagine.
- When God calls us to serve Him, His purposes, and His people, we can trust that He will empower and equip us for the task.
- **Personal Challenge:** Take time to examine your life and what keeps you from consistent obedience. Habits don't change on their own, so make a plan for obeying God when He calls.

# OBJECT LESSON

## A SWIMMING MASK OR GOGGLES

Display the mask. Ask volunteers to share the first time they looked through a mask underwater, especially in the ocean.

Share your own experience or the following example: *The first time I looked through a mask in tropical water, I was astounded by the brilliance and close proximity of the myriad of fish, plants, and coral. Looking through the water from above, I had no clue what was just under the surface.*

Direct a volunteer to read Exodus 3:4-6. Explain: *Putting on a mask and peering underwater completely changes our perspective. Things come into focus for us that were actually there the entire time but we couldn't see them. What aspects of Moses' life changed instantly when God revealed Himself at the burning bush?*

Say: *The burning bush was a defining moment for Moses. He was in a familiar place, where he thought he knew what to expect, but once God spoke to him through the burning bush, Moses never saw anything the same way again. That experience with God changed the way Moses understood God, himself, and others.*



Ask: *When we encounter God and ultimately surrender to His call on our life, our perception of everything else changes. What should our initial response be when we sense God is speaking to us?*

Close in prayer that we would trust God's perspective even when we can't see what's up ahead.

## DIG DEEPER

### ABIDING WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Why was it so important for God to appear in dramatic fashion to His ancient people on certain occasions? Why does He not do that today?

In Old Testament times, the Holy Spirit had not yet been given to live within the hearts and lives of God's people. Until that time, the Holy Spirit was "with" His people, revealing the reality of God. He would "come upon" certain individuals, and they would be moved to speak or act in accord with God's will and purpose at that particular time. As God's representative among the people, Moses' responsibility was an awesome one. He was the agent of God's power and authority in the midst of the people.

Since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit lives within every believer (Acts 2:1-21). While we may try to ignore Him, the fact is He remains present with us. We also have the written, inspired Scriptures which speak with the authority of the Holy Spirit. When there is careless living and disobedience, He is grieved since our witness and influence are compromised.

Christians are mirrors who should always reflect the reality and love of God. We are each uniquely equipped to serve God with the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, reflecting His love to the world:

Therefore I am informing you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different ministries, but the same Lord. And there are different activities, but the same God activates each gift in each person. A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial (1 Cor. 12:3-7).

As God's people, we should always be aware of the impact our words and actions have on those whose lives we touch every day. We are indeed living epistles, "recognized and read by everyone" (2 Cor. 3:2).

## SESSION 2

# CONFRONTATION

## EXODUS 7:1-13

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

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** The miracles God enabled Moses to perform caused Pharaoh to see him as a god in a functional sense.
- b** To further convince Pharaoh that Moses was indeed God’s agent, Aaron would be 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. Sometimes the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart (Ex. 9:12; 10:1; 11:10). At other times Pharaoh hardened his own heart (8:15,32). Sometimes no source is given as to who hardened his heart (7:22; 8:19; 9:7,35). Hardness of heart includes a rejection of God and His message.
- d** The defiant Pharaoh had passed the point of no return in his defiance toward God, so God’s miraculous signs would not soften his hardened heart.
- e** Pharaoh’s refusal to listen to God’s words would bring disaster to Egypt.
- f** For eighty years, God prepared these men for the heavy responsibility He had planned for them.
- g** 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.
- h** The dramatic incident involving the staff was God’s way of proving the credentials of His spokesmen in the presence of the Egyptian occult powers.
- i** These were Egyptian magicians and tricksters of Pharaoh’s court, who may well have been agents under Satan’s demonic control.
- j** Even after seeing these miraculous signs, Pharaoh’s heart grew even harder, and he was more determined not to let God’s people leave Egyptian bondage.

## NOTES

### 1. STRATEGY EXPLAINED (Ex. 7:1-5)

- God explained to Moses that he was to do whatever God directed, knowing that Pharaoh would not allow the Hebrews to be released.
- God declared that Pharaoh's resistance opened the door for God to demonstrate greater signs and wonders, so that any doubts about God's power would be removed.
- Note: Point out that the biblical text at times refers to God hardening Pharaoh's heart (9:12; 10:20,27; 11:10), Pharaoh hardening his own heart (8:15,32), and Pharaoh's heart being hardened without defining the source (7:22; 8:19; 9:7,35). Affirm that the Lord is sovereign in His dealings with human beings and that He knows beforehand how people will respond to Him. Also affirm humanity's free will and accountability for our actions.

### 2. SIMPLE OBEDIENCE (Ex. 7:6-7)

- Moses and Aaron fully obeyed God's directions, doing exactly what they were told.
- Note: Focus on Moses' advanced age, reminding the group that it is never too late to obey God.

### 3. SIGNS AND WONDERS (Ex. 7:8-13)

- Moses and Aaron approached Pharaoh with a wonder from God: changing a staff into a snake. Pharaoh's magicians displayed a similar wonder, but the snake that had been Aaron's staff consumed the snakes of Pharaoh's magicians.
- Pharaoh refused to listen to Moses, just as God had foretold, beginning a cycle of wonders and signs followed by Pharaoh's refusals.
- Note: Summarize the first nine plagues, noting that Pharaoh became more stubborn with each plague.

### SUMMARY STATEMENTS

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

- 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.



## FOCUS ATTENTION

### What acts of God have you seen in your lifetime?

- God performed mighty displays of power for Pharaoh, his officials, and all of Egypt. Beginning with the staff becoming a serpent and swallowing the magician's serpents, the plagues God sent gained progressively in intensity and consequence.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE EXODUS 7:1-5

### God gave Moses favor with Pharaoh. How does God give position and influence to His people today?

- God assured Moses and Aaron He would give them position and influence with Pharaoh, giving them courage to obey in spite of significant risk.
- The captivity of the people of Israel is a strong picture of the captivity sin brings to all people without Christ.
- God gives influence and position to His people so they will have a platform to share Christ, and to resource kingdom work. Any other reasons are unimportant by comparison.

### Look again at Exodus 7:5, and read Matthew 24:14. What do the similarities between the verses teach us about God's power and purposes?

- In the narrative of Exodus 5–10, we see instances of God hardening Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh hardening his own heart toward God. God is sovereign over even man's response to Him, while at the same time giving man free will and accountability. Both are clearly true in Scripture, though we can't yet fully understand how they work together.
- In the instances Pharaoh relented and promised to let the people go, His fear of God was shallow and short-lived. He seemed to want God's favor when hardships were intense, but once relief came, Pharaoh showed he had no real interest in knowing God.
- God's heart has always been for all nations to know Him. The plagues He sent on Egypt had Israel's deliverance as their motive. He also revealed His sovereign power clearly to every Egyptian.

## EXODUS 7:6-7

### Why was Moses' and Aaron's exact obedience so important? How does simple and complete obedience demonstrate faith?

- Our disobedience, including our partial obedience, confuses the messages from God that He asks us to convey to others. It gives us the false impression we have the right to pick and choose whether or not to obey Him.
- Obedience is the primary way we love God and His people (1 Sam. 15:22; Rom. 6:16; 1 John 5:2).

### Why do we sometimes discount our responsibility to obey God because of age or experience?

- Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Hannah, Zechariah and Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna, and many others were called by God in their advanced years to obey and be used in astounding ways.
- David, Samuel, and Timothy were called by God at young ages.
- God chooses people based on His will, not on our experience.

## EXODUS 7:8-13

### What disciplines, processes, and habits could Moses and Aaron have used to prepare for the intimidation factor Pharaoh brought (such as a court full of influential onlookers, magicians, wealth, opulence, power, soldiers, etc.)? How can God prepare us for an unexpected and difficult faith challenge?

- Moses and Aaron had to be certain of everything God had said in order to take on the massive risks He had called them to face. Surely they repeated God's instructions to each other many times.
- Believers must "put on the full armor of God" daily (Eph. 6:11). We are urged to be ready to face opposition, and familiarity with God's Word and His ways brings us certainty.

### How would history be different had Pharaoh respected God's authority at the beginning and let the people go?

- The heaviest cost for Pharaoh's hard heart against God was paid by his own people. Immense suffering and the loss of many thousands of lives could have been avoided by early obedience of Pharaoh.
- Refusing God's truth leads to a much harder and infinitely more costly way of life—so much is wasted. A life of obedience to God in relationship through Christ gives peace, redemption, and meaning to even the hardest of circumstances.

## SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

### How could God use you as a "Moses" in someone's life?

- Think of slavery the Israelites endured in Egypt as a picture of the domain of sin in the world. God went to great lengths to bring His people out of slavery triumphantly and in full reliance on Him. They never could have achieved this on their own. In the same way, God has gone to incredible lengths to buy His people out of slavery to sin through His Son, Jesus Christ.
- **Personal Challenge:** When you pray, ask God to bring this image to life for you. Spend some time thinking about slavery to sin and the ultimate hopelessness of living without Christ. Someone you know needs to be freed by Jesus. Pray for an opportunity to share what God has done to free you and that He is ready to free them as well.

# OBJECT LESSON

## PLASTIC BAGS, CARDBOARD, & DUCT TAPE

Relay the following story to the group: On the 1970 Apollo 13 mission, astronauts and NASA scrambled to solve multiple issues resulting from an unexpected malfunction. Damage to the spacecraft immediately shifted the mission to finding a way to bring the astronauts home safely. The world watched and prayed. Carbon dioxide exhaled by the astronauts became a critical issue. The team on the ground brainstormed how to remove the dangerous buildup of carbon dioxide from the crew's lunar module using only items on board. The items used? Part of a lunar spacesuit, plastic bags, cardboard, and duct tape. Mission Control formulated a plan in Houston as they kept in radio contact with the Apollo crew. Communication came in direct, short bursts. The plan's success—and their lives—depended on the astronauts doing exactly as they were told as they built the device, whether or not they grasped the whole vision or knew all the details.

Ask: *How hard is it for you to obey instructions you don't completely understand? On what basis could you do so?* Explain that as Moses and Aaron approached the confrontation with Pharaoh, they needed to make sure they followed God's instructions exactly.



God didn't tell them everything that would happen, only what they needed to know. God entrusted them with the task at hand with the expectation of complete and exact obedience.

Read Exodus 7:10. Ask: *On what basis could Moses and Aaron obey God exactly and completely?* Pray that the group will trust God and act in obedience even when we can't foresee the outcome.

## DIG DEEPER

### THE BATTLE IS NOT DONE

How does God manifest His power and presence in the lives of believers today? Do we throw down walking sticks and watch them become writhing snakes? Do we wave our hand over a stream to observe its waters part and its bed dry up quickly so we can walk across on dry ground? While the days of God displaying His power to the Egyptians and Israelites might be long past, even missionaries to remote peoples in parts of our world today tell of evidences of God's power demonstrated in remarkable ways. We must never be guilty of constraining the freedom of God's Spirit to manifest Himself in ways that glorify God and bring blessings to His people.

We are told plainly in the Scriptures that "the prayer of faith" is a means God can well use to bring comfort and healing to saints who suffer, if such rests within His will and purpose for that person's life. Those who visit the sick and suffering, and join with fellow believers in intercessory prayer, have seen incredible things happen that bring relief to the suffering and glory to God. Such instances are most often quiet manifestations of God's grace and are not intended to be spectacular demonstrations of His mysterious power.

The laying on of hands in a time of intercessory prayer is a meaningful way to enter into a spiritual fellowship of unity and openness to the movement of God's Spirit in the midst of His people. When we pray for the sick or with those in distress, we do not presume to demand that God answer our prayer. Rather in genuine humility, we seek always first His holy will, and then commit ourselves to abide by that will, whatever it may be in a given instance.

In times of sadness, distress, or even when defeat seems certain, let us remember the power of God and His ability to work mightily in our lives, just as the hymn "This Is My Father's World" says:

This is my Father's world, O let me ne'er forget  
That though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the Ruler yet.  
This is my Father's world, The battle is not done;  
Jesus who died shall be satisfied, And earth and heav'n be one.<sup>1</sup>

1. Maltbie D. Babcock, "This Is My Father's World," *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Worship, 2008), 46.

## SESSION 3

# LIBERATION

## EXODUS 12:1-13

<sup>1</sup>The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt:  
<sup>2</sup>“**This month** **A** is to be the beginning of months for you; it is the first month of your year. <sup>3</sup>Tell **the whole community of Israel** **B** 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. <sup>4</sup>If the household is too small for a whole animal, that person and **the neighbor nearest** **C** his house are to select one based on the combined number of people; you should apportion the animal according to what each will eat. <sup>5</sup>You must have an **unblemished** **D** animal, a year-old male; you may take it from either the sheep or the goats. <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>They must take some of the blood and put it on **the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses** **E** where they eat them. <sup>8</sup>They are to eat the meat that night; they should eat it, roasted over the fire along with **unleavened bread** **F** and **bitter herbs**. **G** <sup>9</sup>Do not eat any of it raw or cooked in boiling water, but only **roasted over fire** **H**—its head as well as its legs and inner organs. <sup>10</sup>You must not leave any of it until morning; any part of it left until morning you must burn. <sup>11</sup>Here is how you must eat it: **You must be dressed for travel**, **I** 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**. **J** <sup>12</sup>I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night and strike every firstborn male in the land of

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** Abib (Canaanite name) or Nisan (Babylonian name), which corresponds to March-April, the first month in the Jewish calendar. The exodus represented a new beginning, including a new calendar for marking time.
- b** A term for the people of God gathered together to worship God or to be instructed in spiritual things
- c** 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 at 10.
- d** Literally referred to an animal that was whole or pure. The sacrifice had to be free of physical defects—not a sick animal that was about to die.
- e** Some of the blood from the slain sacrificial animal would be applied to the sides and tops of the door frames of the houses where they ate the lamb.
- f** Leaven (or yeast) represented the invasive nature of sin and was not included in the preparation of the Passover bread to be baked and eaten.
- g** These were not used for seasoning but represented the suffering and deprivation of the captive Israelites.
- h** In the wilderness, Israel would only be able to cook over an open fire. The Passover commands symbolize this necessity.
- i** They were to eat the Passover meal with tunics tucked into their belts, sandals on their feet, staffs in hand, and ready for a quick departure.
- j** 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).

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.

**k** These pagan gods were usually identified with beasts—bulls, cows, goats, jackals, lions, and so forth—by the Egyptians. These animals also felt the death blow that came on Passover night.

## “ TALKING POINTS

### NOTES

### » 1. PREPARED (Ex. 12:1-5)

- God directed Moses and Aaron to establish Nisan as the first month of their new year. He also gave them requirements for the animal that would be central to the passover.
- Connect the requirements of the Passover lamb as pointing to Christ.

### » 2. SACRIFICED (Ex. 12:6-7)

- God instructed Moses and Aaron to lead Israel to sacrifice the Passover lambs and to apply blood on the doorposts and lintels of their houses.
- Emphasize the blood sacrifice, pointing to Jesus' shed blood.

### » 3. HURRIED (Ex. 12:8-11)

- God told Moses and Aaron that the Passover lamb was to be eaten in an urgent fashion with everyone ready to travel.
- Emphasize the urgency of obedience and participation in God's work.

### » 4. DELIVERED (Ex. 12:12-13)

- God explained that His decisive plague would include the death of every firstborn male, humans and animals. This plague would be the final demonstration of God's superiority over Egypt's gods.
- Point to John's vision of believers in heaven being distinguished by robes made white by "the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14).

### » SUMMARY STATEMENTS

**God provides deliverance for those willing to trust Him.**

- 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.



## FOCUS ATTENTION

**Describe a time when you or someone you love needed help to escape a situation.**

- Today's study outlines God's plan to deliver His people from bondage in Egypt. He told them exactly what would happen as He brought them out of bondage into freedom. They needed to trust Him deeply, listen intently, and obey Him exactly.
- God often works in ways we don't expect or understand.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE EXODUS 12:1-5

**What message did God send His people by reordering their calendar according to their deliverance from Egypt?**

- God's provision at Passover defined the identity of His people and illustrated His ways to all nations.
- God's movement to deliver His people has unique centrality. It is the fulcrum on which every other historical event balances.
- God's salvation story with His people gives meaning to every experience and decision in our lives.

**Why was it important for the animal chosen for this sacrifice to be unblemished?**

- No other lamb would be worthy of sacrifice to a holy, perfect God. The lamb would provide salvation and sustenance for each person who partook in the sacrifice.
- Jesus' blood was worth enough not only to cover every person's sin but to pay the complete price (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:14).

## EXODUS 12:6-7

**Why was blood required rather than another type of sacrifice (grain, harvest, etc.)?**

- Slaughtering the best lamb required the people's faith that God would do as He said. God began to teach His people the precept of blood as covering or payment for sin, rather than as a sacrificial offering of worship.
- Jesus Christ's sacrifice was the ultimate fulfillment of the truth.

**What was accomplished when God told His people to mark their doorposts and lintels with the blood?**

- In order for death to pass over, blood had to be specifically applied to their houses. Another step of faith, this requirement was a very personal instruction for the whole people.

## EXODUS 12:8-11

**In what ways is God's provision evident in this passage?**

- The lamb's life was given to provide blood for literal deliverance and food for sustenance. For us the images point toward the cross, but for the Israelites the provision was tangible.
- Life in Christ is eternal and spiritual, but also completely physical, mental, and emotional.

**Why do we think we have unlimited time to consider and obey what God is teaching us?**

- Any who failed to carry out God's instructions completely would not have been rescued or ready when it was time to go.
- Though God is infinitely patient, our limitations as humans placed within time mean that opportunities to respond to God's leading can pass out of reach. God's call to obedience is always timely, urgent, and a call to trust Him enough to be actively ready.

## EXODUS 12:12-13

**How do you respond to the news that God was going to put every firstborn in Egypt to death, except those in the households with blood on the door?**

- Pharaoh's refusal to let the Israelites go free had severe consequences. The reminder of God's complete authority to bring right judgment on Pharaoh, all of Egypt's gods, and those who trusted in them is sobering.
- God showed beautiful restraint and tender love for His people by giving them a way of escape and telling them everything they needed to know. They had not earned His provision.

**Imagine eating in the night with travel clothes and shoes on and your bags packed. What certainties about God would you be clinging to on the eve of your deliverance?**

- In Christ, we are bought out of captivity to sin—pardoned, ransomed, and freed (Gal. 4:7).
- Blood on the houses was a "distinguishing mark" for the protection, rescue, and ultimate safety for God's people.
- Revelation 7:14 speaks of robes of the saints made white "in the blood of the Lamb." God sets His people apart by Christ's blood.

## SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

**God's faithfulness to teach and demonstrate His ways and His plan to redeem people comes to life against the backdrop of the plagues in Egypt. What do you see in today's study that points you to Jesus?**

- There's nothing we can do to free ourselves from slavery to sin. Only God can do that through Jesus Christ. Freedom is available to all who will apply Jesus' freely given blood to their life by faith in Him.
- **Personal Challenge:** Spend time reflecting and praying through today's Scripture passage. Write down all the things God does or has done for you. With whom could you share your insights?

# OBJECT LESSON

## A PICTURE OF A DIVER IN A SHARK CAGE WITH SHARKS ALL AROUND

Google “man in shark cage” and print an image. Show the image for everyone to view. Ask: *What element in the picture makes it possible to be in the water with the sharks?*

Explain: *Suppose you were looking over the side of the boat at the circling sharks, knowing you had to go into the water. Being certain the shark cage is there makes a world of difference.*

Ask: *What questions would you have about who made the cage, how sturdy the bars are, and how to make sure the door closes securely once you are inside? How closely would you listen to the instructions?*

Explain that in the photo, the diver would likely face serious injury or death if it were not for the cage protecting him. He takes the safeguard seriously and trusts that it will protect him.

Connect to today's Scripture: *The Israelites faced certain death along with the rest of Egypt if they didn't trust God enough to put the safeguards He had provided in place. Once Moses relayed God's message that death to the firstborn in every family was*



*coming to those who were unprepared, the Israelites began to listen closely and obey.*

Ask: *How did Passover protect and prepare the Israelites for what was coming? How does the gospel protect believers from certain death? Close in prayer, thanking God for His eternal protection through Jesus Christ's shed blood on the cross.*

## DIG DEEPER

### REDEEMED BY THE BLOOD

Designating this first Passover for the Israelites as “the Lord's Passover” is significant. The fact it was a meal to be eaten was of secondary importance. In the first place, it was a Passover for the Lord. *Passover* comes from a word meaning “to jump past,” “to pass by,” or “to spare.” So the Passover can be seen as the feast of the Lord's passing over and sparing His people (Ex. 12:12).

It was indeed to be an expression of gratitude to the Lord. There were expressions of thanksgiving from the Israelites on that night, for the death angel passed over their homes and spared their eldest sons because of the sacrificial blood that had been applied to the lintels of their doors. A mournful cry was heard in the homes of the Egyptians, as well as in Pharaoh's palace, because the absence of the blood from their doorposts was the death sentence that claimed their sons.

Passover would become the single most important religious celebration for the Hebrews. We can find other Passover observances in Joshua 5:10 and 2 Chronicles 30:1-27; 35:1-19. Through each Passover offering, the Lord would remind the nation how essential maintaining constant communion with Him in all areas of life is to the individual person and to the Christian community as a whole.

The spiritual lesson for us is a powerful one. It has been said that when God looks at those of us who are His children, He sees us having been redeemed by the blood of His Son. Even as believers, we continue to sin by giving in to the weaknesses of our human nature. Yet our salvation is past, present, and future. The blood of Christ shed on calvary's cross obliterates our past sins and redeems us for eternity.

Nonetheless, through our relationship with Him, God deals with us as a parent corrects and punishes a disobedient child. We can find comfort in God's promised loving care, as well as in the truth of Scripture:

Do not despise the LORD's instruction, my son,  
and do not loathe His discipline;  
for the LORD disciplines the one He loves,  
just as a father, the son in whom he delights in (Prov. 3:11-12).

## SESSION 4

# VICTORY

## EXODUS 14:13-28

<sup>13</sup> But Moses said to the people, “Don’t be afraid. **Stand firm** **A** and see **the LORD’s salvation** **B** that he will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians you see today, you will never see again. <sup>14</sup> The LORD will fight for you, and you must **be quiet.**” **C** <sup>15</sup> The LORD said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to break camp. <sup>16</sup> As for you, **lift up your staff,** **D** stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. <sup>17</sup> 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** **E** by means of Pharaoh, all his army, and his chariots and horsemen. <sup>18</sup> The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I receive glory through Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.” <sup>19</sup> Then **the angel of God,** **F** who was going in front of the Israelite forces, moved and went behind them. **The pillar of cloud** **G** moved from in front of them and stood behind them. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back with **a powerful east wind** **H** all that night and turned the sea into dry land. So the waters were divided, <sup>22</sup> and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with the waters like a wall to them on their right and their left. <sup>23</sup> The Egyptians set out in pursuit—all Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots, and his horsemen—and went into the sea after them. <sup>24</sup> During **the morning watch,** **I** the LORD looked down at the Egyptian forces from the pillar of fire and cloud, and threw the Egyptian forces into **confusion.** **J** <sup>25</sup> 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!” <sup>26</sup> 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.” <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> **The water came back** **K** and

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- 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** The root of this word, “to save or deliver,” literally meant “to make wide.” It referred to the deliverance of God as well as to spiritual salvation.
- c** “Be still” (NIV); “hold your peace” (NKJV); “just stay calm” (NLT)
- d** The staff was the instrument in Moses’ hand that God used to strengthen his faith and to encourage the people to follow in confidence.
- e** The credit for the victory of God’s people over the Egyptians would be evidence of God’s power and would cause Him to be glorified.
- f** This was a miraculous revelation of God Himself in angelic form.
- g** This cloud stood between the pursuing Egyptians and the Israelites, enshrouding the Egyptians in darkness on one side and the Israelites in light on the other.
- h** 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.
- i** The third of the three watches into which the night was divided. This watch was from 2 a.m. to 6 a.m.
- j** God confused other enemies of His people in Genesis 11:7; Joshua 10:10; 1 Samuel 14:20; and 2 Chronicles 20:22-23.
- k** The Lord’s great power caused the waters of the sea that had parted for the Israelites to come together again, destroying the entire Egyptian army.

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.

## “” TALKING POINTS

### NOTES

### »» 1. THE SETTING (Ex. 14:13-18)

- God reprimanded the Israelites for their complaining against Him and directed them to prepare to move forward.
- Moses was then informed by God that He would part the sea so the Israelites could pass and He would defeat the Egyptian army for His honor.

### »» 2. ACT 1: THE SEPARATION (Ex. 14:19-20)

- The angel of God stood between the Israelites and the Egyptians, keeping both groups separated throughout the night.
- Emphasize that the cloud that had led the Israelites now protected them from their enemy.

### »» 3. ACT 2: THE CROSSING (Ex. 14:21-22)

- When Moses obediently extended his staff over the sea, God parted the water so that the Israelites were able to escape on dry land from the Egyptians.
- Affirm God's miraculous intervention.

### »» 4. ACT 3: THE VICTORY (Ex. 14:23-28)

- Having pursued the Israelites into the dry sea bed, God caused the Egyptian chariots to swerve and stall.
- Directed by God, Moses extended his staff again and the sea completely engulfed the Egyptian army.
- Be careful to emphasize God's justice being administered to the Egyptians who had rejected God. Emphasize that all humans are sinners and face God's judgment.

### »» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

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

- 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.



## FOCUS ATTENTION

**Think of a time when you were following the Lord, only to find yourself in a situation that seemed hopeless. What did God teach you during that time?**

- The Israelites were trapped by the sea in their path ahead, as the Egyptian army closed in from behind. Yet the Israelites had literally followed God to this place He had provided.
- Suddenly the history of God's faithfulness—even recent history—wasn't enough to give the Israelites confidence in God's plan and power. Fear and uncertainty became all-consuming. God asked them to trust Him with the victory they couldn't yet see.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE EXODUS 14:13-18

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

- God instructed His people not to fear, to stand firm, and to entrust the fight to Him before He told them specifically what He would do with the Egyptians or the Red Sea.
- Scripture urges followers again and again to not be afraid. We can find comfort in knowing God is victorious and able to deliver His people. Giving in to fear constricts perspective and prevents us from moving forward.

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

- Ephesians 6:10-20 describes readiness as a soldier wearing crucial pieces of armor. Readiness to perceive, respond, and obey God is spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, and practical.
- Matthew 19:22 describes a wealthy young ruler who ultimately loved his possessions more than he loved God. We must hold everything else more loosely than we hold onto Him.
- We can entrust all our relationships and possessions safely to the Lord and find freedom.

## EXODUS 14:19-20

**What qualities of God are displayed in these verses?**

- The presence and protection of God was clearly visible to the Israelites in the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. They could grasp His nearness, power, and presence tangibly.
- The supernatural pillar of cloud and fire must have been fearsome. No one doubted that God was the dominant power.

**How might seeing God's actions with your physical eyes impact your willingness to trust Him more deeply?**

- Even people who saw Jesus bring the dead to life walked away without trusting Him.
- Authentic and healthy trust in the Lord cannot be based solely on an assured situational outcome.

## EXODUS 14:21-22

**For Moses and the Israelites, sight followed obedience, not the other way around. Imagine stepping onto perfectly dry ground between the walls of water. How does this miraculous event help you understand freedom from sin?**

- Often God asks His followers to trust Him before the outcome becomes visible. God miraculously made a way for the Israelites to escape to the land He had prepared for them.
- Paul described anyone without Christ as slaves to sin in Romans 6:12-22. Being freed from slavery is a powerful image, demonstrating the hopelessness and destructive power of sin and the dilemma every person faces, and our desperate need for the help only Jesus offers.

## EXODUS 14:23-28

**What do these verses teach about God's judgment? How are you moved to worship God in response to these verses?**

- Being an enemy of God is serious business. The Egyptians rejected God, though He was gracious to give many warnings and opportunities for them to acknowledge Him as God above all others. All people are sinners and face God's judgment without the intervening sacrifice of Jesus.
- We are often more comfortable with God as Suffering Servant than God as mighty Victor. He is both, and so much more. He is everything we have ever needed or will ever need Him to be.

**What larger impact could the Red Sea crossing and the defeat of Egypt have had for Israel? For Egypt? For the surrounding peoples? For the church today?**

- Israel had deeply feared their Egyptian overlords for 430 years. Seeing them overwhelmed by God's power changed everything.
- God's stated intention was for the Egyptians to know He was Yahweh. Knowing He is God is the beginning point to knowing Him (Ex. 14:4,18).

## SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

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

- God knows how to deliver His people. He's done it! Slavery to freedom; dead in sin to alive in Christ!
- God will never use His might in a way that is unjust. He is good. He wants us to seek Him and He will fight for us (Ex. 14:14).
- **Personal Challenge:** Reflecting on God's saving of His people, how are you encouraged? Write a prayer of thanks to God for doing the work to save you from the sin to which you were once captive.

# OBJECT LESSON

## A BASKETBALL

Note: This scenario works with any sport. Make sure the item you choose to bring matches the sport you describe.

As the group arrives, display the basketball or other item.

Guide the group to imagine an NBA player is a member of your church's basketball team: Though he may play humbly and pass the ball at every opportunity, he won't be able to hide the fact that he has exponentially more ability than anyone else on the court. Every part of his game will be exceptional; victory is assured if he is present on the court.

Emphasize: *When Yahweh is present, no enemy will be victorious.*

Remind the group of God's promise to deliver Israel from captivity in Egypt: *God demonstrated His power through plagues and miracles, and finally through the death of the firstborn of every household. He rescued the firstborn sons of Israel by covering His people with the blood of a sacrificial lamb.*

Explain: *As God escorted His people to freedom by leading them in a pillar of cloud and fire away from Egypt, the Egyptian enemy bore down from behind, pursuing them to the edge of the*



*Red Sea. He was their Rescuer and Protector, and was about to become their Champion, in a league of His own.*

Lead in prayer, thanking God for His willingness to be present with us when we are struggling and to fight for victory against our enemies.

## DIG DEEPER

### GOD, THE VICTOR

One of the great lessons we learn from the Book of Exodus as a whole, and a message reiterated throughout Scripture, is that God is present with His people. God is a Person who created us as persons in His image. He wants to be in relationship with us and one of the ways He makes this known is through His presence.

God also directs His people. One of the most obvious things we see in this text is that God is clearly in charge. Through His presence in the pillars of cloud and fire He is giving His people direction, and their deliverance depended upon their following His direction.

Notice three specific things we can learn about God's guidance as we consider His guidance of Israel out of Egypt.

- God positions us where He wants us, not where we want to be. He wanted to position the Israelites to where He was their only hope, to where if He did not deliver them, they would not be delivered.
- God's direction is not always the easiest way. If we are following God's direction, we must go where He tells us and do as He says.
- God's direction always requires faith. No doubt after a reversal in directions the people began to question whether or not Moses knew what he was doing. Make no mistake about it, whenever you are trying to follow God there will always be those who are more

than ready to offer their advice. There will always be those who think they know a better way than the one God has given you.

Exodus 14 also reveals to us that God delivers His people. The central theological truth of this passage is that God is our Deliverer. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is a God of deliverance.

In his response to the people's lack of faith, Moses encouraged the Israelites to trust God: "But Moses said to the people, 'Don't be afraid. Stand firm and see the LORD's salvation that he will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians you see today, you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you must be quiet'" (Ex. 14:13-14).

God comforts us. He does not want us to fear. He delivers us. He expects us to trust Him. He removes danger from us and protects us. God fights for us, and He is victorious.

The finished work of Jesus demonstrates for us the same truths that our text today tells us about God's working in the lives of His people. God does not want us to fear. He is our Deliverer. He invites us to trust Him. He removes danger from us. He is victorious.<sup>1</sup>

1. Adapted from Dr. Calvin Wittman, "The Exodus from Egypt - Exodus 13-14." Available online at lifeway.com.

## SESSION 5

# SUFFICIENT

## EXODUS 16:1-5,11-20

<sup>1</sup> The entire Israelite community departed from **Elim** **A** and came to the **Wilderness of Sin**, **B** which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had left the land of Egypt. <sup>2</sup> The entire Israelite community **grumbled** **C** against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup> 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** **D** and ate all the bread we wanted. Instead, you brought us into this wilderness to make this whole assembly die of hunger!” <sup>4</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, “I am going to **rain bread** **E** from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. This way I will **test them** **F** to see whether or not they will follow my instructions. <sup>5</sup> On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days.” ... <sup>11</sup> The LORD spoke to Moses, <sup>12</sup> “I have heard the **complaints** **G** 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.” <sup>13</sup> So at evening quail came and covered the camp. In the morning there was a **layer of dew** **H** all around the camp. <sup>14</sup> When the layer of dew evaporated, there were fine flakes on the desert surface, as fine as frost on the ground. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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.’” <sup>17</sup> So the Israelites did this. Some gathered a lot, some a little. <sup>18</sup> 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**. **I** Each gathered as much as he needed to eat. <sup>19</sup> Moses said to them, “No one is to let any of it remain until morning.” <sup>20</sup> But they **didn’t listen** **J** to Moses; some people left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. Therefore **Moses was angry** **K** with them.

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** A place meaning “trees” in the Sinai desert where the Israelites encamped on their exodus from Egypt. It had 12 springs and 70 palm trees (Num. 33:9).
- b** Sometimes called “the Desert of Sin,” it was located between Elim and the Sinai Peninsula.
- c** “Complained” (NLT); “murmured” (KJV). Enroute 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).
- d** “Pots of meat and all you could eat” was an idiom the Israelites used to praise the conditions they enjoyed in Egypt.
- e** A divine abundance of sweet bread (manna) would fall to the earth from heaven.
- f** “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.
- g** Instead of following Moses and Aaron as God’s appointed leaders, the people resorted to registering their complaints and resentments regarding their restricted provisions. God chose to respond to them directly.
- h** In the morning “a layer of dew” covered the ground around the camp. When it evaporated, thin flakes like frost remained.
- i** God’s provision was complete so the Israelites could grow in their confidence toward Him.
- j** In their greed, some of the people refused to listen to Moses and gathered more of the manna than they were supposed to, and it spoiled.
- k** 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.





## FOCUS ATTENTION

### What were the “good ol’ days” like for you?

- In spite of their recent and miraculous freedom from slavery, God’s people began to grumble and complain that they weren’t provided for well enough.
- In this study we will see ways God, through Moses, challenged their perspective, provided what they needed, and confronted their need to learn to trust Him more.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE EXODUS 16:1-3

### What did the Israelites miss on the journey while they fearfully watched their supplies dwindle?

- The people allowed their difficulties, fear, and doubt to cloud their ability to correctly see the past, present, and future.
- The hardships were real. Food supplies were exhausted, and the people were traveling over difficult ground, headed to a place they’d never been. Trusting God is a choice, and not always the immediately easy choice in a situation.
- We, as believers, need to consider the outcomes doubt, fear, and constant complaints move us toward—inattention and insensitivity (and possibly disobedience) to God and His movement in our lives.

### How does over-focusing on immediate concerns or hardships keep us from trusting God?

- When we lean down to inspect something closely we lose the ability to see the whole panorama. While helpful temporarily, it’s damaging to our vision if we stay there long term.
- Mental energy and strength spent worshipping God and reflecting on His faithfulness in the past enables us to trust Him in the present and future.

## EXODUS 16:4-5,11-12

### How is our faith built when God asks us to obey Him in a difficult time?

- God told Moses (and the people) that He would provide for them without explaining the details. He expected their trust as an expression of their faith.
- Many times in Scripture, as in Christians’ lives today, God asked for obedience based on who He is rather than on man’s logic or visible next steps. (See Gen. 12:1 and 2 Cor. 5:7 for examples of this.)

### What was God’s stated purpose in His response to their need in the wilderness?

- In Exodus 6:7-9 God promised to bring the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt, to be their God, and to bring them into the land of promise, so that they would know He was their God. Their relationship mattered most to God.

- God’s desire to be in relationship with people is a distinguishing mark of His character throughout Scripture and human history. Every believer has a testimony that repeats this theme uniquely.

## EXODUS 16:13-18

### What role do expectations play in our ability to be satisfied? Why can gratitude be hard to come by?

- We see in the Israelites the familiar tendency to trust the provisions rather than the Provider. Trusting the Provider more than we trust our provisions frees believers to worship God above all things and share generously.
- God’s encouragement to the people to obey, and requiring some work on their part to make the food edible, didn’t mean God was indifferent to their hardship. In fact, God’s great love for them motivated Him to free, lead, and strengthen them.

## EXODUS 16:19-20

### Why are we tempted to hoard God’s provisions?

- We feel most comfortable with a backup plan, just in case things don’t work out or God doesn’t come through like we think He will. The stinky, rotten manna is a stark picture of the value of man’s back up plans when compared with God’s trustworthy guidance.

- God always provides everything we need to take the next step.

### What does the manna story indicate about how God handles the fear and faithlessness of His people?

- There was a window of time in which to obey and enjoy the Lord’s provision. Those who chose not to obey missed the opportunity for that day.
- Though God’s love is constant, He gives windows of opportunities to respond to His leading and enjoy His provision. Believers can help each other not take these chances for granted.

## SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

### How well do you recognize and appreciate God’s provision?

- God demonstrated love and power by providing complete nutrition, spiritually and physically, for His people.
- God offers us the freedom to trust Him with every aspect of our future. We plan, prepare, and equip, but we don’t need to worry, fear, or trust our own strengths more than we trust Him. He provides all we need and brings our best outcomes.
- **Personal Challenge:** Spend some time in prayer or writing in your journal asking God to help you trust Him for the future in these ways: trusting He will be with you, that He will provide on the day you need it, that He knows what you will need, and that you will trust Him more than your own abilities.

# OBJECT LESSON

## A PHOTOGRAPH OF A SUNRISE

Display the photo of the sunrise to the group. Ask group members to share a favorite or especially beautiful sunrise they've observed.

Ask: *How many of you worry at bedtime each night about whether the sun will come up the next morning? Are you fearful that it won't? That the last fading light might not come back ever again? Would you frantically try to catch the last rays of remaining light in a jar if you did fear the permanent loss of the light?*

Explain: *Most people live in complete confidence that the sun will reappear early each day, and that there will be plenty of sunlight for all the reasons it's needed. Most people don't try to capture sunlight to preserve it in anguish that there won't be anymore coming the next day.*

Connect: *This sounds ridiculous because we all have complete faith in the daily sunrise. And yet having faith in God's provision doesn't come this easy for us. We forget where we've been and where we're going, thinking exclusively about the task or challenge right in front of us and reacting to it without considering God's provision.*

Explain: *In Exodus 16, the Israelites began to lose focus on God's*



*deliverance and listen only to the growling of their stomachs as they were mere weeks into their wilderness journey with God.*

As a group, name as many things as you can think of that God provides for you daily. Then close with a prayer of thankfulness that we will focus on the provisions God has given us today and release our worries about tomorrow to Him.

## DIG DEEPER

### GOD, OUR SUSTAINER

The Israelites celebrated their escape from Egypt with a moving, poetic account of the event (Ex. 15:1-18), revealing evidence that they "feared the LORD and believed in him and in his servant Moses" (14:31). But soon we see the fickleness of the people, forgetting their miraculous deliverance from slavery. Between Egypt and Sinai lay a stretch of barren, coastal desert land called "the Wilderness of Sin." The word "Sin" here actually may be a shortened form of "Sinai," and apparently has no connection with "sin" as a word for evil. The traditional site of Mount Sinai is in the southern Sinai peninsula.

The people quickly forgot the rigors of slavery they had experienced in Egypt and began to grumble against Moses and Aaron. With typical human exaggeration, they said they "sat by pots of meat and ate all the bread [they] wanted" (16:3) in Egypt, and now they claimed to face death from hunger in this place Moses had led them. All through the biblical account of the exodus to the arrival in the land of the Philistines, the people vacillated between faithfulness to God and an unwillingness to acquiesce to His will and to the leadership of His servant, Moses.

Worry and anxiety regarding the future are epidemic in our culture, and pervasive in every age. When God's people focus on God's trustworthiness and character more than on the difficulties of life, the resulting hope is tangible and contagious.

This was also evident in the life of Joseph. Held in high esteem by his father, Joseph's brothers began to hate him and conspired to kill him. As Joseph's story continued, he remained focused on following God's will—despite his being enslaved and eventually imprisoned. Ultimately, God proved Himself purposeful throughout Joseph's struggles and used his difficulties for His good and glory: "You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people" (Gen. 50:20).

These historical events, so carefully and meticulously recorded in Holy Scripture, reflect our tendency to forget how God uses everything that happens in Christians' lives as a part of His divine process of molding us to be like His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

## SESSION 6

# COMMANDMENTS

## EXODUS 20:1-17

<sup>1</sup> Then God spoke all these words: <sup>2</sup> I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of **slavery**. <sup>3</sup> Do not have **other gods** <sup>4</sup> besides me. <sup>4</sup> Do not make an **idol** <sup>5</sup> for yourself, whether in the shape of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. <sup>5</sup> Do not bow in worship to them, and do not serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a **jealous God**, <sup>6</sup> punishing the children for the fathers' iniquity, to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup> but showing faithful love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commands. <sup>7</sup> Do not **misuse** <sup>8</sup> the name of the LORD your God, because the LORD will not leave anyone unpunished who misuses his name. <sup>8</sup> Remember the **Sabbath** <sup>9</sup> day, to keep it holy: <sup>9</sup> You are to labor six days and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> 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** <sup>11</sup> who is within your city gates. <sup>11</sup> 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**. <sup>12</sup> **Honor** <sup>13</sup> your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. <sup>13</sup> Do not **murder**. <sup>14</sup> Do not **commit adultery**. <sup>15</sup> Do not **steal**. <sup>16</sup> Do not

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** The ultimate humiliation suffered by the chosen people of God, to live in total subservience to a pagan master
- b** 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.
- c** Any object of wood, stone, and so forth, used for worship was totally forbidden. The Almighty God alone is to be worshiped.
- d** God expects an undiluted loyalty to Him on the part of His people.
- e** "In curses or silly banter" (MSG); The punishment for one who dishonors God's name is not described, but that it will surely be is a stated certainty.
- f** The seventh day was to be consecrated as a day of rest, a cessation from work for man and beast.
- g** "Stranger" (KJV); "foreigners" (NLT); "sojourner" (ESV); The Sabbath day of rest was for all people.
- h** God not only blessed the Sabbath, but He also made it "holy" because on that day He rested from the work of the creation.
- i** Give weight to; glorify; esteem. Parents represent God to their children and should be honored accordingly.
- j** This commandment forbids the violent and unauthorized taking of life. God determines the timing of one's life and death, not any human.
- k** 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.
- l** Theft damages a community by diminishing trust and causing unnecessary suffering.

give **false testimony** **m** against your neighbor. <sup>17</sup> Do not **covet** **n** 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.

**m** Generally, lies told to defame someone; the term relates to dishonesty in a judicial setting.

**n** Evil desires, wrongfully striving after, wanting what is not one's own; "lusting" (MSG; also see Josh. 7:16-26)

## TALKING POINTS

### 1. THE GOD OF THE COMMANDMENTS (Ex. 20:1-2)

- God identified Himself, establishing His authority to give the Ten Commandments.
- Explain that God initiated the covenant at Sinai and that it was related to His redemptive purposes ultimately fulfilled in Jesus.

### 2. RELATING TO GOD (Ex. 20:3-11)

- God delivered four commandments that identify how His people should relate to Him.
- Affirm personal responsibility for one's sins while pointing to how the collective sins of a generation can impact future generations.
- Explain why Christians observe Sunday as a day of worship instead of the seventh day. Be sensitive to those who may be required to work on Sundays.

### 3. RELATING TO SOCIETY (Ex. 20:12-17)

- God delivered six commandments that identify how His people should relate to one another.

### SUMMARY STATEMENTS

#### God gives a clear standard for holy living.

- 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.

#### NOTES



## FOCUS ATTENTION

**How do you think most people react to rules? When was the first time you remember realizing standards and rules are in place for your good?**

- Our natural tendency to chafe against rules is evident when we are very young. God gave a code of commandments to be obeyed so we can clearly see our bent to sin. Our need for Christ stands out starkly when we begin to understand our sin and its consequences.
- Because God's character is trustworthy, His commands for people can be trusted too. Growth in our understanding of God's holiness and loving grace facilitates obedience as we acknowledge He knows countless things we can't (or don't) perceive, and that He has our best in mind.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE EXODUS 20:1-2

**How do these verses make clear the basis for God's authority to set the standard?**

- God's identity, His character, and His actions all make His authority clear.
- The Ten Commandments start with a strong assertion of God's identity. Recognizing His authority was a problem for the Israelites, for the people of Jesus' day, and for people today. Many misunderstand God's forbearance as a lack of authority.

**Why is it important that God is the One who initiated the covenant at Sinai with the people?**

- God's pattern in interacting with man is to approach and start the conversation. We wouldn't be able to approach Him. He initiated the covenant with Abraham, with Moses at the burning bush, with the people at Sinai here in Exodus 20, and with all people through His Son, Jesus. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him ..." (John 6:44a).
- God followed through with His plan to rescue. He rescued His people physically from slavery, continually in the wilderness and many times through the generations. He rescues all who belong to Him spiritually through Christ.

## EXODUS 20:3-11

**According to Exodus 20:3-11, what are some of the best ways to honor and love God individually? What about corporately—as a family or a community?**

- God is properly jealous to protect the integrity and uniqueness of His relationship with His people.
- Punishing the children for the fathers' sin reflected sin's penalties for successive generations who choose the same sinful path exemplified by their parents. The excuses, "He doesn't know any better," or "It's how she was raised," don't

do away with sin's consequences for any person. This point highlights the need for biblical community and accountability for each other in following God.

**What boundaries do we need to put in place to create time for Sabbath each week for ourselves and for our families?**

- We were created with a need for Sabbath, which brings us space to rest, think, and relate to God and those close to us.
- The practice of Sabbath is life-giving.

## EXODUS 20:12-17

**How would you explain the promise God gives in relationship to the commandment to honor our parents?**

- No condition is given in this commandment. We are not released from the exhortation because we are adults or because it may be hard. We will need grace and God's guidance to honor our parents appropriately.
- *Honor* means respect, to give special recognition, or revere.
- As Christ-followers we can honor the role of parents as God intended it, even if there is no one in that role for us individually. The community aspect of the commandments is noticeable here. God gives us "parents" in the faith community whom we are called to honor.

**How does prioritizing the first four commandments on loving God inform the keeping of the last six commandments about loving others?**

- Jesus uses this same formula—love God, love others—in Matthew 22:37-40.
- When we have no other gods but God, we will not be as prone to have unhealthy fixations which might lead us to steal, murder, lie, and be unfaithful.
- Understanding and submitting to God's authority leads us to respect proper human authority.

## SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

**Recognize the tenderness and loving intent behind the giving of the commandments—protective, unique, merciful, and a framework for every kind of health. In light of this, how might you put any of the commandments in your own words?**

- For example, "I am the LORD your God." God says, *we know each other. We belong to each other. I'm in your camp (literally)—in your neighborhood. We're close. Let Me help you navigate the fallen world and bring you home to safety and true freedom.*
- **Personal Challenge:** This week, take time to reflect on each of the Ten Commandments, including any action steps God is leading you to take.

## EMPTY PICTURE FRAME, WITH NOTHING IN THE MIDDLE SO YOU CAN SEE THROUGH IT

Choose a view in the room or out the window, then hold up the frame around it and notice the difference the frame makes. Pass the frame around the room for people to use the same way.

Discuss: *Why do we frame art or photos to display? What qualities are added by the use of the frame? Frames give context, provide borders, and draw attention to the art, photos, or objects within. With this in mind, how do the Ten Commandments function as a frame for life?*

Challenge the group to name all of the Ten Commandments.

Explain that God did what no other god could or would do: *He gave His people a standard to live by that was based in relationship and motivated by love. Through the Ten Commandments, God shared His vision with His people who walked in fellowship with Him and with each other. This was starkly different from the way the rest of the world lived. God was clear about what that reality would*



*require from everyone. Relationship was the basis and the backdrop for every aspect of His Law.*

Read Romans 3:20. Explain that another purpose for the Ten Commandments is to lead all people to understand and identify their sin, which leads to an understanding of our need for Christ.

Close by praying that we would see our sin, confess it to God, and commit to following His commands.

## DIG DEEPER

### A JEALOUS GOD

The phrase “a jealous God” is confusing to many people. This is likely because of our general understanding of what the word “jealous” means. We tend to see the word as an adjective describing an attitude, particularly of those who hold negative feelings toward others who see things differently or possess something desirable. Perhaps the most common expression of jealousy is on the part of those who resent not enjoying the good fortune of others. The jealousy of God is not that of one who is suspicious or distrustful. When the term *jealousy* is used of God, it denotes an attitude that demands exclusive devotion:

- “Because the LORD is jealous for his reputation, you are never to bow down to another god. He is a jealous God” (Ex. 34:14).
- “For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God” (Deut. 4:24).
- “Do not bow in worship to them, and do not serve them, because 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” (Deut. 5:9).
- “Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you, for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God” (Deut. 6:14-15).

*Jealousy* also describes God’s anger toward those who opposed Him (Num. 25:11; Deut. 29:20; Ps. 79:5), along with the divine care and commitment He demonstrated when He vindicated His people (2 Kings 19:31; Isa. 9:7; 37:32). The Lord alone deserves to be the object of the worship and service of His people.

Scripture condemns any form of rivalry to the honor, glory, and esteem due to the Lord. It grieves God’s Spirit when His people divide their love and devotion between Him and things, allowing the desire for material possessions to eclipse their love and commitment to Him.

Every kind of neglect or contempt for the worship of God is rejected by the second commandment (Ex. 20:3-6). God desired to present Himself as Israel’s husband as the prophets described Him (Jer. 2:2; Hos. 1–3).

Only as we keep our primary focus in life on God can we expect to enjoy the constant assurance of His loving care for us. When we conceive God in this way, the word *jealous* takes on an entirely different meaning.

## SESSION 7

# EQUIPPED

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

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

**31:1** The LORD also spoke to Moses: <sup>2</sup> “Look, I have appointed by name **Bezalel** **H** son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. <sup>3</sup> I have filled him with God’s Spirit, with **wisdom, understanding, and ability in every craft** **I** <sup>4</sup> to design artistic works in gold, silver, and bronze, <sup>5</sup> to cut gemstones for mounting, and to carve wood for work in every craft. <sup>6</sup> I have also selected **Oholiab** **J** 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.”

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

**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** Skins that had all the wool removed, and then were dyed red; it has been compared to our Moroccan leather.

**c** The acacia tree was prolific in Egypt, and was also common in the Sinai Peninsula. The wood was light, though hard in consistency.

**d** Spices were used with the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense. Olive oil was used as a body lotion to keep the skin soft and also as fuel for light.

**e** The ephod was the specific garment worn by the high priest. The word literally means “a covering” or “that which is put on.” The breastplate was a piece of cloth with golden settings for precious stones.

**f** A location considered sacred or holy. The tabernacle in the wilderness (and later the temple in Jerusalem) was considered a sanctuary because it was God’s dwelling place.

**g** The sacred and portable tent where God met His people in the wilderness. The nomadic Israelites lived in tents, and they had no permanent place to live at this time, so God directed them to build a tent as His dwelling place.

**h** 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. 2:19-20) who was gifted by God to train others to build the tabernacle.

**i** “Skill and know-how and expertise in every kind of craft” (MSG)

**j** A member of the tribe of Dan whose name ironically meant “father’s tent”

## NOTES

### »» 1. THE OFFERING (Ex. 25:1-7)

- God directed Moses to call on the Israelites to willingly offer the supplies needed to build the tabernacle.

### »» 2. THE PURPOSE (Ex. 25:8-9)

- God declared that the tabernacle would be where He would dwell with His people. He also reminded Moses of the importance of following the patterns He was about to give.
- Interpret the tabernacle as a representation of the promise of heaven. Point to Hebrews 8:5, noting the importance of Moses following the pattern given. Believers are called temples since they are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

### »» 3. THE LEADERS (Ex. 31:1-6)

- God identified Bezalel and Oholiab as having been gifted to lead the construction of the tabernacle and the articles contained within.
- Avoid equating spiritual gifts with God-given talents and developed skills. Remind believers that God equips them to use their gifts and talents for His purposes.

### »» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

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

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



## FOCUS ATTENTION

**Describe a time you began a repair or a recipe and then realized you didn't have the supplies needed to complete the task.**

- If we aren't equipped and resourced, we don't get very far.
- We can trust God to always provide the resources and equipping needed to fulfill the work He calls us to do (Heb. 13:21).

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE EXODUS 25:1-7

**Where did the items God asked the people to give for the building of the tabernacle come from?**

- God provided for the Israelites' needs, as well as for the tabernacle they did not yet see in their future.
- God in His wisdom specifically matched His provision with what would be needed to fulfill His vision for the tabernacle.

**Why is it important that the people were not forced to give toward the tabernacle?**

- Instead of operating according to give-and-take as people naturally do, God demonstrated His view of generosity by making it truly optional for the people to release the materials for the building of the tabernacle.
- God's interest has always been in the heart.
- God's people are challenged to hold onto wealth loosely and be ready to give as God leads, maintaining proper perspective on where it comes from and to whom it belongs.

**What sacrifices are we called to make when giving to God?**

- God asks His people to give sacrificially to fund and support God-directed kingdom work (the spread of the gospel, the expansion of His church, etc.).
- God's people give in faith, not knowing fully how God will use every gift He asks us to give. We can trust Him for every step. Sacrificial giving indicates trust.

## EXODUS 25:8-9

**How would you explain the idea of God dwelling with people? How is this different from the way people usually view God?**

- A relationship with God is an opportunity for us to experience something unique and special with our Creator.
- The Lord showed that He intended to live among the Israelite families by giving instructions for a movable worship center that could be with them wherever they went. The people would experience a new level of closeness, more intimate than the meetings on Mount Sinai.

**What was the significance of following the exact pattern God laid out for the tabernacle?**

- Hebrews 8:1-5 explains that the tabernacle God asked Moses

to build was an exact "copy and shadow of the heavenly things" (Heb. 8:5), the setting of the once-and-for-all payment for our sins by Jesus' own blood.

- Moses couldn't have completely understood all the reasons for such exact instructions when he was asked to obey. His complete obedience was more important than he realized at the time.
- Each aspect and furnishing of the tabernacle pointed forward to Jesus in some way. Note: Take time to discuss each element.

**How does considering the tabernacle and all its aspects inform your understanding of believers as dwelling places for the Holy Spirit?**

- The Holy Spirit dwells within believers; we never have to live separate from Him (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

## EXODUS 31:1-6

**In what specific ways did God gift Bezalel and Oholiab for the special tasks He instructed them to do? Why do you think wisdom was paired with ability in God's giving?**

- God brought a match between who was needed and who was there and ready. He consistently brings the people He has equipped into opportunities to serve.
- Wisdom involves the most appropriate application of knowledge.

**How have you seen people respond to God in using God-given talents, abilities, and developed skills for kingdom work?**

- We often think of visible skills used on Sunday in the church, but for this task, the most important skills were wisdom, metalworking, textiles, and other artisan skills.
- Preparation and training as we know God and follow Him comes by way of time spent ingesting His truth through Scripture study and prayer (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

## SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

**How would you describe the relationship between God's provision in our lives and His request of us to give?**

- God enables and equips His people as He directs them into obedience to Him. Therefore, all we are and have is prepared to be used for His purposes. Are you willing?
- **Personal Challenge:** Evaluate your willingness to give to God as He directs you. Determine to look for and respond to the opportunities God gives you this week.

# OBJECT LESSON

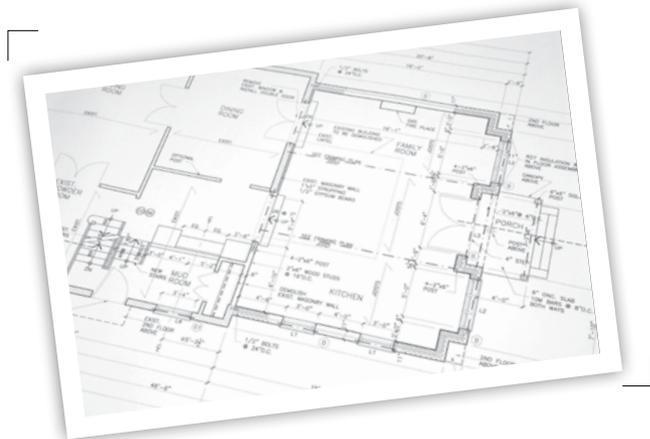
## A PICTURE OF A BLUEPRINT FOR BUILDING A HOUSE

Display the blueprint to the group. Ask the group to brainstorm a list of skills that will be necessary to create the blueprints.

Explain: *As God was beginning to form the Israelites into a people and build a relationship with them, He had some plans in mind for a special dwelling. He began to outline His vision to Moses in great detail, making provision for the supplies and skills that would be needed. When the Israelites left Egypt loaded down with massive wealth freely given to them by their former captors, they couldn't have imagined what God had in mind for those treasures. Ask: Why did God ask them to collect these items?*

Read Exodus 25:8-9. Highlight that sometimes it's staggering to think God would entrust people with so much. He is a generous and patient God indeed. Emphasize that no god the Israelites had known of before would or could do that. Ask: *What's the significance that God now dwells in our hearts when we receive Him as Savior?*

Explain: *As we look into the future of our lives and the lives of our families, we make plans and do our best to equip and supply*



*everything we think we will need. But what if the real plan is God's? Ask: How do we show trust that God is supplying and equipping us for more meaningful things than we could plan?*

Pray that we will remember God's past actions on our behalf and trust His blueprint for our lives.

## DIG DEEPER

### TABERNACLE

*Tabernacle* is a word that appears often in the Old Testament, particularly during the time the Israelites were traveling through the Wilderness of Sinai, eventually arriving in the land of the Philistines, or Canaan. Our use of the words *tabernacle* and *sanctuary* today casts them in a slightly different light than that which they described when they first appeared in the early history of God's people. For example, we think of a *sanctuary* as an auditorium of a church building where we gather with fellow believers to worship. A *tabernacle* is often conceived as a temporary or even portable structure that may be built in a wooded area. Such a building may have three sides open, with only the stage or platform area covered. It could be part of a semi-permanent religious encampment provided by a church-sponsored religious camp meeting.

The word *sanctuary*, however, suggests a place that is sanctified or set apart for religious activities, a sacred and holy place of worship. It can be a formal, beautifully-appointed auditorium with stained-glass windows, a high, vaulted ceiling, inside a building with a steeple or spire that soars into the sky. Or it can be inside a rustic enclosure or tabernacle that is more suited for informal activities.

In ancient times, however, these words described places of worship that, of necessity, had to be portable and easily moved from place to place:

Tabernacle, or "tent of meeting," was a sacred tent, a portable and provisional sanctuary where God met His people. A tent was the dwelling place of a nomadic person. When the sacred tent was meant, it was usually used with some distinguishing epithet. Two compound phrases (*'ohel moed* and *ohel haeduth*) are used in the Bible to designate this tent: "the tabernacle of the congregation" (Ex. 29:42,44), literally the "tent of meeting" (NRSV, NIV) and "the tabernacle of witness" (Num. 17:7) or "tent of witness." In both cases it was the place where the God of Israel revealed Himself to and dwelled among His people.<sup>1</sup>

Most important was the fact the people met there in solemn assembly aware of the presence of God whom they worshiped and whose guidance they sought.

1. "Tabernacle," *Holman Bible Dictionary*, Trent C. Butler, ed. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 1316.

## SESSION 8

# REBELLION

## EXODUS 32:1-6,11-14

<sup>1</sup> When the people saw that Moses **delayed** **A** in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around **Aaron** **B** and said to him, “Come, **make gods for us** **C** 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!” <sup>2</sup> Aaron replied to them, “Take off the **gold rings** **D** that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me.” <sup>3</sup> So all the people took off the gold rings that were on their ears and brought them to Aaron. <sup>4</sup> He took the gold from them, fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it into an image of a **calf**. **E** Then they said, “Israel, these are your gods, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!” <sup>5</sup> When Aaron saw this, he built an **altar** **F** in front of it and made an announcement: “There will be a **festival** **G** to the LORD tomorrow.” <sup>6</sup> 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**. **H** [...] <sup>11</sup> But Moses **sought the favor of the LORD** **I** 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? <sup>12</sup> 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** **J** concerning this **disaster** **K** planned for your people.

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** Moses’ delay in returning from the mountain to the people was a test. Occasionally God uses delays to test and strengthen our faith.
- b** Aaron, Moses’ brother, was Israel’s first high priest.
- c** The people’s lack of concern for Moses and their indifference toward the God Moses represented led them to abandon swiftly the true God and demand another “god” to lead them.
- d** The people wanted a visible manifestation of a god so Aaron told them to remove the gold earrings they had obtained from the Egyptians.
- e** Aaron fashioned the gold into the image of a young bull, which had been worshiped as a god by the Egyptians.
- f** Aaron attempted to make the best of a bad situation by building an altar in front of the idol and announcing a festival to the Lord.
- g** Aaron planned the feast possibly as a sop to the people, with the feast designed to honor the Lord, the true God!
- h** The people engaged in revelry and dancing, and the event little resembled a festival to the Lord.
- i** 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.
- j** 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
- k** The destruction of the sinning Israelites at the hand of a righteous, angry God, and the testimony such would be given to the enemies of the Lord.

<sup>13</sup> Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel—you **swore** **o** to them by yourself and declared, ‘I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and will give your **offspring** **m** all this land that I have promised, and they will inherit it forever.’”

<sup>14</sup> So the LORD relented concerning the disaster he had said he would bring on his people.

**I** Moses reminded the Lord that He had sworn a divine oath that He would bless His people by multiplying them until they were as numerous as the stars in the heavens and would give their offspring all the land He had promised their fathers.

**m** The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to whom God had made these glorious promises regarding their possession of the land He had promised His people

## TALKING POINTS

### 1. REBELLION (Ex. 32:1-4)

- While Moses remained on the mountain for 40 days, the people became restless and demanded that Aaron make an idol for them to worship.
- Aaron acquiesced, collected gold rings, and fashioned the rings into a calf for the people to worship.

### 2. SIN COMMITTED (Ex. 32:5-6)

- Aaron built an altar and announced a day of celebration. The next day, the people offered sacrifices to the idol, followed by a festival.

### 3. APPEAL FOR GRACE (Ex. 32:11-14)

- Moses interceded on behalf of the people, appealing to God’s faithfulness to His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- Discuss the phrase “the LORD relented” (v. 14), being careful not to suggest that God changes in His essential nature or purposes.

### SUMMARY STATEMENTS

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

- 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.

### NOTES



## FOCUS ATTENTION

### What was a defiant thing you did against your parents' wishes—something you can all laugh about now?

- The Israelites, former slaves who now traveled with God in the wilderness, had seen His presence and His miracles firsthand. Some chose to follow Him reverently, while many others nursed attitudes of resentment and rebellion.
- Romans 1:18-25 describes the progression toward their idolatry.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE EXODUS 32:1-4

### In what ways did the people rebel against God? In what ways did Aaron rebel?

- As recorded in Exodus 24:9-11, Aaron and his two eldest sons had seen God along with Moses and 70 of Israel's elders. One can't help but wonder where these leaders were when the people lost faith in the Lord and pleaded with Aaron to make them a god.
- In Exodus 25:2, God told Moses to take an offering of gold (and other items) from all who were willing to give toward building the tabernacle. Much of the gold for the golden calf could have come from those who were unwilling to give in response to God's request for the making of the tabernacle.
- Perhaps we are all guilty of withholding our God-given resources from God while freely giving them to other things.

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

- We often think we would have deeper faith if we could only see God with our physical eyes and experience large-scale miracles.
- The Israelites' experienced God's activity with all five physical senses and still lost many of their number to idolatry and selfish refusal to follow Him.

### How can we pray for pastors and other leaders who may feel immense pressure to give in to people's demands?

- The people's rebellion was fierce enough to sway Aaron and to drive the faithful Israelites into silent hiding.
- Believers need to examine themselves to make sure their worship is directed toward God alone, actively pray for leadership, and stand faithfully against any rebellion toward God.

## EXODUS 32:5-6

### Where did worship of idols—anything other than God—ultimately lead the Israelites?

- The Israelites suffered and many died as a result of the worship of the golden calf. Exodus 32:19-35 outlines the discipline God required. Though some repented when Moses called for those who are for the Lord to come to him, many of the leaders of the rebellion paid with their lives.
- Idolatry leads to warped wisdom and selfish decision making.

### How was Aaron trying to appease both the people and Moses? What was Aaron's punishment?

- Aaron had already been chosen as the high priest. God often uses people who seem the least qualified to fulfill His plan.
- Aaron's two eldest sons were later consumed by fire from the altar at the tabernacle for approaching God in worship in a way that mocked His holiness—as they had seen their father do.
- Aaron was not allowed to enter the promised land, but died in the wilderness with the rest of the disobedient generation.

## EXODUS 32:11-14

### How would you characterize Moses' relationship with God by reading his dialogue with Him in this passage?

- The freedom Moses felt in approaching God with this prayer indicates a respectful, warm, confident, and trust-filled relationship.
- In Scripture, Moses, David, Jesus, and Paul prayed repeatedly for God to be merciful to those who don't know Him and bring them to repentance. Close fellowship with God brings about compassion for the rebellious and disobedient.

### What character attributes of God are revealed in verses 7-14?

- These qualities among others are evident: God's justice, righteous anger, righteous jealousy, responsiveness to people, desire to be in loving relationship with people, mercy, faithfulness, kindness, protectiveness, nearness, desire for the hearts of people to trust Him enough to be obedient.

## SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

### Who/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?

- Consider the rebellion we see around us daily, in our own lives, community, and world. The rebellion of idolatry is so pervasive! Hearts are led away from the Lord, bringing painful and deadly consequences. In response to this realization, what might you adjust about the way and the mind-set with which you worship?
- **Personal Challenge:** Memorize John 4:24. Spend time in prayer, worshiping God alone. Ask God to order the priorities of your heart as you worship Him. Ask Him to use the influence He has given you to draw people to worship Him.
- Pray for Christians around the world as they worship God in spirit and in truth. Pray for millions living in rebellion against God as they worship idols. Pray that they would have access to and respond to the gospel.

# OBJECT LESSON

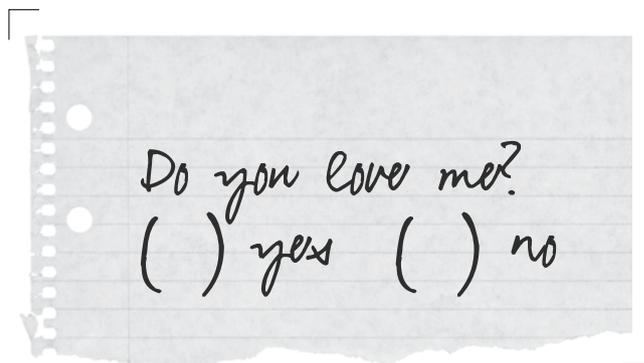
## A HANDWRITTEN NOTE THAT SAYS "DO YOU LOVE ME—YES, NO, MAYBE?"

Display a note that says "Do you love me?" with checkboxes like the ones children send to each other.

Explain that in a sense God was asking His people, "Do you love Me?" when He asked them to wait and to receive His words with respect and a desire to obey. These are tests that measure the level of trust and love the people had for Him. The Israelites had already promised Him to do everything He commanded.

Read Exodus 24:3. Explain that ultimately love is demonstrated in action rather than words. State: *Today's study takes place after the giving of the Ten Commandments and a covenant ceremony. God invited Moses to ascend the mountain to meet with Him and to receive tablets of stone on which God had written the Ten Commandments. Moses stayed on the mountain with God 40 days and nights. In the meantime, Aaron was responsible for the people.*

Direct volunteers to read Exodus 32:1-4,5-6,11-14 in succession. Guide the group to give one-word responses that describe what



they observe in the account of the people's rebellion, sin, and appeal for grace.

Ask: *What proves they loved God? What proves that God loved them?*

Take time for the group to reflect on how their actions show their obedience to and love of God. Close in prayer that all would deny any rebellious ways and focus on a life that demonstrates love for Him.

## DIG DEEPER

### INTERCESSORY PRAYER

The average Christian probably does not think very seriously about the matter of intercessory prayer. Fellow believers share with us problems that have become heavy burdens to bear, and they ask us to pray for them. We readily respond positively that we will indeed do so. We certainly have good intentions when we make such a promise. But the real issue is whether or not we understand what it means to genuinely pray for someone, to help them bear their heavy burdens. We may indeed mention our friend's expressed need in our personal prayers, but does our concern go beyond a mere surface acknowledgment of that person's prayer request?

Intercessory prayer involves far more than merely reciting to God that person's need. Rather this kind of prayer involves empathy, which is far more than just being "in sympathy" with the one who bears this burden. It means actually feeling the weight of that burden another is bearing. Moses' concern for his rebellious people was like a heavy load that bore down on his soul. He recognized that his people had rejected God's loving care for them. Instead of walking away from them, he walked beside them and pleaded with God to withhold His judgment and show mercy on them.

Our attitude toward those who disobey God's commandments should be prompted by a similar forgiving spirit. Just as God sent

His Son for the forgiveness of all sins, Jesus Himself is our example of loving others. He is our Intercessor, a role He established while on earth:

Isaiah 53:12 says, "He Himself bore the sins of many, and interceded for the transgressors." [In] Luke 22:23 Jesus tells Peter, "I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail." [In] Luke 23:34 on the cross, Jesus was praying for others when He said, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." [In] John 14:15 Jesus interceded for us, asking the Father to send the Holy Spirit. [In] John 17:19 He prayed for us, the church, in His High Priestly prayer. Listen to the intercessory nature of this prayer, "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou has given Me." Romans 8:34 tells us that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for us. And Hebrews 7:25 says, "Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."<sup>1</sup>

God wants us to pray for others to reflect His love and mercy to a hurting world. Let's take our role as intercessors seriously.

1. Calvin Wittman, "Spiritual Discipline Series: Prayer (Colossians 4)." Available online at [lifeway.com](http://lifeway.com).

## SESSION 9

# HIS PRESENCE

## 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** **a** all the work they had **accomplished**. **b** They had done just as the LORD commanded. Then Moses **blessed** **c** 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**; **d** also bring in the lampstand and set up its lamps. [...] **34** The **cloud** **e** covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. **35** Moses was unable to enter the **tent of meeting** **f** because the cloud rested on it, and the **glory of the LORD** **g** filled the **tabernacle**. **h** **36** The Israelites set out whenever the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle throughout all the **stages** **i** 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** **j** inside the cloud by night, visible to the entire house of Israel throughout all the stages of their journey.

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** Moses bore the responsibility of insuring every part of the tabernacle’s construction, including the furnishings on the inside, followed God’s direction. His inspection was thorough and meticulous.
- b** Moses was pleased with the tabernacle’s construction only when the workers had followed the Lord’s will completely.
- c** 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.
- d** “Set in order the things that are to be set in order upon it” (KJV); Great care was taken in placing the tabernacle furnishings.
- e** 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.
- f** The place where God in His glory met with His people; “Tabernacle” (NLT); “tent of the congregation” (KJV)
- g** The presence of the Lord among His people was expressed in multiple ways: “the face of the Lord” (1 Pet. 3:12); “an angel of the Lord” (Matt. 28:2); “the name of the Lord” (Matt. 21:9); “the temple of the LORD” (1 Sam. 3:3).
- h** In that day, God’s presence inhabited the tabernacle before the Holy Spirit was sent after Jesus’ resurrection to indwell the hearts of God’s people.
- i** The Israelites’ journey through the wilderness started and stopped only according to the timing of the distances God planned for the journey.
- j** Due to God’s presence in the fire, the people never experienced the total darkness of night.

## NOTES

### »» 1. FINISHED! (Ex. 39:42-43)

- The Israelites finished making all the items for the tabernacle as specified by God. Moses reviewed the work, blessing the people for their faithful work.
- Explain that Moses thoroughly inspected the work.

### »» 2. ASSEMBLY REQUIRED (Ex. 40:1-4)

- God directed Moses to assemble the tabernacle, specifying the order for assembly.

### »» 3. GLORY SHOWN (Ex. 40:34-35)

- God appeared in the completed tabernacle, filling the tent with His glory. Not even Moses was able to enter the tent at this time because of God's glory.
- Emphasize God's desire to be with His people. Point to the Holy Spirit's indwelling of believers as a cause to celebrate.

### »» 4. GOD LED (Ex. 40:36-38)

- God led the Israelites on their journey by means of the cloud that settled on the tabernacle. When the cloud moved, the Israelites followed.
- Emphasize that God offers direction today through His Word and the promptings of His indwelling Holy Spirit. Explain that His Word and His Spirit will agree with each other, not oppose.

### »» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

#### God enjoys dwelling with His obedient people.

- 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.



## FOCUS ATTENTION

**Remember the excitement you felt when you moved into your first house, apartment, or dorm room? What did you look forward to the most?**

- Israel was being defined as a people belonging to God, and the completion of the tabernacle had arrived.
- Ongoing sacrifices at the temple became an integral part of daily life in the community. The sights, sounds, and smells of the offerings became a distinguishing characteristic of the people's identity and relationship to God.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE EXODUS 39:42-43

**How would you describe the kind of attitudes necessary for the Israelites to achieve this level of group obedience?**

- Exodus 36–39 describes the components that were fashioned, carved, woven, and overlaid with gold according to God's exact instructions over many months of time.
- Colossians 3:17 instructs us to apply some of these same principles to our work.

**What were the benefits of Moses' inspection and accountability?**

- Receiving a blessing from Moses for a job well done must have been deeply satisfying. Finishing such a detailed task takes commitment, sacrifice, patience, and focus.
- Measurable growth and progress in maturity motivates and encourages us to keep moving forward in faith.

## EXODUS 40:1-4

**What do you think Moses learned from personally assembling the tabernacle?**

- People learn best by experience. Moses became most familiar with every aspect of the tabernacle by putting it together according to God's directions.
- Every piece illustrated something about God's unfolding plan to restore the human heart to Himself through the Messiah.

**How would focusing the Israelites' attention on the tabernacle help them understand and communicate with God?**

- Jesus entered the true Holy of holies, offering His own blood in God's presence (Heb. 9:11-15).
- The veil separating the Holy of holies was torn at Jesus' death, opening the way for anyone to come through faith in Jesus into God's presence (Matt. 27:50-51).
- Jesus is "the bread of life" (John 6:35) and "the light of the world" (John 8:12).

## EXODUS 40:34-35

**How would you compare the filling of the tabernacle by the glory of God to the filling of the Christian's life by the Holy Spirit?**

- No one who witnessed the arrival of God's glory could have remained ambivalent about Him.
- God's presence must have been terrible in its intensity and simultaneously profoundly beautiful.
- Believers can have reverent peace and joy knowing God's presence in their lives.
- The Holy Spirit seals Christ-followers as belonging to Him. Pentecost signaled His arrival as He filled the believers there first (Acts 2:1-6).

## EXODUS 40:36-38

**How might it change things if God's presence were visible in your neighborhood?**

- Even the Israelites who could see God's presence any time of the day or night didn't all trust and obey Him.
- Many of those who saw Jesus and interacted with Him still chose to turn away.
- Seeing isn't necessarily believing, and that's why we should continually ask God to strengthen our faith.

**The people knew to move when the cloud moved. How does this compare with the way God leads His people today?**

- God leads believers today through His Word and the promptings of His indwelling Holy Spirit, which will always agree with each other.
- The Israelites carried the responsibility of watching to see what God was doing. If He moved, they moved.

## SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

**How does knowing God's presence is within the believer give confidence for the future?**

- As a Christ-follower, do you live as if His presence is closer than your breath? Do you look to God, trusting Him to lead? God has loved us so well in making Himself available to us through Jesus' death and resurrection. Second Chronicles 20:12b says, "We do not know what to do, but we look to you."
- **Personal Challenge:** Look back over Exodus 39–40, remembering each element of the tabernacle, its construction, and the way God filled it with His presence. Spend some time in prayer reflecting on the meaning of each and thanking God for the way He demonstrated His protective love to His people. Ask God to make you more aware of the leading of the Holy Spirit.

## TENT PEGS

Display the tent pegs as the group gathers. Set the context for today by reviewing the following: *Israel had been working, watching, and talking about the creation of the tabernacle for months after Moses returned from being on the mountaintop with God. The instructions he returned with were carried out to the letter as the people repented from their sinful and disastrous worship of the golden calf. As the elements of the tabernacle began to take shape surely excitement was building. God had said He would come and dwell with His people in the tent. They had seen His glory from far away, but what would it be like to have Him next door?*

Pass around the tent pegs. Call for people to share experiences of setting up a tent and the importance of using pegs to anchor the tent to the ground.

Share that the tent pegs represent being staked in, invested, and immersed in the environment. God demonstrated the reality of His desire to dwell—permanently reside—with His people. He wasn't just stopping by for a visit or checking up on them. They would live side by side daily. Wherever He went, they would go too.



Discuss things we can do to stake our daily lives in Christ. Then close with a prayer that we would immerse ourselves in the elements you discussed (prayer, Bible reading, encouragement of others, etc.).

## DIG DEEPER

### THE GLORY OF GOD

When He called Moses to the summit of Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, Moses hid himself in the cleft of a rock formation on that rugged and legendary mountain.

Moses wanted desperately to see God, face to face. But God told him this was not possible, for no human being could dare look on His divine presence and live. But God did the next best thing for Moses. He hid him in the rock, and He passed by on the outside. Then God invited Moses to come out of the cave. When he did, the brightness and glory of where God had been as He passed by lingered on that mountain trail. His presence was so penetrating that the brilliance of His face left its residue in the air and clung to Moses' face. Moses did not realize it, but when he came down from the mountain, the people waiting to greet him begged him to hide his face, for its brilliance blinded them!

We, too, could never bear to look into God's face. But because His presence lives within us, the reflection of His glory—when we are obedient and in tune with Him—is easily detected by those with whom we associate, though we may never be aware of it.

Once, a group of young preachers attending a weekend retreat planned an all-night prayer meeting. An older minister who was the guest preacher for the retreat did not join them. The next morning at breakfast one of the young men said to the older minister, in an almost accusing tone of voice, "Look at us! We have prayed all night. Don't our faces shine?" The older preacher, very calmly and humbly, said, "Moses did not know that his face shined."

If you spend time with God in prayer and Bible study, your face may indeed shine because of that experience, but you will be the last one to know it!

Now God has revealed these things to us by the Spirit, since the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except his spirit within him? In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:10-11).

## SESSION 10

# SET BEFORE

## 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**. **B** He will bring it to the entrance to the tent of meeting so that he may be **accepted** **C** 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** **D** for him. **5** He is to slaughter the bull before the LORD; **Aaron’s sons** **E** 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** **F** to the LORD.” [...] **2:1** “When anyone presents a **grain offering** **G** as an offering to the LORD, it is to consist of fine flour. He is to pour olive oil on it, put **frankincense** **H** 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** **I** 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** **J** of the fire offerings to the LORD.” [...] **3:1** “If his offering is a **fellowship sacrifice**, **K** 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** **L** 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.”

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** A young bull, lamb, goat, turtle dove, or pigeon, dependent on the financial ability of the one who brings the offering. 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** A perfect and complete specimen; “no defects” (NLT)
- c** A sacrifice that was offered on the altar according to the priestly regulations
- d** “To purify you, making you right with him” (NLT). 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 sacrificial death and resurrection of His Son and the Messiah, Jesus Christ.
- e** The priests who would apply the blood of the slain sacrifice to the inner sides of the altar
- f** An expression meaning that the Lord had accepted the burnt offering; “a sweet savour” (KJV)
- g** A sacrifice from the harvest, usually mixed with perfume. Often it acknowledged God’s blessing of provision in the harvest.
- h** A white resin with a pleasing fragrance that was highly valued in the ancient world
- i** A representative handful of the treated flour and all of the frankincense
- j** Only a ritually clean priest could eat the holiest part of the sacrifice and must do so near the altar of sacrifice.
- k** A freewill, thanksgiving offering signified communion between the worshiper and God.
- l** Considered the best part of the animal and associated with robust power

## NOTES

### »» 1. THE BURNT OFFERING (Lev. 1:3-9)

- God shared the requirements and protocol for presenting a burnt offering.
- Characterize the burnt offering in terms of atonement for sin. Explain that this daily offering was a reminder of the need to confess sin regularly. Emphasize that Jesus was without defect, atoning for our sin.

### »» 2. THE GRAIN OFFERING (Lev. 2:1-3)

- God outlined the requirements and protocol for presenting a grain offering.
- Characterize the grain offering as an expression of gratitude to God for His provisions.

### »» 3. THE FELLOWSHIP OFFERING (Lev. 3:1-5)

- God described the requirements and protocol in presenting a fellowship offering.
- Explain that this offering symbolized the worshiper and God sitting down and eating together at peace with each other. Point out that this offering followed the burnt offering. Emphasize that only through faith in Christ can one be at peace with God.

### »» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

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

- People should take sin seriously, knowing 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 with and in fellowship with God.



## FOCUS ATTENTION

### How would you describe the attitudes and actions of a person who is devoted to a person, group, or goal?

- In reality the Israelites' worship was more about God's holiness and grace to become near to Him than it was about their devotion. True worship is not centered on the worshiper.
- God designed and put the tabernacle in place to create a space to be near His people and for them to be with Him. Through offerings of active and living worship the people would be able to come close to Him despite their inability to be holy without His help.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE LEVITICUS 1:3-9

### How was God's requirement for the burnt offering to atone for sin and its protocols merciful and protective? In what ways did God show grace to the people?

- God made provision to deal with the people's sin and allow relationship with Him to happen.
- In His kindness God took the guesswork out of the people's efforts to worship Him. He is never cruel.

### How would having to regularly kill an animal to atone for your sins affect the way you view yours sins? Would it change the way you understand or relate to Jesus' death on the cross?

- Atonement—reconciliation between God and people—required dealing with the sin of every person in Israel individually and corporately.
- We all sin. The burnt offering is a reminder for us of the need to confess our sin to God (1 John 1:9).
- The unblemished lamb was the standard for a worthy sacrifice, the most costly and valuable offering possible.

## LEVITICUS 2:1-3

### What was the significance of the grain offering's purity?

- Yeast acts as a corrupting influence, and makes permanent changes to the substance it encounters.
- Romans 12:1 urges believers to make themselves "a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship."

### How does gratitude affect our worship?

- In Psalm 100, thanksgiving and praise are woven together. A heart full of gratitude is sensitive to the Lord.
- Being grateful is an attractive quality. People want to be in community with someone who has a grateful spirit. Just as complaint can poison the atmosphere in the body of believers, gratitude can sweeten it.
- Gratitude to God affects our worship individually and corporately.

## LEVITICUS 3:1-5

### How does the idea of the fellowship offering complement the previous offerings for atonement and gratitude?

- Through worship, God has taught His people multiple aspects of His character, including that we are all made in His image.
- True fellowship is possible when the relationship is on right terms and there is deep appreciation for the other.

### How does the fellowship offering symbolize the relationship between the worshiper and God?

- The fellowship offering demonstrated the intention of God dwelling with His people through the picture of a meal eaten together.
- Fellowship suggests safe company, time spent sharing, and joy in being together. This type of relationship with our Holy God is possible through Jesus Christ.

## SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

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

- The burnt offering, grain offering, and fellowship offerings continued daily, all day, right in the geographical center of the community. The people couldn't escape the sights, sounds, smells, and even the tastes of the sacrificial smoke in the air. Their mindfulness was not limited to a once-a-week corporate gathering.
- Living with God was the central piece of their lives—God dwelling among them. They experienced daily the holiness, security, hope, and might of their God along with the brutal and constant reminders of the consequences of their sin.
- Up until this point God and people hadn't lived this close together since the garden of Eden. It was a major step in the revealing of God's plan to reconcile people to Himself.
- **Personal Challenge:** Spend some time thinking about ways today's passage can impact your worship, prayer life, and giving. Journal your responses. Share with someone close to you the things God is teaching you.

# OBJECT LESSON

## A RESTAURANT RECEIPT WITH THE TIP LINE HIGHLIGHTED

Show a restaurant receipt to the group, and ask them to get out any restaurant receipts they may have in a wallet or purse. Point out the tip line on the receipt, and ask group members to share how they decide on an amount for the tip. *What criteria do you use? Do you always leave the same percentage? The same amount? Do you raise or lower the tip based on what kind of service you receive at the table? Based on the quality of your food?*

Read Leviticus 1:3-9; 2:1-3; 3:1-5. Explain that today's Scripture passage unpacks three types of offerings the Israelites were to bring to the tabernacle to give to God. *Do we view offerings to God like tips at a restaurant? Do we give freely or not based on our perception of what God has done for us lately? Do we give the required percentage out of obligation? Or do we think no one will know, so we try not to give at all?*

Emphasize: *The offerings God asked for from the Israelites weren't so much about what the giver could afford. In fact, provision was made for acceptable options based on the giver's means. There*



*were specific processes given that people needed to follow, but God seems most interested in the people's understanding of why they were to bring offerings. Now that the tabernacle was set up and God's glory was in the camp, the people needed to know how to relate to Him, and offerings were a major part of the relationship.*

Lead the group to discuss how we can regularly remind ourselves of Jesus' atonement for our sin.

## DIG DEEPER

### BECOMING ONE WITH GOD

"Atonement" is a basic biblical doctrine, without which sinful people have no hope to approach a righteous God.

Atonement, meaning reconciliation, was associated with sacrificial offerings to remove the effects of sin and in the New Testament, refers specifically to the reconciliation between God and humanity effected by the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. ... While atonement in the Old Testament most frequently refers to humans offering sacrifices to God for their wrongdoing, several references are made to God making atonement. In Psalm 78:38, the Hebrew for "atoned for" is used where the KJV translates "forgave" as is also true in Deuteronomy 21:8. Because God "atones for" or "covers" human sin, atonement is best understood as expiation, that is removing the barrier that sin creates rather than propitiation or appeasing an angry God.<sup>1</sup>

What is involved in the atonement reveals clearly the distance sin has placed between God and unredeemed people. It shows the depth of God's love for a human race that defiantly disregards Him.

The atonement was prefigured in the Old Testament in the shedding of the blood of innocent animals. Perhaps the most

poignant scene of all was Abraham's willingness to offer his beloved son, Isaac, on an altar of sacrifice (Gen. 22). This, of course, provided a human picture of the Heavenly Father's willingness to offer His beloved and only begotten Son as the sacrifice for the sins of the world (John 3:16).

The Old Testament descriptions of God's wrath to be released on sinners are awesome indeed, although the prophets of old spoke of One who would bear in His own body the condemnation of God upon sinners. The prophet Isaiah revealed that this coming Servant of God would save many from condemnation: "Therefore I will give him the many as a portion, and he will receive the mighty as spoil, because he willingly submitted to death, and was counted among the rebels; yet he bore the sin of many and interceded for the rebels" (Isa. 53:12). Later, in Acts 8, the evangelist Philip used these Suffering Servant passages in Scripture to share Christ with the Ethiopian eunuch who was searching for truth (vv. 32-35).

The perfect and final revelation of the atonement came with Christ's redeeming death on the cross for the sins of all who would acknowledge their hopeless state and accept God's free offer of forgiveness and eternal salvation.

1. "Atonement," *Holman Bible Dictionary*, Trent C. Butler, ed. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 128.

## SESSION 11

# SET APART

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

**9:15** Aaron presented the people's offering. He took the **male goat** **A** 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**. **B** **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** **C** and the **ram** **D** 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**, **E** the burnt offering, and the **fellowship offering**. **F** **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**. **G** [...] **10:1** Aaron's sons **Nadab and Abihu** **H** each took his own **firepan**, **I** put fire in it, placed incense on it, and presented **unauthorized fire** **J** 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**. **K**

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** A sacrificial offering on behalf of the elders, and, by proxy, the entire community
- b** The divine procedure set down by God, and carried out by Moses and the leaders of the congregation
- c** A domesticated work animal that symbolized strength and was valuable to ancient Israel's economy
- d** A male sheep; the ram's horn, or *shophar*, was used in Old Testament times to call the people of Israel together.
- e** This sacrifice dealt with sin that was committed unintentionally. The sacrifice varied according to the person who committed the sin.
- f** 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)
- g** God's revelation of His glory to His leaders like Manoah and his wife was so unmistakably genuine that their reaction was to fall down in humble worship before Him.
- h** Sons of Aaron who were priests consumed by fire because they offered unholy fire before the Lord (Lev. 10:1-7; Num. 26:61)
- i** A handheld vessel for burning incense, or censer, used to transport coals from one place to another (Num. 16:17-18)
- j** "Strange fire" (KJV); "the wrong kind of fire (NLT); fire brought from some place other than the altar of the sanctuary, the legitimate source
- k** Aaron's silence verified the fact he knew mourning rites were inappropriate in the sacred sanctuary.

## NOTES

### »» 1. CLEANSED (Lev. 9:15-21)

- Aaron presented offerings on behalf of the Israelites.
- Emphasize that God was pointing humanity to a means of returning to Him. Explain that Jesus is our Mediator, so that we no longer require an earthly priest to approach God.

### »» 2. BLESSING (Lev. 9:22-24)

- After offering a blessing upon the people, Moses and Aaron entered the tent of meeting.
- When they emerged and offered another blessing, God sent fire to consume the offerings on the altar.
- The people responded with praise and worship.

### »» 3. HOLY (Lev. 10:1-3)

- Two of Aaron's sons offered an unauthorized offering, and they died as a result of their disobedience.
- God reminded everyone that He was holy and should be revered as such.
- Avoid speculating on the nature of the "unauthorized fire." Emphasize the expectation of obedience before a holy God.

### »» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

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

- 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.



## FOCUS ATTENTION

**We often think a football program is all about a certain coach, or a school's prominence is all about a certain principal, or a church's relevance is all about a certain pastor. When have you heard it said, "Our program is bigger than just one person?"**

- The scope of the concept of priesthood as it unfolds through Scripture is far bigger than Aaron could have imagined.
- In the body of Christ we look to Jesus as our High Priest and must avoid the tendency to look to any person more easily.
- Aaron was known by many thousands of people but his influence as high priest came from the importance of the role, not his personal charisma or connectedness.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE LEVITICUS 9:15-21

**What qualified Aaron to be high priest?**

- God's appointment of Aaron was the only ultimately relevant factor. His obedience to that appointment was the qualification. God was merciful to provide a way for Aaron to be clean in order to serve.
- When God established the priesthood, it's like He placed an arrow pointing directly to His redemptive work through Christ's death.

**Why was the priesthood set up by God?**

- God was directing people toward a way of returning to Him.
- An intermediary was needed to make provision for the people's sins according to God's instructions. Jesus is our perfect Mediator, once and for all (1 Tim. 2:5).
- Priesthood involved facilitating access to God for the people by way of God's instructions through sacrifices, teaching the community about God, and worship—all finally fulfilled perfectly in Jesus Christ as the ultimate High Priest and brought about in the church through His followers.

## LEVITICUS 9:22-24

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

- Their instant response was to worship and praise Him.
- There was responsibility for the specific sin of the individual but also a great sense of relating to God as a community.
- Being in God's presence in worship brings about blessing and proper perspective in our lives.

**What is the significance of this worship experience coming after the sin offering, burnt offering, and fellowship offering?**

- The order of these offerings illustrates that atonement comes before true relationship. God makes relationship with Him possible after we first respond to His way of atonement.
- Adjusting our hearts toward gratitude to God in our lives enhances our worship.

## LEVITICUS 10:1-3

**What truths were pressed deeply into Israel as a result of what happened to Nadab and Abihu?**

- God's holiness is uncompromising. The Lord deserves every reverence people are capable of offering, and more.
- The purity of the Levitical priesthood and the prescribed sacrifices was preserved.

**How does disobedience reflect a lack of faith in God?**

- Had Nadab and Abihu's disobedient offering been done in ignorance, a sin offering would have reestablished their right relationship with God. Instead, their deliberate disobedience revealed their disrespect for God.
- Arrogance takes many forms; even lack of reverence can be a form of arrogance. People don't, and can't, have the authority to choose or create a way that God can successfully be approached.
- Understanding or agreeing with the strategy of what God asks us to do isn't a release from the expectation of obedience.

## SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

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

- As believers, we are to be an active part of the holy priesthood that is life in Christ, bringing the reconciliation He offers to the attention of others.
- We can rest in the complete holiness of God because Jesus has given us His purity "by grace through faith" (Eph. 2:8).
- **Personal Challenge:** How do you see Christians today minimize God's expectation of their obedience? In what areas of your own life do you do this? Ask Him to show you where you need to get serious about obeying Him exactly. Give God thanks for providing Christ as both a holy sacrifice and a High Priest so that you can have a relationship with Him.

# OBJECT LESSON

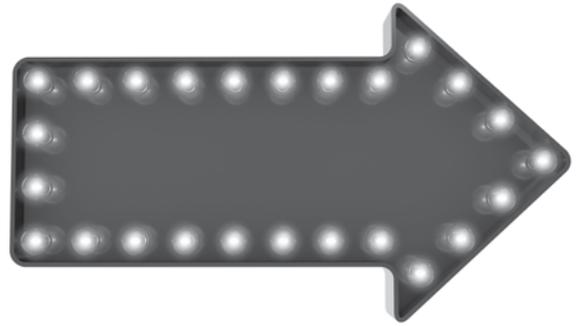
## A PICTURE OF A DIRECTIONAL ARROW

Share a time when an arrow has been a welcome sight. Maybe you were uncertain of where to go or needed to know a sharp turn was coming up just over the hill.

Ask: *What is the beauty in an arrow?* Explain: *They aren't especially pretty. In fact, they are fairly basic and nondescript. They actually work best when they are simple, clear, and in the right place. The significance in an arrow is the work it does just by being itself. It doesn't exist for itself, but rather to direct others toward something greater.*

Ask: *Is there a person, an event, or a circumstance that has functioned like an arrow in your life?* Ask group members to share these "arrows" with the group.

Emphasize: *For the Israelites, God established the priesthood to function as an arrow. Everything from their prescribed clothing, rituals for cleansing, and functions at the tabernacle was an illustration about an aspect of God's character and His plan for bringing reconciliation between Himself and people.*



Read 1 Peter 2:9. Ask: *In what ways do Christians serve as a "priesthood" to the rest of the world?* Explain: *As we have been entrusted by God to administer His truths to people, we can function like arrows, influencing people's attention and focus toward Him.*

Close in prayer that the group would remember to point their lives toward Jesus, our High Priest.

## DIG DEEPER

### THE OLD AND THE NEW

Aaron, Moses' brother, carried a daunting responsibility for the Israelites, for he was the high priest, or mediator, who officiated at the altar of burnt offering, and thus represented the people before God. Sadly, sons do not always follow in the footsteps of their fathers. Such was the case with Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron. They were priests who served at the altar of burnt sacrifice located at the entrance to the tabernacle (or "tent of meeting").

God had commanded Moses to ceremonially set apart the sons of Aaron for the holy priesthood. This required them to wash, change clothes, be anointed with oil, and place blood sacrifices on the bronze altar. On the eighth day, the excitement, anticipation, and expectation heightened. If they had done everything right, the glory of the Lord would fall and consume these final sacrifices made on behalf of the priests, sinners before God like all the other Israelites. Sure enough, the glory of the Lord fell as fire from heaven and consumed the sacrifices. The people responded with shouts, falling on their faces (Lev. 9:24).

The symbolic presence of God was proved by the reality of His glory. Fire came miraculously from the Lord to consume the offerings and to show that God had accepted them. This was a sacred fire and was not allowed to cease. The people showed their joy because God had accepted the offerings by shouting and falling face down before the Lord (v. 24). In addition, the people were awed by this supernatural manifestation of the God who had accepted them and promised to dwell with them, be their God, and take them for His people.

In the Old Testament, the people of God had to go to great lengths to experience acceptance from His holiness. Today, God has accepted us through the gospel of Jesus and His holiness. As you read the Old Testament, thank God for the New Covenant that He has provided through Jesus. Jesus has fulfilled the Old Covenant so that we can enjoy life in the New Covenant.<sup>1</sup>

1. Adapted from Chip Dean, "Sermon: The Day the Priests Dropped Dead—Leviticus, Hebrews, 1 Peter." Available online at lifeway.com.

## SESSION 12

# SET FREE

## LEVITICUS 16:3-10,29-30

<sup>3</sup> “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. <sup>4</sup> He is to wear a **holy linen tunic**, **B** 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**; **C** he must bathe his body with water before he wears them. <sup>5</sup> He is to take from the Israelite community two male goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering. <sup>6</sup> Aaron will present the bull for his sin offering and **make atonement** **D** for himself and his household. <sup>7</sup> Next he will take the two goats and place them before the LORD at the entrance to the tent of meeting. <sup>8</sup> After Aaron **casts lots** **E** for the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other for an uninhabitable place, <sup>9</sup> he is to present the goat chosen by lot for the LORD and sacrifice it as a sin offering. <sup>10</sup> 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** **F** for an uninhabitable place.” [...] <sup>29</sup> “This is to be a **permanent statute** **G** for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month you are to **practice self-denial** **H** and do no work, both the **native** **I** and the **alien** **J** who resides among you. <sup>30</sup> Atonement will be made for you on this day to **cleans** **K** you, and you will be clean from all your sins before the LORD.”

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** “The sanctuary area” (NLT); God’s sacred dwelling place. Neither Aaron or his descendants were to enter that place except once a year, on the Day of Atonement.
- b** To emphasize the holy atmosphere that must be present, the high priest must dress precisely as the Lord had set forth for the observance of this ritual.
- c** The priest’s dress must further underscore the sacredness of everything connected with this sacred ritual.
- d** “Making them right with the LORD” (NLT); Atonement was made for the high priest and his household before he could bring the sacrifice for the nation.
- e** Likely a stone or pebble, casting these lots was used to help with decision-making. Today we use God’s Word and indwelling Holy Spirit to determine God’s will.
- f** In Israel, a rocky, dry wasteland with little rainfall and few inhabitants
- g** “Permanent law” (NLT); “standard practice” (MSG); “lasting ordinance” (NIV). On the tenth day of the seventh month, the natives and the foreigners among them were to fast and do no work.
- h** A time to “afflict themselves,” a general term for humiliation which probably included fasting and doing no work
- i** “One of your own country” (KJV); “citizen” (MSG); a true Israelite
- j** “Foreigner” (NIV); “stranger” (ESV); a non-Israelite who lived among the Israelite people
- k** Atonement, a symbolical cleansing, was made once a year for all of the sins of the Israelites.

## NOTES

### » 1. PREPARING TO SACRIFICE (Lev. 16:3-6)

- God, through Moses, identified how Aaron was to prepare himself to offer a special annual sacrifice in the holy of holies.

### » 2. THE CHOSEN GOAT (Lev. 16:7-10)

- God instructed Aaron to take two goats and cast lots to determine which animal would be sacrificed and which animal would be sent into the wilderness as the scapegoat.
- Emphasize that the dismissed goat represented the gracious removal of Israel's guilt and sin.

### » 3. THE DAY OF ATONEMENT (Lev. 16:29-30)

- God established the Day of Atonement for Israel to observe annually. The purpose of this most holy of days was to make atonement for the sins of Israel.
- Emphasize that Jesus' death made atonement once and for all for the sins of humanity.

### » SUMMARY STATEMENTS

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

- 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.



## FOCUS ATTENTION

**Describe a time when a stain ruined your clothing or furniture. How is sin like a stain?**

- God had promised a way to remove the seemingly hopeless stain of sin from His people.
- Facilitating atonement, which was the stain remover, was the primary function of the priest. All the other aspects of their God-given work led to and supported this process.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### LEVITICUS 16:3-6

**What mind-set do you think Aaron had when Moses told him what he would need to do in order to be prepared to carry out the atonement sacrifices for the people?**

- In preparing to be high priest, Aaron undoubtedly felt the burden of his own sin, as well as the sins of the people.
- Like children who come in from playing outside and are unaware of how much dirt they have accumulated, we too have difficulty realizing our own sin stains. God's Spirit lovingly, though not always gently, makes us aware.

**How does realizing the need for purity before God cause you to think about Jesus' extravagant provision for you?**

- Jesus gives us His cleanness, knowing we can never remove our sin stains apart from God's process for doing so.

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

- God's Spirit brings us to painful moments when we face our own sin head-on. We need to pray for God to do this in the lives of our lost friends so they can fully know the grace of atonement.

### LEVITICUS 16:7-10

**What was the purpose of a scapegoat?**

- Read Leviticus 16:7-10. Then retell in your own words what Aaron is to do in verses 20-22 with the azazel goat.
- As the dismissed goat wandered away into the wilderness, never to be seen again, he illustrated to the nation God's gracious and merciful removal of their sin far away from them.

**In what ways is the scapegoat a picture of Christ?**

- Christ took on the weight and penalty of all the sins of mankind on the cross.
- Hebrews 9:11-14 unpacks the process of Christ's sacrifice as our atonement. The Day of Atonement in the tabernacle was an imperfect representation of a perfect reality.
- Jesus' love for us and His obedience to the Father's will allowed Him to be taken as the final and perfect sacrifice for our sins.

### LEVITICUS 16:29-30

**How did God require the Israelites to observe the Day of Atonement?**

- The Israelites were to practice Sabbath, withdrawing and resting from the daily occupations of mind and body.
- The Israelites were to practice reflection and self-denial, traditionally understood to mean refraining from doing anything to improve or please one's self.

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

- The Day of Atonement demonstrated God's interest in the heart of people. Most important were the realizations and determinations brought about in the hearts of the people during this time.
- When our worship becomes rote, we can reset our gratitude and reverence for God when we spend time reflecting on the atonement Jesus accomplished for us.

## SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

**How did Jesus fully complete the practice and purpose of the Day of Atonement in our past, present, and future? How well are you living in the freedom that Jesus' atonement for our sin brings?**

- Jesus paid for our sin one time for all with His blood.
- Jesus is purifying His own as we walk with Him daily.
- Jesus will do away with the presence of sin altogether in our future. What is present reality in heaven will be present on earth as well.
- **Personal Challenge:** Plan a time today to withdraw and consider the gift of reconciliation with God that you have available to you. If you've never entrusted your life to Him, please don't wait any longer. He gave His very blood to remove the sin barrier between you and God. You can trust Him. Pray, telling Him you know you need Him and your desire to follow Him.
- If you know Christ, pray for those who don't yet know Him. Ask God to show your lost friends their desperate need for Him. This message of hope—that reconciliation with God is possible and available through Jesus Christ—is for every person. Ask God to give you an opportunity this week to have a gospel-centered conversation with someone who is searching for Him.

# OBJECT LESSON

## SHALLOW BOWL, WATER, PEPPER, DISHWASHING LIQUID

Bring a shallow bowl to the group and fill it up to its widest point with water. Coat the surface of the water with black pepper. Invite the group to stand around the bowl so they can see.

Say: *Think of the camp of the Israelites as the surface of the water, with the pepper representing their sins. Imagine the tabernacle with the holy of holies inside right in the center. God had asked them to create the tabernacle and set up the priesthood. God set up all the perfect processes for animal sacrifices to identify and cover the sins of the people. These sacrifices occurred daily, with the fires of sacrifice consistently burning. Once a year the whole community was to prepare, and the high priest made a special sacrifice. He took the blood of a specially chosen lamb into the holy of holies to sprinkle on the Ark of the Testimony to atone for the sins of the people for a year.*

The sins were put away from the people, which satisfied the holiness of God enough that He could continue to dwell with them.

Drop one or two drops of dishwashing liquid into the center of the pepper. Say: *The atonement for sin put distance between the*



*people and their sin, moving the sin barrier that had previously been between them and God.*

*Through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection He completely paid the price sin required, removing the sin barrier for all people in all places and times who place faith in Him.*

## DIG DEEPER

### JESUS, OUR SCAPEGOAT

Exactly why did Jesus have to shed His blood on the cross? It's a seemingly unfortunate end to the story of our Savior and Teacher, and so we play up the teachings and play down the blood and the guts and the death. But there is no "Christ" without the cross. Don't take my word for it. Take it from Jesus Himself:

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But you," he asked them, "who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus responded, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven" (Matt. 16:13-17).

Well done, Peter. That's the right answer. Amidst the wealth of confusion about the identity of Jesus, you nailed it. So right are you, in fact, that your answer could not have come exclusively by your own intuition or intellect—it was a gift from God Himself. But Peter did not understand the implications of calling Jesus the Messiah, or the Christ:

From then on Jesus began to point out to his disciples that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, "Oh no, Lord! This will never happen to you!" Jesus turned and told Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me because you're not thinking about God's concerns but human concerns" (Matt. 16:21-23).

Peter wanted a cross-less Christ. A great teacher. A charismatic leader. But a dead one? A suffering one? Unthinkable. That can't be right. But according to Jesus, the very idea that He might be Christ and yet not face the cross is blasphemous. An idea with demonic origins. It cannot be so. Jesus won't stand for it.

If you take the cross away from Jesus, you strip Him of His mission. You devalue His life. You nullify His authority. And you stand against His crowning triumph and glory. Jesus withstood the taunts of the soldiers. He was silent before the mocking crowd and the preening government officials. But He will not remain silent when someone tries to separate Him from the very reason He came to earth in the first place. There is no such thing as a cross-less Christ.<sup>1</sup>

1. Adapted from Michael Kelley, "No Christ Without the Cross." Available online at lifeway.com.

## SESSION 13

# SET FUTURES

## LEVITICUS 26:3-16,40-45

<sup>3</sup> “If you follow **my statutes** **A** and faithfully observe **my commands**, **B** <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> Your **threshing** **C** 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. <sup>6</sup> I will give **peace** **D** to the land, and you will lie down with nothing to frighten you. I will remove **dangerous animals** **E** from the land, and no sword will pass through your land. <sup>7</sup> You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall before you by the sword. <sup>8</sup> 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**. **F** <sup>9</sup> I will turn to you, make you **fruitful** **G** and multiply you, and confirm my **covenant** **H** with you. <sup>10</sup> You will eat the old grain of the previous year and will clear out the old to make room for the new. <sup>11</sup> I will place **my residence** **I** among you, and I will not reject you. <sup>12</sup> I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people. <sup>13</sup> 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** **J** and enabled you to live in freedom. <sup>14</sup> But if you do not obey me and observe all these commands— <sup>15</sup> if you reject my statutes and despise my **ordinances**, **K** and do not observe all my commands—and break my covenant, <sup>16</sup> 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.” [...] <sup>40</sup> “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, <sup>41</sup> and I acted with hostility toward them and brought them into the land of their enemies—and when their **uncircumcised hearts** **L** are humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, <sup>42</sup> 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. <sup>43</sup> For the land abandoned by them will make

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- 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** The comprehensive list of laws given by God through Moses to the Israelites
- c** To beat out grain from its husk, as with a flail
- d** In this instance, *peace* refers to a continuing state of agreement that naturally results in an atmosphere in which there will be successful productivity.
- e** 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).
- f** God promised the Israelites victory over their enemies if they would remain faithful to Him. “Your God fights for you” (Deut. 3:22).
- g** “I’ll make sure you prosper” (MSG). To reward their obedience, God would cause them to grow and be successful before their enemies.
- h** 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.
- i** A promise of divine fellowship; “I’ll set up my residence in your neighborhood” (MSG); “I will live among you” (NLT).
- j** A reference to the slavery that God’s people bore while in Egyptian bondage
- k** God’s prescribed or established practices
- l** Hearts that had not been transformed by the spiritual circumcision of repentance and faith





## FOCUS ATTENTION

### What relationships are meant to be lifelong?

- Parent/child, siblings, cousins, grandparent/grandchild relationships are at times difficult, but each are also extremely rich in meaning.
- The quality of relationship God outlined in the passage today was a long-term, lifelong, generation-to-generation relationship, illustrating His commitment to the people.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE LEVITICUS 26:3-13

### What specific blessings does God outline for those who faithfully follow His commands?

- The blessings Israel would experience would be on a scale that could only be attributed to God, and grown in gardens they didn't plant.
- Only God could bring about such bounty out of His goodness.
- God stated His intention to dwell with His people right after He brought them out of Egypt.
- In light of where the people had been, peace in the land with no fear would have been precious to them.

### How would you compare life in Egypt with a life filled with God's faithfulness?

- Egypt was a figurative yoke for the Israelites.
- A yoke is a weight or burden, often carried around the neck of men or beasts, that can't be escaped or set down.
- When a beast of burden is yoked it has no option other than to pull the weight.
- We can trust God to remove our heavy yokes and guide us, like the Israelites, into a life filled with His faithfulness. He knows how to bless and guide His children.

## LEVITICUS 26:14-16

### What truths does God's promise of discipline for breaking the covenant relationship indicate about Him?

- God values the love of His people. He is patient to cultivate it. Obedience is most important because it indicates the direction of the heart.
- Revelation 3:19 states, "As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent." What a welcome assurance in the midst of thorough discipline.
- Discipline should be an expectation when believers disobey God.

### How would you describe the relationship between love and discipline?

- In parenting we want the best for the child more than we want what is easiest or most pleasant.

- In marriage personal discipline is required in order to care for and serve the spouse more than one's own self.

## LEVITICUS 26:40-45

### What are the necessary ingredients for a return to fellowship with God?

- God asked that the Israelites own their sin by confessing it personally and as a people.
- God has always been most interested in the heart of His people. Genuine repentance before God allows the relationship between Him and the people to be restored.

### How does the certain promise of restoration through Jesus Christ give you hope for yourself and your people (your family, friends, and community)?

- Restoration is God's specialty. He restored the Israelites physically and restores all His people spiritually.
- No situation is too far gone for God to restore. His power to rebuild and redeem has no end.

## SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

### 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?

- God gives such good gifts.
- God dwelled with His people. He didn't just stop by for visits from time to time. He settled in and invited His people closer.
- Everything God does is consistent through the generations.
- God always provides a way home to Him.
- **Personal Challenge:** When you are talking to a friend or family member today, share three things: (1) Your deep gratitude that God always provides a way home, back to Himself, through the atonement Jesus provided in the heavenly holy of holies for us; (2) something you've learned about God's holiness that is exciting or a little troubling to you; and (3) something that strengthens your confidence in Jesus. Pray for those who don't know Jesus as Savior. Yield yourself to God to be used in whatever way He chooses. Ask God to direct your life and renew your commitment to follow Him wherever and whenever He leads.

## A TWO-FOOT LENGTH OF STRING

Explain that in this final look at Leviticus, we will see how the Lord laid out two potential courses of life for His people and where those paths would lead. Drop the string on a tabletop where everyone in the group can see it. Explain: *The first course of life we see spelled out in the passage (Lev. 26:3-13) is one of obedience and blessing. A life and a community that follow God are more peaceful and exhibit built-in protections because His precepts are good. God's promise of blessing would be realized by those who followed Him faithfully.* To illustrate the faithful life, pick up one end of the string and pull it. As the string naturally follows the pulling of your hand, point out that the life that follows God is blessed by peace and moves forward steadily.

Explain: *The second course of life the passage discusses is the life in opposition to God, which leads down a path of disaster. It is a frightful thing to have God's face set against you, especially when it doesn't have to be that way. Those who are hostile toward God live outside of His protection.*

To illustrate the life lived in opposition to God, try to move the string by pushing it. When being pushed the string bunches up



and only moves forward slightly even though there is much effort. Emphasize: *Perhaps the most compelling passage outlines God's ultimate response to the disobedient (vv. 15-16). Even on the path of opposition to God, He offers an off-ramp of repentance that leads to restoration and ultimate blessing. God's intention in discipline and even in punishment is to bring about repentance and restoration.*

## DIG DEEPER

### GOD IS FAITHFUL

Whenever God gives a promise, man assumes it will require his own abilities to fulfill it. Whenever the Lord gives a task we figure that we have everything we need to accomplish it. We are like the stubborn child that shouts, "I can do it!" when it's painfully obvious that we cannot. Yet even in the midst of this subtle rebellion God's relentless grace accomplishes what human stubbornness cannot.

In Deuteronomy 7:6 the Lord reminded Israel that He had "chosen [them] to be his own possession" (Deut. 7:6). When the Israelites heard this they may have assumed it was their desirability that stirred the Lord to pick them out of all the other people in the world. Yet in Deuteronomy 7:7 the Lord assured them it was not because of their performance that God would bless them (9:6). In fact, just the opposite would happen. The Israelites' disobedience would cause them to lose the promised land and eventually go into exile.

Some people must come to the end of their own efforts before they realize they cannot make it on their own. The period of judges proved to be a rock-bottom point for the Israelites. This tragic story cries out for a Redeemer. We cannot accomplish the promises of God, but He can. Only He can.

From the beginning God taught the Israelites that His faithfulness would lead to the fulfillment of His promise, not human effort.

He rescued the Israelites and gave them the promised land because of His love (Deut. 7:8). It is because of His faithfulness and not ours that His promises will be realized. He is faithful to His covenant oath even when we do what is right in our own eyes.

Against the dark backdrop of Judges is the story of Ruth. Ruth, a Moabitess and her mother-in-law, Naomi, found redemption in their gracious kinsman, Boaz. He serves as an apt pointer to our great Redeemer, Jesus Christ. The Book of Ruth also ends with a beautiful glimmer of hope: the name David. Yet, David himself is but a shadow of the Son of David, God's ultimate provision. Just as God said He would do in Deuteronomy, He kept His covenant promises through the provision of His Son, Jesus.

God in His grace is making all things new. He promises that those who trust in His provision instead of their own performance will find rest in the eternal home He has built. Unbelievers are called to turn from hearts that shout, "I can do it on my own" and instead trust in God's provision through Jesus Christ. Believers are called to cling to the promises of God because we trust the God who made the promise.<sup>1</sup>

1. Adapted from Mike Leake, "God Fulfills His Promises—Deuteronomy 7." Available online at lifeway.com.



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# REFOCUS YOUR ATTENTION ON CHRIST

by Priscilla Shirer



Recently, I ran across a TV program that showed a series of magic tricks, thrilling illusions that were difficult to figure out. Each one was more compelling than the last. I sat back in my chair, bewildered. Every time I thought that I might've figured out one of the tricks, I was wrong. Not even close. ... The show's host assured the viewing audience that nary a camera was involved in any deception. In fact, he said, there was no need for them to trick us because we are actually masters at doing it to ourselves.

"Inattentional blindness," they call it. It's the foundation for every Houdini-like illusion crafted since the beginning of time. Magicians rely on it. The success of their show depends on it. Sometimes called "perceptual blindness," this phenomena is defined on one Internet encyclopedia as a human's "failure to notice a fully-visible, but unexpected object because attention is engaged on another task, event, or object." ...

Inattentional blindness is the trick our own brains play on us—keeping us preoccupied with one thing while rendering us unaware and oblivious to another. So while we are concentrating somewhere else, another more critical action could be occurring within view, but without our conscious knowledge. Then, shocked and bewildered, we realize we missed something, or Someone, who really deserved our full attention. This kind of blindness has nothing to do with vision and everything to do with attention. It's all about focus.

The children of Israel had missed seeing Yahweh, even though He'd been directly in their field of vision for years. Overwhelmed with the many moving parts of their slavery in Egypt and then the distractions of wilderness travel, they had moved Him to the periphery of their attention. Even His gifts to them (this manna, for instance, delicate and delicious) had become more of a focus than Yahweh was.

They'd become consumed with the manna, hoarding it beyond the 24 hours they'd been licensed to keep it, seeking to gather it beyond the length of days they'd been instructed to collect it. They were distracted, preoccupied, and sidetracked from Yahweh's original intention for their liberty. ... God gave us Sabbath to refocus our attention, and to cause us to bring to the center stage of our mind and heart the Person whom we have placed at the periphery far too long. Margin keeps us from marginalizing God.

Reading through the children of Israel's experience with my own children has been a delightful undertaking this past year. The whole saga (from the time of their enslavement through their wilderness travels) is filled with enough shocking events that even three boys will lean in close to read, listen, and learn. I mean, with that whole Red Sea business and the thunder roaring on Mount Sinai, it's enough to make all of our eyes widen in suspense.

Without a doubt, our favorite part so far has been the ten plagues. Yahweh masterfully crafted ten miracles to bring immense difficulty to Pharaoh and his kingdom when he refused to release the Hebrews.

A few weeks ago, my boys and I had a blast reenacting the plague of hail. Tiny slivers of crushed ice from a fast-food restaurant, tossed lightly over their heads, might not depict the exact experience of those poor Egyptians being flattened by giant balls of ice, but it was enough to get my kids excited about the lesson, that's for sure. While my boys' favorite verse probably has something to do with frogs or diseased cattle, mine is tucked in Exodus 9 and reads like this: "Then the Lord said to Moses ... 'But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed [Pharaoh] to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth'" (vv. 13,16, NASB).

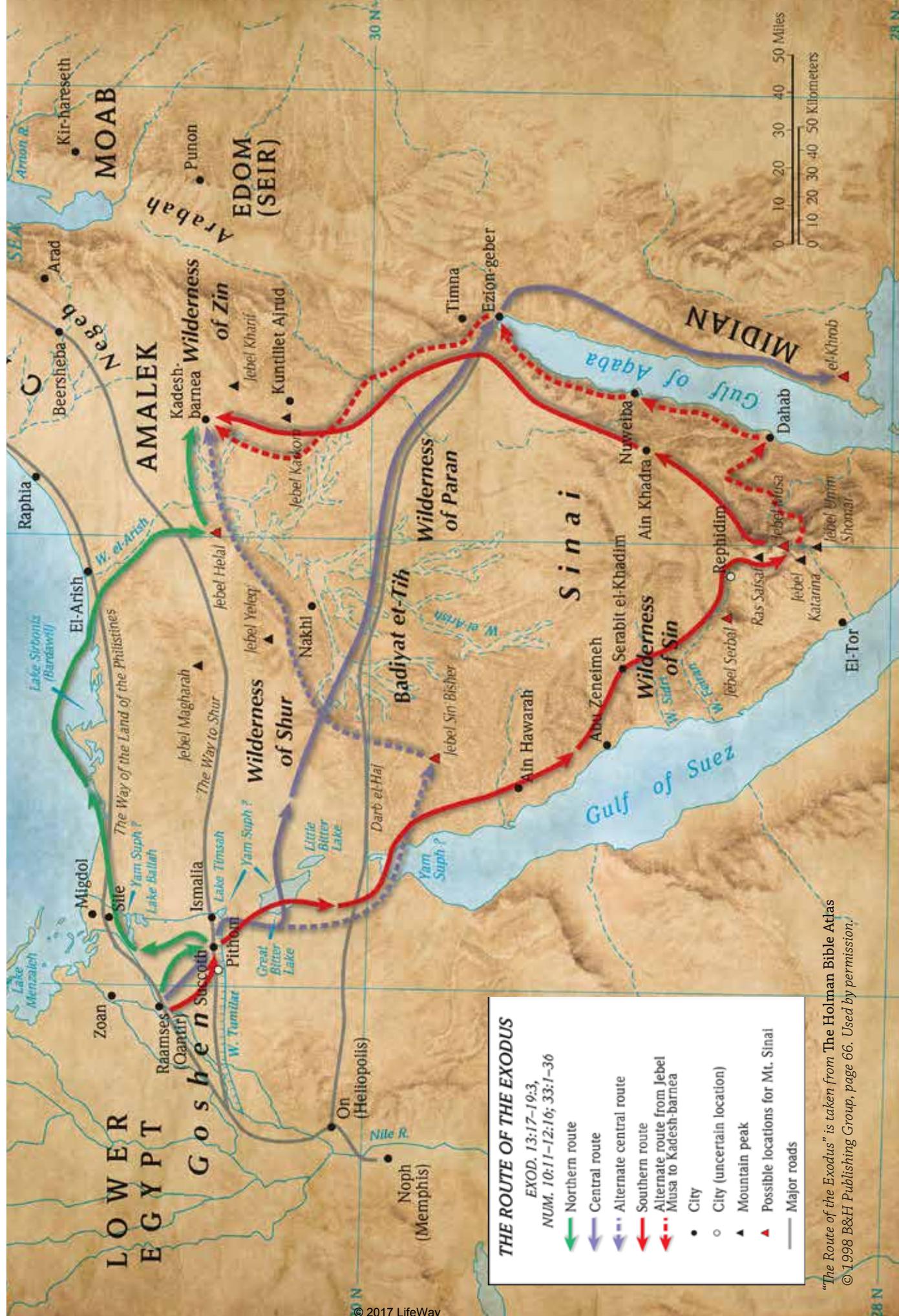
God has always prioritized bringing glory to Himself, even if He needed to unleash the worst of plagues to do it. From the beginning of time until now, God's reasoning and purpose for allowing certain occurrences (or even creating them), His strategy for incorporating certain boundaries, or calling us to particular assignments, has always primarily reflected His intention to reveal His power and magnify His own name. More than anything. Even now, the Holy Spirit's main job in our lives is to bring glory to God, to position Him center stage in our experience (John 16:14). God clearly intends to situate Himself out of the margins and squarely into our center.

*This article is excerpted from Priscilla Shirer's Breathe: Making Room for Sabbath. Read the complete first session for free at [LifeWay.com/priscillashirer](http://LifeWay.com/priscillashirer).*

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## ACTS 13–28

- Session 1**    **The Gospel Message** > *Acts 13:26-39*
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- 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*
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