

Explore the Bible.®

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE



Exodus; Leviticus

Fall 2017 > CSB

Steve Gaines, General Editor

LifeWay | Adults

LIFE BY DESIGN

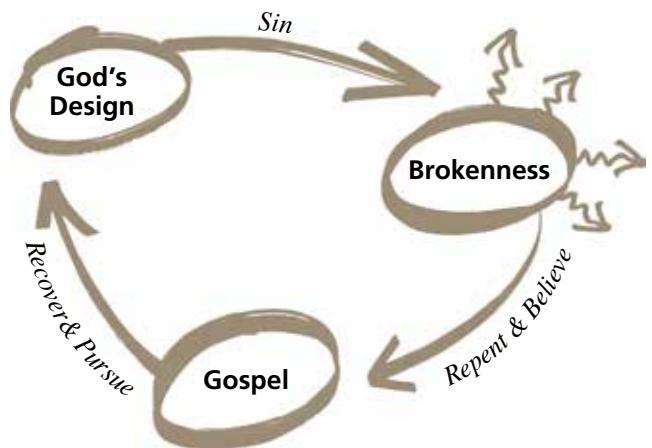
We live in a broken world. This brokenness is seen in suffering, violence, poverty, pain, and death around us. Brokenness leads us to search for a way to make LIFE work.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

CONTENTS

FEATURES

| | |
|---|-----|
| Word Wise | 6 |
| Bible Reading Plan | 7 |
| Introduction to Exodus; Leviticus | 8 |
| Holy: A Word Study | 127 |
| Coming Next Quarter | 130 |

of the coming age,⁶ and will
because,⁶ to their own harm
tying the Son of God and holdi
empt. ⁷ For ground⁷ that has
it has often fallen on it, and the
ion useful to those it is cou
s a blessing from God. ⁸ But
and thistles, it is worthless and
ed, and will be burned at the
en though we are speaking
in your case we are confident
igs connected with salvation
injust; He will not forget your
ec you showed for His name
the saints—and you continue
⁹ Now we want each of you
he same diligence for the fruit

SESSIONS

| | Title | Page |
|-------------|--|------|
| Session 1: | Reluctance (Ex. 3:4-14; 4:13-16) | 10 |
| Session 2: | Confrontation (Ex. 7:1-13) | 19 |
| Session 3: | Liberation (Ex. 12:1-13) | 28 |
| Session 4: | Victory (Ex. 14:13-28) | 37 |
| Session 5: | Sufficient (Ex. 16:1-5,11-20) | 46 |
| Session 6: | Commanded (Ex. 20:1-17) | 55 |
| Session 7: | Equipped (Ex. 25:1-9; 31:1-6) | 64 |
| Session 8: | Rebellion (Ex. 32:1-6,11-14) | 73 |
| Session 9: | His Presence (Ex. 39:42-43; 40:1-4,34-38) | 82 |
| Session 10: | Set Before (Lev. 1:3-9; 2:1-3; 3:1-5) | 91 |
| Session 11: | Set Apart (Lev. 9:15-24; 10:1-3) | 100 |
| Session 12: | Set Free* (Lev. 16:3-10,29-30) | 109 |
| Session 13: | Set Futures (Lev. 26:3-16,40-45) | 118 |

*Evangelistic Emphasis



» MEET THE WRITER

Matt Capps wrote these studies drawn from Exodus and Leviticus. Matt serves as the Senior Pastor of Fairview Baptist Church in Apex, North Carolina. He holds degrees from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (B.A.), Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div.), and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (D.Min.).

Explore the Bible: Adult Personal Study Guide CSB (ISSN PENDING; Item 005573495) is published quarterly by LifeWay Christian Resources, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234, Thom S. Rainer, President. © 2017, LifeWay Christian Resources.

For ordering or inquiries, visit lifeway.com, or write LifeWay Church Resources Customer Service, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0113. For subscriptions or subscription address changes, email subscribe@lifeway.com, fax (615) 251-5818, or write to the above address. For bulk shipments mailed quarterly to one address, email orderentry@lifeway.com, fax (615) 251-5933, or write to the above address.

We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. Read LifeWay's full doctrinal guideline online at lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline. The Key Doctrine statements in this study guide are adapted from these guidelines.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers®. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

The suggestions for pronouncing Bible names are from *That's Easy for You to Say: Your Quick Guide to Pronouncing Bible Names* by W. Murray Severance, © 1997 by Broadman & Holman Publishers. Used by permission.



ADULT PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

FALL 2017

VOLUME 4 • NUMBER 1

ERIC GEIGER

VICE PRESIDENT,
LIFEWAY RESOURCES

STEVE GAINES

GENERAL EDITOR

MIKE LIVINGSTONE

CONTENT EDITOR

DWAYNE MCCRARY

TEAM LEADER

KEN BRADY

MANAGER, ADULT ONGOING
BIBLE STUDIES

MICHAEL KELLEY

DIRECTOR, GROUPS MINISTRY

Send questions/comments to Team Leader by email: Dwayne.McCrary@lifeway.com; or by mail to Team Leader, Explore the Bible: Adult Personal Study Guide, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0175; or make comments on the Web at lifeway.com.

Printed in the United States
of America

Cover Photo ©gettyimages.com

Interior Photos ©iStockphoto.com

A WORD FROM THE GENERAL EDITOR



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

This quarter we will study the Books of Exodus and Leviticus. These biblical books are about life. That is why they go together. Exodus describes the new life the Israelites received when the Lord rescued them from Egypt.

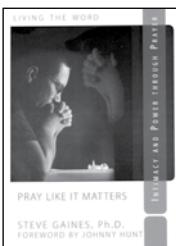
Leviticus explains how God further taught them to live holy lives for His glory.

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

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

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

Steve Gaines



Steve Gaines is the Senior Pastor at Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, and currently serves as the president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Dr. Gaines holds degrees from Union University (B.S.) and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div, Ph.D.). He is the author of *Pray Like It Matters*, *Share Jesus Like It Matters*, and the devotion book, *Morning Manna*.



WORD WISE

Terms listed here are identified in the Bible commentary with a dot (•).

Ahisamach [uh HIZ uh mak]—personal name meaning “my brother has supported”; father of Oholiab, the artisan who helped Bezalel build the tabernacle and its furnishings

Ark of the testimony—the original container for the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed; later it also held a jar of manna and Aaron’s rod (Heb. 9:4); it was the symbol of God’s presence with the people of Israel

Atonement—biblical doctrine that God reconciles sinners to Himself; in the Old Testament sacrificial system, atonement was made by blood sacrifice, pointing to the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ on the cross

Bezalel [BEHZ uh lehl]—personal name meaning “in the shadow of God”; son of Uri and great-grandson of Caleb (1 Chron. 2:20); he and Oholiab were skilled craftsmen who were responsible for constructing the tabernacle and its furnishings

Canaanites [KAY nuhn ights]—a tribe of people who lived in Canaan before the Israelites conquered it

Elim [EE lim]—a place meaning “trees” in the Sinai desert where the Israelites encamped on their exodus from Egypt

Ephod [EE fahd]—a short linen garment or apron worn by a priest; used in connection with seeking a word from God

Hethites [HITH ights]—one of the groups of people who opposed the Israelite occupation of Canaan

Hivites [HIGH vights]—one of the groups of people who occupied the land of Canaan before the Israelite conquest

Jebusites [JEB yoo sights]—one of the groups of people who opposed the Israelite occupation of Canaan; originally controlled Jerusalem before David conquered the city

Oholiab [oh HOH lih ab]—personal name meaning “father’s tent”; a craftsman who assisted Bezalel in constructing the tabernacle and its furnishings

Perizzites [PEHR ih zights]—a group name meaning “rustic”; one of the groups of people who opposed the Israelite occupation of Canaan; they lived in Canaan as early as Abraham’s time (Gen. 13:7)

Uri [yoo RIGH]—personal name meaning “fiery”; father of the tabernacle artisan Bezalel

BIBLE READING PLAN

MONTH 1

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

MONTH 2

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

MONTH 3

- 1. Leviticus 5:1-19
- 2. Leviticus 6:1-23
- 3. Leviticus 6:24-7:21
- 4. Leviticus 7:22-38
- 5. Leviticus 8:1-21
- 6. Leviticus 8:22-36
- 7. Leviticus 9:1-24
- 8. Leviticus 10:1-20
- 9. Leviticus 11:1-23
- 10. Leviticus 11:24-47
- 11. Leviticus 12:1-13:17
- 12. Leviticus 13:18-46
- 13. Leviticus 13:47-59
- 14. Leviticus 14:1-32
- 15. Leviticus 14:33-57
- 16. Leviticus 15:1-33
- 17. Leviticus 16:1-34
- 18. Leviticus 17:1-16
- 19. Leviticus 18:1-30
- 20. Leviticus 19:1-37
- 21. Leviticus 20:1-27
- 22. Leviticus 21:1-24
- 23. Leviticus 22:1-33
- 24. Leviticus 23:1-22
- 25. Leviticus 23:23-24:9
- 26. Leviticus 24:10-25:7
- 27. Leviticus 25:8-31
- 28. Leviticus 25:32-26:13
- 29. Leviticus 26:14-46
- 30. Leviticus 27:1-34



INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS; LEVITICUS

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

The central theme of Exodus is the fulfillment of God's promises to the forefathers of the faith, namely, to make their descendants a great nation. But the fulfillment of this promise is not without its obstacles. In opposition to the great powers of Egypt, and despite God's people's lack of faith, God remained true to His promises. When God's people were faithless, He remained faithful. In fact, the victory of God's people in Exodus was actually the victory of God.

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

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

OUTLINES OF EXODUS; LEVITICUS

EXODUS

- I. Preparation for Deliverance (1:1–4:31)**
 - a. Hebrew Slavery (1:1-22)
 - b. A Deliverer in Exile (2:1-25)
 - c. A Reluctant Deliverer Called (3:1–4:31)
- II. Moses Confronts Pharaoh (5:1–13:16)**
 - a. Initial Talks (5:1–7:13)
 - b. Plagues One through Nine (7:14–10:29)
 - c. The Tenth Plague (11:1–13:16)
- III. Freedom Gained (13:17–15:21)**
 - a. The Departure (13:17–14:4)
 - b. The Pursuit (14:5-14)
 - c. The Red Sea (14:15–15:21)
- IV. Into the Wilderness (15:22–18:27)**
- V. At the Foot of Mount Sinai (19:1–34:35)**
 - a. Setting Up Camp (19:1-25)
 - b. God Reveals His Standards (20:1–31:18)
 - c. Rebellion and Restoration (32:1–34:35)
- VI. Building the Tabernacle (35:1–40:38)**

LEVITICUS

- I. Laws for Sacrifices and Offerings (1:1–7:38)**
- II. Ordination and Ministry of Priests (8:1–10:20)**
- III. Purity Laws (11:1–16:34)**
- IV. God's Requirements for Holiness (17:1–27:34)**





RELUCTANCE

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

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

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

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

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

EXODUS 1:1–4:31

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

The Israelites had moved to Egypt with Jacob (1:1). (See Gen. 37–50.) The people of Israel living in Egypt grew into a large group (1:7). Because of their great number, Pharaoh and the Egyptians no longer regarded them with friendliness but with fear. The Egyptians pressed the Israelites into slavery, causing God's people to suffer greatly (1:8-11).

In chapter 2, Moses entered the story. His name sounds like the Hebrew verb meaning “to draw out.” His name alone foreshadows God's purposes to use Moses to “draw out” Israel from Egypt. Moreover, the preservation of Moses at birth points to his destiny. Moses' mother declared that “he was beautiful” (2:2). The word translated “beautiful” literally means “good,” echoing the words of creation in Genesis 1. Moses would be representative of the new creation of God's people. Moreover, Moses was set in a basket (or “ark,” KJV) to be saved from the death that would come from Pharaoh's hand in the slaughtering of the firstborn sons of Israel (1:22; 2:3). In other words, Moses was selected as God's means to deliver His people from a tragic fate. Everything one needs to know about Moses' purpose is established in his birth and circumstances.

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

Read Exodus 3:4-14 and 4:13-16 in your Bible. Observe God's proclamations and promises in this dialogue, as well as Moses' responses. What do Moses' responses reveal about him?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

THE APPROACH (EX. 3:4-6)

⁴ When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called out to him from the bush, "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." Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

VERSE 4

Exodus 2:11-22 describes the events that led to Moses' fleeing to Midian, marrying the daughter of a priest named Jethro, and tending sheep at Horeb (also known as Mount Sinai). It was on this mountain that Moses encountered God in a burning bush (3:2). In Exodus, God's presence is often revealed in a flame of fire (13:21-22; 19:18; 40:38). It is not difficult to imagine why Moses stopped and approached this mysterious burning bush that was not being consumed by flames (3:3).

Moses did not figure out the mystery of the burning bush on his own. Instead, we see the Lord reveal Himself to Moses. God was going to initiate a great work in the life of Moses.

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

VERSE 5

God lovingly declared a warning, reminding Moses that he was standing on **holy ground**. Just as God did not consume and destroy the object of His revelation (the bush), He also would not consume

or destroy the recipient of His revelation (Moses). This shows us God's grace and purpose, for no sinful man can survive a close encounter with the Almighty God. In response, an encounter with the living God calls for a respectful change in posture, a fearful reverence that treads lightly. This shows us that though God is transcendent, He is also imminent.

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

VERSE 6

God specifically revealed Himself to Moses as *the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob* (see Ex. 2:24). It was in this announcement that Moses came to see clearly who was addressing him. In awe and fear, Moses *hid his face*. One must remember that Moses was in exile from God's enslaved people in Egypt (2:15). In fact, Moses had been alienated from them since birth. With this declaration, God reminded Moses of the long line of people that he was a part of as the offspring of Abraham (2:23-25). One has to imagine Moses' curiosity at this point: *Why has God chosen to reveal Himself? What does the God of my fathers want with me?*

What does our response to God reveal about our view of God? About our view of ourselves?

KEY DOCTRINE: *God*

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

THE ASSIGNMENT (EX. 3:7-10)

⁷ Then the LORD said, "I have observed the misery of my people in Egypt, and have heard them crying out because of their oppressors. I know about their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to rescue



them from the power of the Egyptians and to bring them from that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the territory of the Canaanites, Hethites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. ⁹ So because the Israelites’ cry for help has come to me, and I have also seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them, ¹⁰ therefore, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh so that you may lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.”

VERSES 7-9

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

God’s purposes are accomplished not by our power, but by His.

VERSE 10

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

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

God commissioned Moses by His word and power to do something that seemed impossible. He was sent to lead a huge group of slaves out of bondage. He was sent by God to stand before Pharaoh and call for the Israelites’ release. It would be possible only if God supplied the power.

Even today, God is not a distant deity. He hears the cries of His people and is moved to action. How does this depiction of God in these verses comfort you in times of suffering and affliction? How do the cross and the resurrection of Christ remind us that God has ultimately heard our cries?

BIBLE SKILL: *Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.*

Review the following passages: Joshua 1:9; 1 Chronicles 28:20; Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5-6. Notice who was addressed in each passage. Why was it important for the person addressed to be assured of God's presence? How does God's presence serve as a motivator to action?

THE AUTHORITY (EX. 3:11-14)

¹¹ But Moses asked God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” ¹² He answered, “I will certainly be with you, and this will be the sign to you that I am the one who sent you: when you bring the people out of Egypt, you will all worship God at this mountain.” ¹³ Then Moses asked God, “If I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what should I tell them?” ¹⁴ God replied to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.”

VERSES 11-12

Moses' response is understandable: ***Who am I*** to do such unfathomable things? God graciously responded: ***I will certainly be with you.*** Note that God did not answer Moses' question in the way that he asked but rather pointed back to Himself to show how this would be accomplished. In the Old Testament, when God



declares that He will be with someone, He is saying, *I will do this by my own power* (see Gen. 26:3; Ex. 4:12). Moreover, God confirmed His promise by stating that once the Israelites were delivered, they would serve God on the very mountain where Moses stood.

The “I AM” Sayings of Jesus

- *I am the bread of life (John 6:35).*
- *I am the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5).*
- *I am the door of the sheep (John 10:7,9).*
- *I am the good shepherd (John 10:11,14).*
- *I am the resurrection and the life (John 11:25).*
- *I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).*
- *I am the true vine (John 15:1,5).*

VERSES 13-14

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

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

How did knowing God’s identity bring assurance to Moses? In a world filled with unreliable people and broken promises, how does God’s promise enable us to trust Him despite our challenges or circumstances?

THE ASSURANCE (EX. 4:13-16)

¹³ Moses said, “Please, Lord, send someone else.” ¹⁴ Then the LORD’s anger burned against Moses, and he said, “Isn’t Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, he is on his way now to meet you. He will rejoice when he sees you. ¹⁵ You will speak with him and tell him what to say. I will help both you and him to speak and will teach you both what to do. ¹⁶ He will speak to the people for you. He will serve as a mouth for you, and you will serve as God to him.”

VERSES 13-16

Even though God had clearly revealed Himself, explained His purpose, and promised His presence, Moses still doubted (see Ex. 3:17-18; 4:1). Even after God had given Moses further confirmation (4:8-9), Moses pleaded for God to *send someone else*. Moses felt he did not have the credentials (3:11-12), he did not know how it would be accomplished (3:13-22), he did not have the people’s trust (4:1-9), and he did not have the communication skills (4:10-12). In Moses’ eyes, it would seem that he had built a pretty strong case against God’s plan. The text then tells us that *the LORD’s anger burned against Moses*. But while God reprovved Moses for his questioning, He also provided *Aaron the Levite* as Moses’ spokesperson to help accomplish His purposes.

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

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



IN MY CONTEXT

- 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.

Record your understanding of the role God desires you to play in redeeming His people. What steps do you need to take to carry out the mission you have identified?

List the resources God has provided you to accomplish His will. Discuss with your group how you can use each resource. Ask God for the courage to fulfill His will using the provided resources.

Reflect on Exodus 3:14. Take time to praise God for always being true to His character. Memorize this verse this week.

Prayer Needs



CONFRONTATION

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

EXODUS 7:1-13

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

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

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

EXODUS 5:1–10:29

Christians affirm that God is all powerful and is able to perfectly accomplish His will. The biblical writers often propose the rhetorical question, “Is anything impossible for the LORD?” (see Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:27). Ironically, we often treat God’s omnipotence as hypothetical. While most of us do not question God’s power explicitly, many times we live our day-to-day lives that way.

In Exodus 5–10 we enter into the saga of Israel’s slavery under Pharaoh. It is important to remember that the Egyptians viewed Pharaoh as the divine offspring of their sun god, and they believed he became the god of the afterlife upon his death. In other words, Pharaoh was a false god waging war against the God of Israel. In this narrative, Pharaoh was not only hostile to God’s people but also hostile to the one true God. At every turn, Pharaoh used his power to oppose God’s purposes for His people. In the end, however, the God of Israel was the only one standing as the true sovereign God over all creation.

After the call of Moses (Ex. 3–4), Moses confronted Pharaoh for the first time about releasing God’s people (5:1). The response of Pharaoh was swift and decisive: “Who is the LORD that I should obey him by letting Israel go? I don’t know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go” (5:2). Moses’ initial confrontation with Pharaoh resulted in the increased oppression and suffering of God’s people (5:6-18).

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

Moses again protested that Pharaoh would not listen to him since he spoke poorly (6:30; see also 4:10; 6:12). God answered Moses’ objection by sending Aaron to speak His words as mediated through Moses (7:1-2). Moses and Aaron again confronted Pharaoh and showed him the sign of turning Aaron’s staff into a serpent.

But when the Egyptian sorcerers did the same with their staffs, Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go (7:6-13).

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

Notice the directives given to Moses by God in Exodus 7:1-13. What does the simplicity of the directives indicate about the nature of obedience? Identify the words and phrases that point to God’s purposes in Moses’ confronting Pharaoh. What do these purposes reveal about God?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

STRATEGY EXPLAINED (EX. 7:1-5)

¹ The LORD answered Moses, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother will be your prophet. ² You must say whatever I command you; then Aaron your brother must declare it to Pharaoh so that he will let the Israelites go from his land. ³ But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart and multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt. ⁴ Pharaoh will not listen to you, but I will put my hand into Egypt and bring the military divisions of my people the Israelites out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. ⁵ The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the Israelites from among them.”

VERSES 1-2

God clearly laid out His strategy for bringing about His purposes in saving His people. There are three reminders of God’s promises from earlier conversations that fortified Moses and Aaron in their calling and confidence.



First, God reminded Moses that He had provided **Aaron** to function as a **prophet** before Pharaoh (see 4:14-16). Designating Aaron as a prophet was a concession to Moses' perceived disadvantage based on his own poor speaking abilities (see 4:10; 6:30). While Aaron was the spokesperson, Moses clearly played the primary role in this confrontation since he was to be **like God to Pharaoh**. Moses was to fulfill his role as God's mediator or representative. This was to counter not only Moses' doubt but also Pharaoh's belief that he himself was a god. This was a reminder that God was in control.

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

VERSE 3

Next, God again declared that He would **harden Pharaoh's heart** (see 4:21). It is important to note that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is described in various ways throughout Exodus. At times, the biblical text refers to God's hardening Pharaoh's heart (9:12; 10:20,27; 11:10); Pharaoh's hardening his own heart (8:15,32); and Pharaoh's heart being hardened without identifying the cause (7:22; 8:19; 9:7,35). All of these statements must be considered together for every act of Pharaoh's disobedience.

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

How do you see people hardening their hearts toward God today? How does what you see compare with Pharaoh's hardened heart?

VERSES 4-5

Lastly, God proclaimed once again that He would bring Israel out of Egypt by His mighty hand (see 3:19-20). The “I will” statements of this passage are a reminder that God is the One doing the work. Remember that Pharaoh had asked, “Who is the LORD that I should obey him by letting Israel go? I don’t know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go” (5:2). Pharaoh’s question revealed his disdain and his intent to usurp and undermine the God of Israel.

God’s plan did not depend on Pharaoh’s cooperation. Pharaoh might refuse to obey God, but he could never prevent God from delivering His people. Neither Pharaoh nor his army could stop God from accomplishing His will. Soon enough, Pharaoh would know who God was when the plagues were unleashed against Egypt. God had revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush (3:14-15), but soon all of Egypt would clearly know He was the one true God through His self-revealing mighty acts (see 8:10,22; 9:14,29; 11:7). In the same way, all of the earth will one day know that He is the one true God (Phil. 2:9-11).

KEY DOCTRINE: *God*

To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience.

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



BIBLE SKILL: *Read, reflect on, and react to a Bible verse.*

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

SIMPLE OBEDIENCE (EX. 7:6-7)

⁶ So Moses and Aaron did this; they did just as the LORD commanded them. ⁷ Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.

VERSES 6-7

Moses and Aaron fully obeyed God's directions, doing exactly what they were told. Note that Moses and Aaron were both senior citizens! Moses was eighty years old and Aaron was eighty-three. Their advanced age reminds us that it is never too late to be used by God. It is never too late for God's power to be manifest through our faithful living. Moses and Aaron did not make excuses; they ***did just as the LORD commanded them.*** Regardless of our weaknesses and inabilities, God can and will work through us when we faithfully live according to what He has commanded. In other words, when we are weak, God is strong (2 Cor. 12:9-11).

God's power is made most evident when we are weak.

Believers demonstrate faith in God through simple acts of obedience. We often shy away from God's work because of excuses or perceived weaknesses. But the example of Moses and Aaron in this passage reminds us that God's power is made most evident when we are weak. With confidence in our all-powerful God, we are called to live just as God has commanded us.

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

SIGNS AND WONDERS (EX. 7:8-13)

⁸ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ⁹ “When Pharaoh tells you, ‘Perform a miracle,’ tell Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh. It will become a serpent.’” ¹⁰ So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD had commanded. Aaron threw down his staff before Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a serpent. ¹¹ But then Pharaoh called the wise men and sorcerers—the magicians of Egypt, and they also did the same thing by their occult practices. ¹² Each one threw down his staff, and it became a serpent. But Aaron’s staff swallowed their staffs. ¹³ However, Pharaoh’s heart was hard, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

VERSES 8-12

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

This is the first of three instances where *the magicians of Egypt* see the sign that Aaron performs and then do the same by their secret arts (see 7:22; 8:7). The Egyptian magicians functioned as mystical priests in the service of the Egyptian gods. The text does not provide any explanation for the means by which these magicians performed their signs, but it is clear that Aaron’s staff *swallowed their staffs*, indicating God’s supreme power over the magic of man.

VERSE 13

Just as God had foretold, Pharaoh refused to listen to Moses, beginning the cycle of miraculous plagues followed by Pharaoh’s refusals (7:14–10:29). The water in the Nile River turned to blood. Then frogs, gnats, and flies overran the land. One plague caused



the death of livestock. Another brought boils, while another was a plague of deadly hail. Still another brought swarms of locusts, and then a plague of darkness covered Egypt.

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

The Ten Plagues

- *Water to blood (Ex. 7:14-25)*
- *Frogs (Ex. 8:1-15)*
- *Gnats/Mosquitoes (Ex. 8:16-19)*
- *Flies (Ex. 8:20-32)*
- *Death of the cattle (Ex. 9:1-7)*
- *Boils (Ex. 9:8-12)*
- *Hail (Ex. 9:13-35)*
- *Locusts (Ex. 10:1-20)*
- *Darkness (Ex. 10:21-29)*
- *Death of the firstborn (Ex. 11:1-12:30)*

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

While Pharaoh's hard-hearted, evil rule over Israel was characterized by slavery and death, the good God of Israel desired to lead His people to life. While Pharaoh desired to keep the Israelites in his land to live under his rule, God used His infinitely greater power to deliver them to His land to live under His rule. The God of Israel not only showed His supremacy in the triumph of Aaron's staff but also in each subsequent plague sign.

While God normally holds chaos at bay, in this instance He stepped aside and allowed chaos to plague His enemy. In the end, God brought judgment to Pharaoh and Egypt.

IN MY CONTEXT

- 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.

Identify the fears and excuses that get in the way of your living on mission with God. What has God provided to you that overcomes those fears and excuses? What simple act can you do this week to demonstrate obedience to God?

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

Reflect on Exodus 6:7. Take time to praise God for the ways He has displayed His power in your life. Memorize this verse this week.

Prayer Needs





LIBERATION

God provides deliverance for those willing to trust Him.

EXODUS 12:1-13

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

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

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

EXODUS 11:1–13:16

In the Christian life it is important to understand that our actions reveal our identity. When we act in faith against the internal pressures of our fears and the outside influences of those around us, it sets us apart. This is why it is important to remember not only who God is, but also what He has called us to do. In the narrative of the Passover, we remember God's saving power and grace toward His people. Moreover, we see that Israel was called to act in faith according to God's promised actions. In many ways, their actions identified them as God's chosen people.

The exodus event is central to the identity of God's people. Time and time again, God called Israel to look back and remember their salvation and deliverance from Egypt. Jesus, when instituting the Lord's Supper, commanded the church to look back: "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). God's salvation is important for our formative memory and our ongoing identity.

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

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

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

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

Read Exodus 12:1-13 in your Bible. Notice what distinguishes the households of Israel from those of Egypt. What is the significance of how they are distinguished?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

PREPARED (EX. 12:1-5)

¹ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: ² “This month is to be the beginning of months for you; it is the first month of your year. ³ Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month they must each select an animal of the flock according to their fathers’ families, one animal per family. ⁴ If the household is too small for a whole animal, that person and the neighbor nearest his house are to select one based on the combined number of people; you should apportion the animal according to what each will eat. ⁵ You must have an unblemished animal, a year-old male; you may take it from either the sheep or the goats.

VERSES 1-2

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

to the Lord's salvation and judgment (12:14). This weeklong festival included the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which served the purposes of remembrance and instruction (12:15-20; 13:3-10).

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

BIBLE SKILL: *Use a Bible dictionary (either in print or online) to learn more about the Passover lamb.*

In a Bible dictionary, look up "Passover" and "Lamb of God." Review the biblical passages listed in the entries. How does the Passover lamb point to Christ? Having contemplated the nature of the Passover lamb, write a brief description of how Jesus fulfilled that role for us.

VERSES 3-5

On the tenth day of this month, Israelite families were to select a spotless lamb to be sacrificed on behalf of their household. Since the animal would not be slaughtered until the fourteenth day of the month (v. 6), each household would have to care for the animal for four days. God wanted no last-minute preparations for the commemoration.

Not all Israelite families would be able to eat an entire animal in one night. God allowed neighboring families to join together



and share one animal. A meal with too many people would be better than a meal with too few. The Passover meal was not meant to encourage gluttony or to feed a family or several families for several days. The meal commemorated the fact that the Israelites were leaving Egypt quickly.

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

Families could select either a lamb or a goat from the flock as long as the animal was an *unblemished ... year-old male*. Sickly or injured animals could not rightly symbolize the perfect deliverance of His people by the perfect God.

It is important to note that unless Israel believed the word of God and followed all of His directions, all of their firstborn would die with the firstborn of Egypt. This was not only a call to trust in God's word—believing He would do what He said—it was also a call to act in faith. Therefore, we see that the lamb's blood covered those who believed, and by their obedience to God's word they avoided judgment.

These instructions given to Israel find their ultimate fulfillment in the New Testament through the redemptive and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb (John 1:29,36; 1 Cor. 5:7). The New Testament presents Jesus as the Lamb of God without blemish (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Further, the New Testament teaches that in Christ the church is presented as spotless and without blemish (Eph. 5:27). In other words, the church's purity and righteousness are found in Him alone (2 Cor. 5:21). Therefore, as Christians, we can be confident that we are cleansed from sin and stand blameless before God's throne in Him (Jude 24). In Luke 9:31, Jesus' death is called an exodus ("departure"), indicating the inauguration of a new exodus from bondage to freedom.

How does preparation for a tradition or event add to the significance of that tradition or event? What preparations help you better see the significance of a practice like the Lord's Supper?

SACRIFICED (EX. 12:6-7)

⁶ You are to keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembly of the community of Israel will slaughter the animals at twilight. ⁷ They must take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses where they eat them.

VERSES 6-7

God instructed Moses and Aaron to lead all of Israel to sacrifice the Passover lambs at twilight on *the fourteenth day* of Nisan and to *take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel* of their houses. Placing the blood of a spotless lamb on the doorpost would indicate that the members of the household followed God's instructions and were thus set apart to Him. The blood of the slain lamb became a stark reminder that a life had to be sacrificed in their place.

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

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

KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Son*

In His substitutionary death on the cross, Jesus made provision for the redemption of men from sin.



HURRIED (EX. 12:8-11)

⁸ They are to eat the meat that night; they should eat it, roasted over the fire along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ⁹ Do not eat any of it raw or cooked in boiling water, but only roasted over fire—its head as well as its legs and inner organs. ¹⁰ You must not leave any of it until morning; any part of it left until morning you must burn. ¹¹ Here is how you must eat it: You must be dressed for travel, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. You are to eat it in a hurry; it is the LORD's Passover.

VERSES 8-11

God told Moses and Aaron that the Passover lamb was to be eaten in an urgent fashion with everyone ready to travel. The Passover lamb was to be consumed with *unleavened bread*. The unleavened bread related to the fact that Israel exited Egypt so swiftly that they had to leave before their dough was fermented (v. 34). The command to eat *bitter herbs* would be a reminder of the bitter slavery they once experienced in Egypt. In the same way, we should often reflect on the bitterness of sin from which God has saved us through the death of His Son. As Thomas Watson once said, "Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet."

The Israelites were to prepare their Passover lambs by roasting them over the fire, and then they were to burn up any part of them that remained before morning. The reference to the meal as *the LORD's* specified that it was to be treated as holy. This meal was set apart from other meals, to be remembered from generation to generation.

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

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

DELIVERED (EX. 12:12-13)

¹² I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night and strike every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, both people and animals. I am the LORD; I will execute judgments against all the gods of Egypt. ¹³ The blood on the houses where you are staying will be a distinguishing mark for you; when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No plague will be among you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.”

VERSES 12-13

We must remember that the Lord had made clear that the primary purpose of the plagues was for both Egypt and Israel to know who He is (see 7:5,17). For the Israelites, the plagues were signs that Yahweh is the only true God of heaven and earth and that He was acting on their behalf. For the Egyptians, the Passover was a solemn demonstration of God’s righteous judgment because of their king’s persistent rejection of Him. In these acts of judgment it became clear that Israel’s God was infinitely greater than all the power of Pharaoh and his kingdom.

The Passover, therefore, highlights both judgment and salvation. Egypt was judged with death, and the spotless lamb was judged for Israel in that God passed over Israel as they were protected by the blood of the lamb (12:13,23). When we read the New Testament, we see that Jesus’ death was the event in which salvation and judgment were fulfilled (1 Cor. 1:18). The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus’ death was the once-for-all sacrifice that delivered His people from judgment and death (Heb. 10:10-14). The gospel is the good news that God offered His own Son in our place to pay the price for our sin.

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



IN MY CONTEXT

- 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.

Reflect on the truth that God provided the perfect sacrifice for our salvation in His Son. How does that truth impact how you live your life today? Take time to thank God for sending His Son and for making it possible for you to have salvation.

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

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

Prayer Needs



VICTORY

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

EXODUS 14:13-28

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

How does overcoming a difficulty or challenge help us face other difficulties or challenges? How does God use difficulties to build our faith in Him?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

EXODUS 13:17–15:21

Throughout the Bible we are reminded that God will ultimately be victorious over His enemies and the enemies of His people. This is why we are called to “fear not” and “stand firm.” Our salvation, just like the salvation of Israel, is completely dependent on God’s work on our behalf. The narrative recalled in this session’s Scripture passage would prove significant in the memory of the Israelites as they looked back on God’s mighty acts of salvation (Pss. 77:19-20; 78:13; 136:13-16). The same is true for us today. We must remember that, through Jesus, God has overcome our greatest enemies—sin, Satan, and death. The act of remembrance is key to our moving forward in faith despite our circumstances.

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

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

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

Read Exodus 13:17–15:21 in your Bible. Identify each scene as this story unfolds, looking for how God was involved in each scene. What attributes of God are seen in this story?

Note the number of times God reminded Israel that the battle and the victory was His alone. Why was this important in bolstering their faith?

BIBLE SKILL: *Dig deeper into key concepts.*

God used “signs” and “wonders” for a variety of reasons. Use a Bible concordance or an online Bible to identify passages that contain both words. Review a sample of these passages, looking at passages from different Bible books. Take note of the purpose the signs and wonders served in these passages. Write a summary statement about what you discover.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

THE SETTING (EX. 14:13-18)

¹³ 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. ¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you, and you must be quiet.” ¹⁵ The LORD said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to break camp. ¹⁶ As for you, lift up your staff, stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it so that the Israelites can go through



the sea on dry ground. ¹⁷ As for me, I am going to harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them, and I will receive glory by means of Pharaoh, all his army, and his chariots and horsemen. ¹⁸ The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I receive glory through Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.”

VERSES 13-15

God’s words to Israel, *don’t be afraid*, were issued to bolster their confidence. *Don’t be afraid* typically was spoken by angels when appearing to humans (see Gen. 15:1; 26:24) and by God to those facing overwhelming odds (see Num. 14:9; Josh. 10:8). Moses’ words assured the people they had no reason to fear. The people saw only Pharaoh’s army, but God, whom they could not see, was with them and would save them.

Rather than fear, the Israelites were to *stand firm and see*. They did not need to try to swim across the sea or prepare to fight or give up. They only needed to watch. Thus far they had seen only the Egyptian army and their predicament. Moses encouraged them to open their eyes in faith and to see God at work. The phrase *the LORD’s salvation* describes the deliverance only God can provide. God would do what Israel could not do.

VERSES 16-18

God told Moses to lift his staff and stretch it out over the sea, and He would divide it so that the Israelites could *go through the sea on dry ground*. There would be no question as to who was working to bring about Israel’s salvation, for God would receive the glory. Not only would God bring salvation to His people, He would also bring down the waters of judgment on His enemies. While Egypt was strong in chariots and horsemen, the God of creation commands every molecule of the sea. God chose to use weapons that no one on earth had command over and to which no one on earth had a defense. This attack on Egypt would remove all doubt that God alone was the victor. God’s victory over Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea would be known throughout the land and in the surrounding nations (9:16; 15:14-16).

As Israel faced certain destruction, God delivered them by the power of His hand. We are reminded in Isaiah 54:17 that no weapon formed against God’s people will succeed. Even in the

spiritual realm, our battle is “not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens” (Eph. 6:12). Our God is sovereign over all.

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

KEY DOCTRINE: *God*

God is all powerful.

ACT 1: THE SEPARATION (EX. 14:19-20)

¹⁹ Then the angel of God, who was going in front of the Israelite forces, moved and went behind them. The pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and stood behind them. ²⁰ It came between the Egyptian and Israelite forces. There was cloud and darkness, it lit up the night, and neither group came near the other all night long.

VERSES 19-20

The angel of God stood between the Israelites and the Egyptians, keeping both groups separated through the night. We must remember that when the angel of the Lord appears in the Old Testament, he is depicted as acting and speaking for God Himself (see Gen. 22:11-18). In fact, the angel of the Lord is identified as God in Exodus 3:2-4. The angel of the Lord appeared in a flame of fire (Ex. 3:2), in the pillar of fire and cloud (13:21-22), on Mount Sinai (19:18), and in the tabernacle (40:38). In all instances, the angel of the Lord signified God’s presence and protection. Here, the angel of the Lord protected Israel in their exodus from Egypt and would go before them into the promised



land (14:19; 23:20; 33:2). God’s presence with Israel points forward to His presence in Christ, who is our protection and refuge against all the attacks of the enemy.

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

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

ACT 2: THE CROSSING (EX. 14:21-22)

²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back with a powerful east wind all that night and turned the sea into dry land. So the waters were divided, ²² and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with the waters like a wall to them on their right and their left.

VERSES 21-22

Moses and the people did exactly as God had directed them. When Moses ***stretched out his hand over the sea***, God ***drove the sea back with a powerful east wind***, revealing the dry land that would lead to their salvation. While it is simply referred to as *the sea*, we know from Exodus 13:18 and 15:4 that the body of water Israel was about to cross was the Red Sea. Moses and the Israelites demonstrated faith by following God’s directions; believers today likewise demonstrate their faith in God when they obey His Word.

The waters formed ***a wall*** of protection. This intense display of God’s power over the waters was a powerful sign of His protection over His people and His judgment over His enemies (Ex. 14:28-31). This was clearly a supernatural event. Israel did not achieve any of this; it was all the work of God. In a similar way, God would show

His power when Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan into the promised land in Joshua 3:14-17.

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

ACT 3: THE VICTORY (EX. 14:23-28)

²³ The Egyptians set out in pursuit—all Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots, and his horsemen—and went into the sea after them.

²⁴ During the morning watch, the LORD looked down at the Egyptian forces from the pillar of fire and cloud, and threw the Egyptian forces into confusion. ²⁵ He caused their chariot wheels to swerve and made them drive with difficulty. “Let’s get away from Israel,” the Egyptians said, “because the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt!” ²⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the water may come back on the Egyptians, on their chariots and horsemen.” ²⁷ So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea returned to its normal depth. While the Egyptians were trying to escape from it, the LORD threw them into the sea. ²⁸ The water came back and covered the chariots and horsemen, plus the entire army of Pharaoh that had gone after them into the sea. Not even one of them survived.

VERSES 23-25

When the Egyptian chariots pursued the Israelites into the dry seabed, God caused them to swerve and stall. Simply put, the powerful forces of Egypt’s warfare were crippled by God. Even the Egyptians themselves realized that their confusion and difficulty driving their chariots was no coincidence; this was all happening because Israel’s God was fighting for His people. They were able to understand that the supernatural protection of God guarded the Israelites against them.



VERSES 26-28

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

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

The cross and the empty tomb serve as eternal reminders that the victory of God is our victory.

When we see the salvation that has been achieved by our God, it should cause us to confess that He alone is worthy of worship and praise. While Pharaoh's army was powerful and frightening, it was crushed by the power of God. While our greatest enemies—sin, Satan, and death—are frightening, Christ crushed them on the cross. He is our victory. Paul exhorted the church, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:31). The apostle said in Galatians 6:14, "But as for me, I will never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Just as the Israelites looked back on their salvation through the Red Sea, we also look back to the cross of Christ. The cross and the empty tomb serve as eternal reminders that the victory of God is our victory.

How did the events experienced at the Red Sea impact the Israelites' understanding of God? How can witnessing a display of God's power cause us to gain a deeper understanding of God?

IN MY CONTEXT

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

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

As a group, celebrate victories given by God to group members. Be sure to include salvation in that celebration. How can awareness of the victories God is granting encourage group members in their spiritual walks?

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

Prayer Needs





SUFFICIENT

God provides for the needs of His people.

EXODUS 16:1-5,11-20

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

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

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

EXODUS 15:22–18:27

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

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

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

Read Exodus 16:1-5,11-20 in your Bible. How did God provide for His people? What was the purpose behind God’s provisions? (See v. 4.)

How can something be both a provision and a test?



EXPLORE THE TEXT

QUESTIONING THE FUTURE (EX. 16:1-3)

¹ The entire Israelite community departed from Elim and came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had left the land of Egypt. ² The entire Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³ The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by pots of meat and ate all the bread we wanted. Instead, you brought us into this wilderness to make this whole assembly die of hunger!”

VERSES 1-3

As God’s people *departed from •Elim* to travel further toward the promised land, they *grumbled against Moses and Aaron*. They were only a little over a month into their journey, and already the entire community was complaining. In verses 7-8, Moses made it clear that their complaining was really against God. Grumbling against God is a serious sin (see 1 Cor. 10:1-12). Paul told the church in Philippi to do everything without grumbling or arguing (see Phil. 2:14).

Moreover, Moses reminded the people that God had heard their complaints (Ex. 16:8-12). In questioning God’s power to sustain them, the people were actually questioning His character. In response, Moses and Aaron told the people, “In the morning you will see the LORD’s glory” (v. 7). Throughout Exodus, God’s glory is shorthand for a manifestation of His presence (see 24:16-17; 40:34-35). God would answer Israel’s doubt by revealing Himself.

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

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

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

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

QUESTIONING THEIR OBEDIENCE (EX. 16:4-5,11-12)

⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. This way I will test them to see whether or not they will follow my instructions. ⁵ On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days." [...] ¹¹ The LORD spoke to Moses, ¹² "I have heard the complaints 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."

VERSES 4-5

God's provision of manna from heaven not only met the people's immediate physical needs, it was also meant to signify that God



would sustain their whole lives. Moreover, it was meant to teach His people that their whole lives were to be governed by God’s word and promise.

Once again, this was a trial to teach them that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. The question was whether they would walk in God’s **instructions**.

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

VERSES 11-12

God **heard the complaints** of the people, just as He had heard their cries in Egypt (Ex. 3:7). Just as He had provided a miraculous deliverance out of Egypt, He would now provide them quail at twilight and fresh manna each morning. These miraculous provisions were given so that the Israelites would know that He was their God.

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

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

QUESTIONING THE PROVISION (EX. 16:13-18)

¹³ So at evening quail came and covered the camp. In the morning there was a layer of dew all around the camp. ¹⁴ When the layer of dew evaporated, there were fine flakes on the desert surface, as fine as frost on the ground. ¹⁵ When the Israelites saw it, they asked one another, “What is it?” because they didn’t know what it was. Moses told them, “It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat. ¹⁶ This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Gather as much of it as each person needs to eat. You may take two quarts per individual, according to the number of people each of you has in his tent.’” ¹⁷ So the Israelites did this. Some gathered a lot, some a little. ¹⁸ When they measured it by quarts, the person who gathered a lot had no surplus, and the person who gathered a little had no shortage. Each gathered as much as he needed to eat.

VERSES 13-15

Moses made it clear that it was God alone who provided what they needed. The *quail* was provided in such abundance that it covered the camp. As the morning dew evaporated, manna covered the ground to reveal that God had provided what they needed for their nourishment. Despite their complaints and faithlessness, God revealed the truth expressed in Lamentations 3:22-23: “Because of the LORD’s faithful love we do not perish, for his mercies never end. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness!” Even so, God’s people did not understand what He had done. *They asked one another, “What is it?” because they didn’t know what it was.* Moses had to explain that this was food that God had graciously provided.

VERSES 16-18

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

Note that God’s provision was strictly according to the people’s needs, no more and no less. This is a theme common in the Bible. God’s provision is always enough. We are reminded in



2 Corinthians 12:9 that God’s grace is sufficient for us and His power is perfected in our weakness.

Not only does God’s act of provision remind us that He is the God of creation, His commands for collection also remind us that He is the God who lovingly sustains His people as they dwell in His creation.

How can not knowing what something is or how it was provided cause a person to question that provision? How can a person’s focus on what was provided get in the way of being thankful for that provision?

KEY DOCTRINE: Stewardship

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

QUESTIONING THE NEXT MEAL (EX. 16:19-20)

¹⁹ Moses said to them, “No one is to let any of it remain until morning.” ²⁰ But they didn’t listen to Moses; some people left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. Therefore Moses was angry with them.

VERSES 19-20

Moses was very clear that God’s people were to collect all of the manna and not leave any of it until the next day. There was a test implicit in this command not to hoard God’s provisions; they must be collected as gifts for each day. God would provide bread daily. In this sense, Exodus 16 is paradigmatic, presenting a real-life example of what it means to rely on God to “give us today our daily bread” (Matt. 6:11).

Even after being warned by Moses, some people disobediently left part of the manna uneaten overnight. Since they ignored Moses, the remaining manna ruined. It ***bred worms and stank***. Note that Israel’s failure to heed God’s warning justly angered Moses.

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

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

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

BIBLE SKILL: *Compare the teachings of Jesus to an Old Testament event.*

Review Jesus' teachings from the Sermon on the Mount about prayer and God's provisions (Matt. 6:5-14,25-34; 7:7-12). Look for teachings of Jesus that could have been shared with the Israelites in Exodus 16. In what ways do the teachings of Jesus intersect with the experience of the Israelites?



IN MY CONTEXT

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

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

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

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

Prayer Needs

COMMANDED

God gives a clear standard for holy living.

EXODUS 20:1-17

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

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

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

EXODUS 19:1—24:18

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

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

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

Read Exodus 20:1-17 in your Bible. Number each commandment. Identify any commands that are related or that seem to influence other commands. Look for various ways God described Himself in this passage. How does the way He revealed Himself impact obedience to His commands?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

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

¹ Then God spoke all these words: ² I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery.

VERSES 1-2

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

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

What God revealed about Himself in these two verses set the stage for what was about to be revealed in the law. What He had done for them would be the motivation to do what God required.

Throughout Israel's history, the exodus event remained central to their identity, and God often called them to remember what He had done. The key phrase found in verse 2, *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt*, would be repeated often to jostle the memory of God's people, reminding them that the God who had delivered them could be trusted and obeyed. (See Judg. 6:8; 1 Sam. 10:18; Neh. 9:18; Ps. 81:10; Jer. 34:13; and Dan. 9:15.)

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



BIBLE SKILL: *Explore further a phrase used in a verse or passage.*

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

RELATING TO GOD (EX. 20:3-11)

³ Do not have other gods besides me. ⁴ Do not make an idol for yourself, whether in the shape of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. ⁵ Do not bow in worship to them, and do not serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the fathers' iniquity, to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing faithful love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commands. ⁷ Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God, because the LORD will not leave anyone unpunished who misuses his name. ⁸ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy: ⁹ You are to labor six days and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. You must not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female servant, your livestock, or the resident alien who is within your city gates. ¹¹ For the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six days; then he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and declared it holy.

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

VERSE 3

The first commandment stipulates that Israel should not have any *other gods*. In this command, the Lord demanded exclusive covenant loyalty and exclusive worship. (See also 22:20; 23:13,24,32.) We are to have no other gods in competition with the Lord God for our affections and obedience.

In the exodus event it became clear that the God of Israel is the one and only God of creation. Moses' declaration to a later generation makes this clear: "the LORD is God; there is no other besides him" (Deut. 4:35,39; see also Ps. 86:10; Isa. 44:6,8; 45:5,6,18; and 1 Cor. 8:4-6).

Having no other gods implies loving God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength. Therefore, this command deals with worship. In what do we find ultimate joy and satisfaction?

VERSES 4-6

Related to the first command, the second commandment makes it clear that God's people should not make for themselves any *idol*. In this sense, no object that represents God should substitute for the worship of the one true God. That God is the sovereign Creator of all heaven and earth makes this command explicitly clear. To craft any image of God from created materials elevates creation over the Creator. Therefore, not bowing before idols means honoring and revering God as Creator and Redeemer with every thought.

This command regulates worship and warns against false worship. God is a jealous God, and rightly so. He alone is worthy of all honor and praise from His creation. The warning related to *children* and *the third and fourth generations* affirms the fact that immoral behavior often results in negative consequences for future generations.

VERSE 7

Misusing *the name of the LORD* refers to taking a deceptive oath in God's name or invoking God's name to affirm a dishonest act. Leviticus 19:12 says, "Do not swear falsely by my name, profaning



the name of your God; I am the LORD.” This command also bans using God’s name irreverently or disrespectfully (see Lev. 24:10-16).

God was warning His people against using His name as if it were disconnected from His person, presence, and power. Not misusing God’s name means honoring that name with our words and our actions.

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Lord’s Day*

The Lord’s Day commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private.

VERSES 8-11

God also commands His people to ***remember the Sabbath day*** by keeping it ***holy***. God established the rhythm of life in the seven days of creation. The first six days are set apart for work and the seventh day is set apart for rest (see Gen. 2:1-3). The day of rest was a reminder for Israel to trust that they were sustained by God’s hand, just as God had sustained them in their slavery in Egypt.

Remembering the Sabbath means trusting God and finding our rest in Him—not in our own striving. In this sense, the Sabbath is a weekly reminder that God, not our work, sustains us.

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

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

RELATING TO SOCIETY (EX. 20:12-17)

¹² Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³ Do not murder. ¹⁴ Do not commit adultery. ¹⁵ Do not steal.

¹⁶ Do not give false testimony against your neighbor. ¹⁷ Do not covet your neighbor's house. Do not covet your neighbor's wife, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

VERSE 12

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

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

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

Jesus and the Ten Commandments

| The Ten Commandments | Jesus' Teaching |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Do not have other gods besides me (Ex. 20:3).</i> | <i>Matthew 4:10; 6:33</i> |
| <i>Do not make an idol for yourself (Ex. 20:4).</i> | <i>Matthew 6:24</i> |
| <i>Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God (Ex. 20:7).</i> | <i>Matthew 5:33-37; 6:9; 23:16-22</i> |
| <i>Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (Ex. 20:8-11).</i> | <i>Matthew 12:1-13; Mark 2:23-27;</i> |
| <i>Honor your father and your mother (Ex. 20:12).</i> | <i>Mark 7:9-13</i> |
| <i>Do not murder (Ex. 20:13).</i> | <i>Matthew 5:21-24</i> |
| <i>Do not commit adultery (Ex. 20:14).</i> | <i>Matthew 5:27-30</i> |
| <i>Do not steal (Ex. 20:15).</i> | <i>Matthew 5:40</i> |
| <i>Do not give false testimony (Ex. 20:16).</i> | <i>Matthew 5:37</i> |
| <i>Do not covet (Ex. 20:17).</i> | <i>Luke 12:15-34</i> |



VERSES 13-15

The sixth through eighth commandments establish universal prohibitions not to **murder** (v. 13), **commit adultery** (v. 14), or **steal** (v. 15). These commands uphold justice and holiness as Israel sought to live as a light among the nations.

Avoiding murder involves loving and protecting life as the image of God in man. Avoiding adultery means keeping our hearts pure from lust and from twisting things to appease our sinful appetites. It means keeping sexual purity and not defiling the marriage bed. Not stealing includes working hard to supply not only for your own needs but also for the needs of others.

VERSES 16-17

God warned His people against giving **false testimony**. The context of verse 16 likely suggests a legal trial in which false testimony could lead to punishment for one's neighbor, but it also had implications for all relationships and conversations. Bearing a false witness has devastating effects in relationships and shows absolute disdain for God's character (see Prov. 6:16-19; 12:22; 19:5,9).

This commandment prohibits speaking falsely for the sake of gaining at the expense of others and perverting justice. Not bearing false witness implies that in every situation our words bear truth. We are not to distort the truth to protect ourselves or to hurt others.

While the commandments in verses 13-16 are aimed at actions and words, the tenth commandment aims at the heart. Specifically, verse 17 warns of the sin of coveting anything that belongs to one's neighbor. Coveting affects relationships and can lead to harmful actions against one's neighbor. Coveting is the motivation for murder, adultery, stealing, and lying.

Because of the way coveting values a particular thing over God as the Provider, it is also a breach of the first commandment (see Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5). Therefore, refusing to covet means that we are sold out to God, so much so that the things of this world have little value when it comes to the desires of our hearts.

Is there an issue not covered in this set of laws? If so, what? To what level do you agree that all other laws are based on these? How would you describe a society that fully followed these commands?

IN MY CONTEXT

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

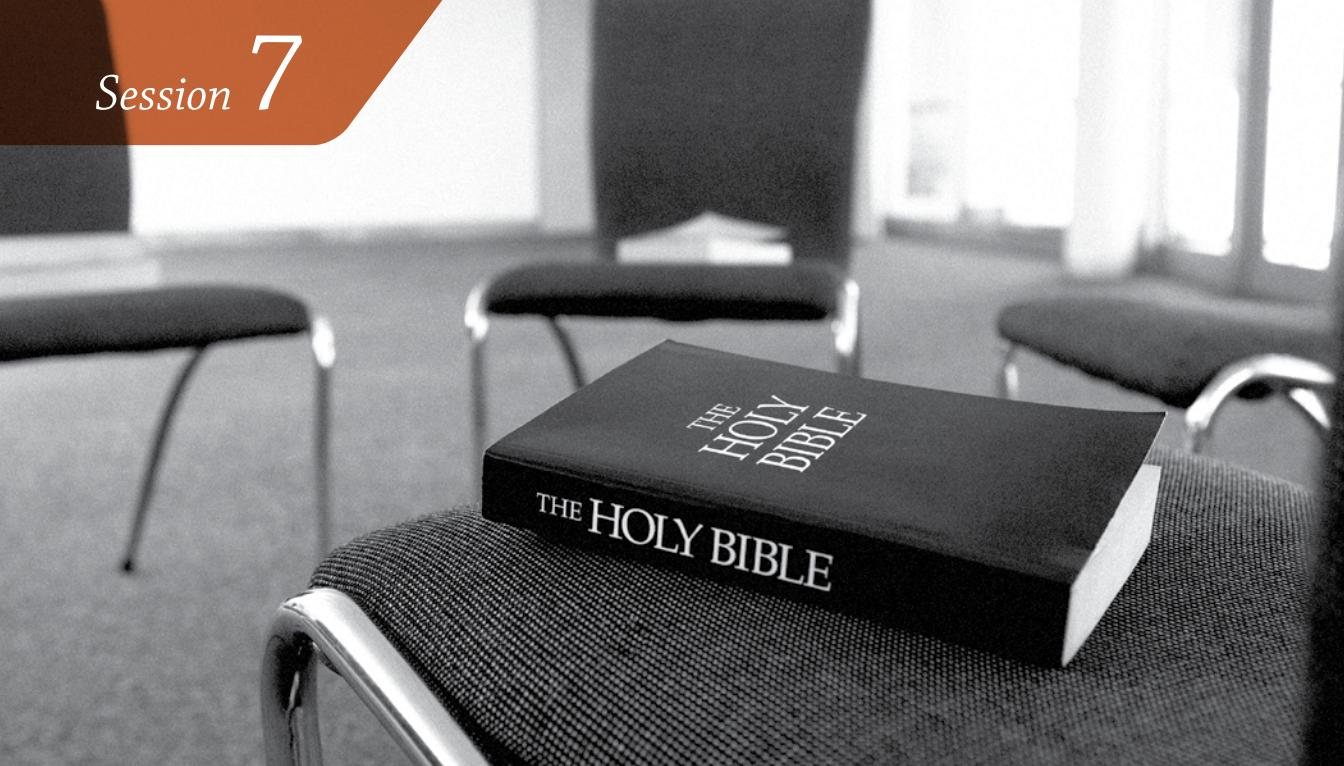
What needs to change in your life so that the standard of the commands is seen in you? Ask God to reveal ways in which you fall short of these commandments, confessing to Him what He reveals to you. Ask Him to help you live out His desires in your life.

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

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

Prayer Needs





EQUIPPED

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

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

Most of us never think about what is required for a good Bible study group to function. We arrive to find fresh coffee and a clean room. We use the comments in resources like the one you are now reading to help the group better understand the passage. Prayer requests are shared, and the list somehow ends up in your email box.

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

God provides through you and other people the resources needed for your Bible study group to function. He has given various gifts and talents to people in your group who make sure each action is completed.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

EXODUS 25:1—31:18

The second half of Exodus focuses on the events at Mount Sinai and the giving of the law through Moses. In this half of the book God prepared His people (19:1-25) and gave them the law (20:1-23:19). God also gave them instructions for entering the promised land (23:20-33). In 24:1-18 the Lord confirmed His covenant with His people. In this session, our passage turns to the instructions related to the construction of the tabernacle (25:1-31:18; 35:1-3). Once again, we are reminded that the entirety of the exodus event is a gracious act of God by which He delivers, sustains, and instructs His people for new life outside of Egypt.

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

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



Read Exodus 25:1-9; 31:1-6. Notice the directives given to Moses. How is God's grace shown in giving the people the gifts and goods required to obey His directives?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Stewardship*

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

EXPLORE THE TEXT

THE OFFERING (EX. 25:1-7)

¹ The LORD spoke to Moses: ² "Tell the Israelites to take an offering for me. You are to take my offering from everyone who is willing to give. ³ This is the offering you are to receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze; ⁴ blue, purple, and scarlet yarn; fine linen and goat hair; ⁵ ram skins dyed red and fine leather; acacia wood; ⁶ oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; ⁷ and onyx along with other gemstones for mounting on the ephod and breastpiece.

VERSES 1-2

Our study begins with God's directing Moses to call on the Israelites to willingly offer the supplies needed to build the tabernacle. Before anything else, the instructions for the tabernacle begin with an assessment of the people's hearts. This is important because God was instructing them regarding building His dwelling place, a tabernacle. The people were going to contribute to this work. God doesn't just want a contribution out of duty; He is concerned with the heart. There are two notable assessments in this passage.

In verse 2, God called for giving from willing hearts. Why is this important? One could argue that regardless of the state of their hearts, God could use the materials for His purposes. However, God told Moses to receive an offering *from everyone who is willing to give*. God wanted the contributions to come from people who loved Him and wanted Him to dwell among them.

What moves people's hearts to give to God's work? I think it is as simple as remembering God's goodness to them. God had delivered them from Egypt and sustained them on their journey. Just as obeying the Ten Commandments was a responsive action, so is giving. We acknowledge that everything comes from the Lord's hand. We also acknowledge that God provides our daily bread, as He did with manna in the wilderness. As our hearts overflow with thankfulness and gratitude, we give. The words in Exodus are similar to Paul's words to the Corinthians: "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7).

God doesn't just want a contribution out of duty; He is concerned with the heart.

VERSES 3-7

In verses 3-7 we see that God requires costly or sacrificial giving. This is the second notable requirement. The materials for the tabernacle were unique and valuable. God told Moses exactly what to collect from the people—*gold, silver, and bronze; blue, purple, and scarlet yarn; fine linen and goat hair; ram skins dyed red and fine leather; acacia wood; oil ... spices ... and onyx along with other gemstones*.

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

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



This truth has a clear connection to the New Testament. We know that sin separates us from God. For this reason, the tabernacle and temple point to a greater reality—with the coming of Jesus, God came to dwell or to “tabernacle” among us (see John 1:14). Jesus declared that His own body was the temple that would be destroyed and raised (John 2:19). Because Jesus is the resurrected temple, He is the foundation or cornerstone of a new temple (1 Cor. 3:10-11; Eph. 2:19-20; 1 Pet. 2:6), that is, the church. Therefore, in the New Testament, the people of God serve as “God’s dwelling in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:21-22; see also 1 Cor. 3:16-17). The point is that God desires to dwell with His people, and He makes a way for His people to dwell with Him.

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

BIBLE SKILL: *Compare similar passages.*

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

THE PURPOSE (EX. 25:8-9)

⁸ They are to make a sanctuary for me so that I may dwell among them. ⁹ You must make it according to all that I show you—the pattern of the tabernacle as well as the pattern of all its furnishings.”

VERSE 8

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

God desires to dwell with His people, and He makes a way for His people to dwell with Him.

VERSE 9

God called His people to build the tabernacle exactly as He instructed them. He demanded that they follow His pattern. It is significant that Moses did not devise the plan for creating a sanctuary for God; rather, the Lord provided a detailed *pattern of the tabernacle as well as the pattern of all its furnishings*.

As a holy God, He was not to be approached according to the best Israelite ideas or the whims of the culture but according to His word. God stipulates how we must approach Him. No one can approach God in his or her own way without being condemned by sin. God must provide the way. The carefulness of following God’s pattern was important as a heart check for Israel.

In the tabernacle and later in the temple, God’s presence was separated by a veil (see 26:31-35). The Gospel accounts tell us that when Jesus was crucified, the veil was torn in two (Luke 23:44-45).



This shows us that access to God was granted through the sacrifice of Christ. Christ did all of the perfect law-keeping so that we could enjoy fellowship with our God. The Book of Hebrews makes it clear that Christ makes intercession between God and man (Heb. 7:25). What made the travels through the wilderness bearable for the Israelites was the ever-immediate and knowable presence of God always before them. Through Christ, we have even greater access to that comfort and security.

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

THE LEADERS (EX. 31:1-6)

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

In chapters 25–30 Moses recorded the Lord’s instructions concerning the construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings (25:10–27:21) and for the clothing and consecration of the priests (28:1–29:46).

VERSES 1-6

This section names **•Bezalel son of •Uri** and **•Oholiab son of •Ahisamach** as those whom the Lord had prepared to work in every craft He had prescribed for the construction of the tabernacle and all its elements (see 35:30–36:2). Bezalel is described as being **filled ... with God’s Spirit**, which means here that he had been equipped to fulfill the particular task to which he was called. The expression **filled ... with God’s Spirit** appears in the Old Testament with the idea of God’s equipping a person for a task that serves His purposes and the well-being of God’s people.

Not only had God provided the materials and the instructions for the tabernacle, He also empowered the workers to build this tabernacle by the power of His Spirit. Once again, the giving of the Spirit prefigures Christ's building the church through the Spirit. If the Spirit builds us up as the dwelling place of God on earth, let us be eager to build on that work.

This passage points us to 1 Corinthians 14:12, where Paul exhorted the church, "since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, seek to excel in building up the church." Similarly, in Ephesians 2:19-22, Paul reminded the church that we are "members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you are also being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit."

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

God is already on mission. The church is called to join Him on His mission.

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

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



IN MY CONTEXT

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

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

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

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

Prayer Needs



REBELLION

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

EXODUS 32:1-6,11-14

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

Essentially, anything other than God that we seek to give us security and significance is an idol. For some, it is romantic relationships. For others, it is approval. For many people, it is financial security or a comfortable lifestyle. The list goes on and on. While these can be good things, they are not ultimate things. They fail to deliver the deep and lasting joy that we long for. We were created for God.

Augustine said, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in Him.” The good news of the gospel is that, in Christ, we have more than we need to meet our hearts’ deepest desires. The only way to destroy our idols is to set our affections on Him and enjoy Him above all else.

KEY DOCTRINE: *God*

There is one and only one living and true God.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

EXODUS 32:1–34:35

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

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

Read Exodus 32:1–34:35 in your Bible. Notice the different requests made in this passage. Identify who made the requests, to whom they were made, and the purpose of the requests. How is each request unique based on the one to whom it was made?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

REBELLION (EX. 32:1-4)

¹ When the people saw that Moses delayed in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said to him, “Come, make gods for us who will go before us because this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt—we don’t know what has happened to him!” ² Aaron replied to them, “Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me.” ³ So all the people took off the gold rings that were on their ears and brought them to Aaron. ⁴ He took the gold from them, fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it into an image of a calf. Then they said, “Israel, these are your gods, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!”

VERSES 1-4

Moses was on the mountain receiving instruction from God about the tabernacle. Verse 1 tells us that *Moses delayed in coming down from the mountain*. It seems that Israel doubted whether he would return: *we don’t know what has happened to him!* Thus, shortly after being delivered out of Egypt, Israel was now falling away from God after becoming impatient and restless. Even though the people had gotten out of Egypt, Egypt had not gotten out of them.

The people gathered themselves together around Aaron, calling on him to *make gods* who would go before them. In response to their request, Aaron instructed the people to bring him their gold jewelry so that he might fashion this false god. This jewelry had been a gift from God taken out of Egypt to be used in the building of the tabernacle. Yet, here they were, willing to use it to blaspheme the very God who provided it to them.

Even though the people had gotten out of Egypt, Egypt had not gotten out of them.

Aaron collected the *gold rings* and fashioned them into *an image of a calf* for the people to worship. This reveals how easily we can be lured into the foolishness of idolatry.

It is no coincidence that Israel made a golden calf. Most likely, they chose a calf because cows were worshiped in Egypt and were



used to represent the Egyptians' creator god. The true God of creation delivered His people out of Egypt; now they were creating and bowing to the false Egyptian god of creation.

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

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

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

BIBLE SKILL: *Compare, contrast, and correlate Bible passages.*

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

SIN COMMITTED (EX. 32:5-6)

⁵ When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of it and made an announcement: “There will be a festival to the LORD tomorrow.”

⁶ Early the next morning they arose, offered burnt offerings, and presented fellowship offerings. The people sat down to eat and drink, and got up to party.

VERSES 5-6

Having made the golden calf, Aaron *built an altar* and announced a day of celebration. *Early the next morning* the people offered sacrifices to the idol, followed by a full festival. This text makes it abundantly clear that Israel had turned its back on God. Verses 5-6 provide a clear example of what Paul condemned in Romans 1:22-25, namely, that people become fools when they exchange the image of God for idols. Israel had exchanged the truth of God for a lie. They worshiped a creation, rather than the Creator, and they were in all-out celebration of their idolatry.

One might wonder how Israel became so foolish. Verse 8 says that they quickly turned aside from God’s ways. In verse 9 we receive a clue that provides clarity into why Israel so quickly moved into idolatrous celebration. Moses declared that they were “a stiff-necked people.”

We become like what we worship. We resemble what we revere.

One of the Old Testament principles for understanding the effects of sin, especially idolatry, is that we become like what we worship. We resemble what we revere. Israel’s cow idol had eyes but could not see. It had ears but could not hear. It had legs but could not move. In Psalm 115:8, the psalmist declared, “Those who make them [idols] are just like them, as are all who trust in them.”

In Exodus 32, Israel had become stiff-necked, like a wild or untrained cow—they would not obey. Consider Hosea 4:16, which declares, “For Israel is as obstinate as a stubborn cow. Can the LORD now shepherd them like a lamb in an open meadow?”

The idea is that when a people are fully engaged in—and, in the case of Israel, celebrating—their idolatry, they become blind to their sin. In a sense, they receive their just reward. The Israelites



had stubbornly turned from God, and now, by their own power, they were unable to see the effects of their idolatry. Any attempt to worship any person or object other than the one true God will lead to foolishness. Sometimes the scariest judgment of God in this life is to give us exactly what we want. How would they break away? How would they see?

Sometimes the scariest judgment of God in this life is to give us exactly what we want.

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

The Foolishness of Idolatry

Idols are ...

- *worthless (Jer. 2:5,8,11)*
- *traps (Ps. 106:36)*
- *made by human hands (Ps. 135:15; Acts 7:41)*
- *temporary (Isa. 2:18)*
- *unable to save (Isa. 45:20)*
- *unable to speak (Jer. 10:5; 1 Cor. 12:2)*
- *unable to walk (Jer. 10:5)*
- *liars (Zech. 10:2)*
- *nothing (1 Cor. 8:4)*

APPEAL FOR GRACE (EX. 32:11-14)

¹¹ But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God: “LORD, why does your anger burn against your people you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and a strong hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians say, ‘He brought them out with an evil intent to kill them in the mountains and eliminate them from

the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger and relent concerning this disaster planned for your people.¹³ Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel—you swore to them by yourself and declared, 'I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and will give your offspring all this land that I have promised, and they will inherit it forever.'¹⁴ So the LORD relented concerning the disaster he had said he would bring on his people.

VERSES 11-13

God's wrath burned hot against His people. We must remember that these were the people He had saved from Egypt. God is jealous for His people's worship. He is also just and holy. Israel was in absolute defiance and rebellion. We must also remember the truth that God's jealousy for His people's worship does not make Him power-hungry. God is the only, all-powerful God of creation. Therefore, He alone is worthy of worship. This was a situation prime for God to destroy the entire nation of sinners, and He would be just in giving them what they deserved, since they were not rendering to Him what He deserves.

However, God is faithful to His word. This is where we see Moses functioning as a mediator between God and Israel. Moses asked God, "*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'?*" Moses called on God to *remember* His promise made to *Abraham, Isaac, and Israel*.

VERSE 14

Note the word *relented* used in verse 14. Because of His promise to His people, God *relented* from the disaster of destroying the people. The word *relent* has the idea of God's being moved to pity and having compassion. God, in His longsuffering, takes upon Himself the evil that has been done against Him. God's relenting here reveals His desire to be true to His own character and promise but also to show His steadfast love for His people. Moses' conversation with God did not remind God of something the Lord had forgotten. It does not mean that Moses swayed God, as if this whole event had taken Him by surprise.

Moses' prayer on behalf of the people accomplished two things. First, it verbalized (or revealed) the reality that God is moved



to burning wrath because of His people's rebellion. Second, it revealed God's promise to His people. This is what held back the Lord's judgment—His promise. Despite the people's rebellion, the promise of God is the controlling factor in this narrative. In the end, God turned His wrath away from His people and showed them grace.

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

The good news of this story, and the good news of the gospel, is that there is more grace in God than sin in us.

In this incident, the Israelites did not get what they deserved. The justice of God was upheld in the fact that thousands of years later, Jesus Christ consumed the wrath of God against all rebellion, thus fulfilling the promises of God. For our salvation, Christ interceded on our behalf. Now, in Christ, the church is called to intercede on behalf of others, asking God to open their eyes to their sin and their need for repentance. The good news of this story, and the good news of the gospel, is that there is more grace in God than sin in us.

***How does God's being faithful to His promises give us comfort today?
What do we learn about God's mercy in this passage?***

IN MY CONTEXT

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

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

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

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

Prayer Needs





HIS PRESENCE

God enjoys dwelling with His obedient people.

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

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

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

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

EXODUS 35:1–40:38

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

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

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

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

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

Read Exodus 39:42-43; 40:1-4,34-38 in your Bible. What words or phrases do you see that emphasize the results of obedience? Why is obedience prominent in these verses?



EXPLORE THE TEXT

FINISHED! (EX. 39:42-43)

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

VERSES 42-43

In chapters 25–31, Moses made sure that the work of building the tabernacle was done according to the instruction given by the Lord. In these verses, the Israelites had finished making all the items for the tabernacle as specified by God. The repetition of the phrase *according to everything the LORD had commanded* is key. It clearly emphasizes the people's obedience. Moses *inspected* the work and *blessed* the people for their faithful work.

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

In the act of building the tabernacle, the people had a physical and formative reminder of who they were as the people of God. As we have seen, there was also a dark side to their identity. One of the patterns we have noticed in our study of Exodus is just how fickle and unfaithful Israel had been. Even in the construction of the tabernacle, the people learned righteousness from continued obedience. What's beautiful about this passage is that having learned from their past disobedience, God's people made sure that they followed God's word exactly at this point. With careful attention to God's word, they moved forward in obedience to His commands.

If we approach our failures with a very practical view of spiritual growth, we will see two things. First, failure gives way to humility for the best of saints. Secondly, grace gives way to hope for the worst of sinners. When a saint experiences failure,

it produces humility. When a sinner experiences grace after failure, it produces hope. Often it is the experience of God's grace in forgiveness after our past failures that equips us with greater determination to say no to sin and yes to godliness. Much of Israel's history in Exodus is riddled with failure. God's instruction for them to build Him a dwelling place was a sign of mercy and grace.

Satisfaction can be found in finishing the work God has assigned us.

God's work secured His people's redemption, and now their work would secure His dwelling place among them. In this sense, satisfaction can be found in finishing the work God has assigned us.

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

KEY DOCTRINE: *Sanctification*

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

ASSEMBLY REQUIRED (EX. 40:1-4)

¹ The LORD spoke to Moses: ² "You are to set up the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, on the first day of the first month. ³ Put the ark of the testimony there and screen off the ark with the curtain. ⁴ Then bring in the table and lay out its arrangement; also bring in the lampstand and set up its lamps."



VERSES 1-4

Once again, *the LORD spoke to Moses* and gave him specific instructions regarding when and how he was to prepare and set apart the tabernacle. In obedience to God's word, Moses carried out the tasks just as God had commanded (see 40:16-33).

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

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

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

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

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

GLORY SHOWN (EX. 40:34-35)

³⁴ **The cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.** ³⁵ **Moses was unable to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud rested on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.**

VERSES 34-35

The tabernacle was *the tent of meeting* in which the Lord's presence was signified by the *cloud* and fire (v. 38). From this point forward, God would direct the Israelites' journeys by means of the cloud by day and the fire by night. The cloud and fire were visible reminders that the Lord dwelt among them. His presence was real, a comforting reminder during their journey through the wilderness. The cloud was also a sign that God accepted all that His people had done.

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

Jesus is the reality to which the tabernacle pointed; He is "the greater and more perfect tabernacle."

What Moses longed for when he asked God, "Let me see your glory" (Ex. 33:18) would eventually be revealed in Jesus. Jesus is the image of God (Col. 1:15). In Hebrews we are told that Jesus is the reality to which the tabernacle pointed; He is "the greater and more perfect tabernacle" (Heb. 9:11). In John 2, Jesus said that His body was the temple, the meeting place of God and man (vv. 19-22).

Jesus unveiled His glory, the glory of God, on the mount of transfiguration, and Moses was present at that momentous event (Luke 9:28-30). Previously, Moses had not been able to see God's face. At the transfiguration of Christ, however, Moses beheld Him. On the mountain, Moses and Elijah were with Jesus, "speaking of his departure" (Luke 9:31). The word translated "departure" in Luke 9:31 is literally the Greek word for exodus (*exodon*). Jesus was about to lead the ultimate exodus through His death and resurrection. His sacrifice made the way for sinful people to fellowship with God.



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

GOD LED (EX. 40:36-38)

³⁶ The Israelites set out whenever the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle throughout all the stages of their journey. ³⁷ If the cloud was not taken up, they did not set out until the day it was taken up. ³⁸ For the cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day, and there was a fire inside the cloud by night, visible to the entire house of Israel throughout all the stages of their journey.

VERSES 36-38

The glory *cloud* was present by day and the pillar of *fire* by night to guide God's people. Notice the repetition of mentioning the covering of the cloud throughout this account. This is reminiscent of Exodus 24:16-18, where the cloud covered the mountain and the glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai. The tabernacle was, in many ways, a portable Sinai.

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

Today, God offers direction through His Word and the promptings of His indwelling Spirit. This is a reality on which we must reflect. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus made it clear: "I am with you always, to the end of the age." In Hebrews 13:5-8, we are reminded that Jesus will never leave us nor forsake us (v. 5). So we can

confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” (v. 6). Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (v. 8). This is central to the Holy Spirit’s daily comfort in our lives.

In this sense, we must—like the Israelites—wait and listen for God. You can almost imagine the Israelites in their camp. They were satisfied but never fully settled. They set up camp but were ready at any moment to move ahead. At any moment, God’s presence, like the cloud, would arise and press on. And Israel would follow. It is always wise to patiently and prayerfully look around and see what God is doing and join Him in that work.

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

BIBLE SKILL: *Correlate essential biblical concepts.*

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



IN MY CONTEXT

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

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

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

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

Prayer Needs



SET BEFORE

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

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

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

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

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

LEVITICUS 1:1–7:38

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

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

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

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

Read Leviticus 1:3-9; 2:1-3; and 3:1-5 in your Bible. Look for similar words and phrases. What do the similar words and phrases reveal about the expectations placed on the one offering the sacrifice?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

THE BURNT OFFERING (LEV. 1:3-9)

³ “If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he is to bring an unblemished male. He will bring it to the entrance to the tent of meeting so that he may be accepted by the LORD. ⁴ He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering so it can be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. ⁵ He is to slaughter the bull before the LORD; Aaron’s sons the priests are to present the blood and splatter it on all sides of the altar that is at the entrance to the tent of meeting. ⁶ Then he is to skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces. ⁷ The sons of Aaron the priest will prepare a fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. ⁸ Aaron’s sons the priests are to arrange the pieces, the head, and the fat on top of the burning wood on the altar. ⁹ The offerer is to wash its entrails and legs with water. Then the priest will burn all of it on the altar as a burnt offering, a fire offering of a pleasing aroma to the LORD.”

VERSES 3-4

Central to understanding this text is the command that the worshiper must offer a bull without any physical defects, *an unblemished male*. The presence of a physical defect would make it unworthy as an offering to God. In fact, Malachi 1:8 notes that offering an animal of defect is evil in the sight of God. This reminds us of the proper way to approach God: with our best. In reality, we all have spots and blemishes. However, God’s perfect standards in this passage point us forward to the perfect sacrifice that was to come many years after this book was written.

God’s perfect standards in this passage point us forward to the perfect sacrifice that was to come many years after this book was written.

The physical gesture of the worshiper’s laying his *hand on the head* of the animal is deeply symbolic. This gesture is also repeated in the peace offering and sin offering (Lev. 3:2-13; 4:4-33). The laying on of a hand symbolized that the worshiper’s relationship



with the sacrificial animal was one of atonement. By laying his hand on the offering, the worshiper was accepting the payment that would be offered for sin. Atonement for sin was the primary reason for the shedding of blood and burning of flesh in the animal sacrifice. This passage is a bloody and beautiful demonstration of the doctrines of expiation (removal of sin) and propitiation (appeasement of God's wrath against sin). The act of sacrifice noted that the offerer needed to be ransomed from sin and that God's just wrath against sin had to be met. Thus, the animal died in the place of the offerer. The burnt offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering all accomplished making atonement for sin (Lev. 4:26; 5:16). This daily offering was a reminder of the need to confess sin regularly. This reminds us that we should take sin seriously, knowing that the price for sin can only be paid by an acceptable sacrifice. However, the hand gesture of communion with the sacrifice points to our solidarity with Christ in His sacrifice for our sin.

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

BIBLE SKILL: *Use a Bible dictionary.*

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

VERSES 5-9

The burnt offering was bloody, and the jarring imagery of the offering included slaughtering the animal, throwing its blood against the altar (v. 5), cutting the slaughtered animal into pieces (v. 6), and burning the remains so they are consumed by fire (vv. 7-9). In Leviticus 17:11, we are reminded that the blood of an animal contains life and the animal itself is symbolic of life. The gruesome reality of this sacrificial act would be difficult to erase from the worshiper's mind.

The burnt offering is often considered the most costly of offerings since it was completely burned up with nearly nothing left over. Therefore, this offering is often depicted as symbolic of total dedication to God on behalf of the worshiper.

This offering was *a pleasing aroma to the LORD*, an expression meaning the Lord accepted the gift. These offerings provide a jolting picture of the sacrifice that Christ would make on behalf of sinners at the cross. The apostle Peter reminds us in 1 Peter 1:18-19 that we were ransomed by the blood of Christ, who was our sacrifice for sin. In other words, the precious blood of Christ is what atoned for our sin, and He was without blemish or spot. Paul also notes that Christ's self-sacrifice was rendered as a fragrant offering (Eph. 5:2). The good news of the gospel is that Jesus was without defect and perfectly atoned for our sin. Jesus also offered a whole sacrifice to satisfy God's righteous requirements because of sin. Therefore, there is nothing else left; His sacrifice was once for all (Heb. 10:5-10). Just as the smoke from the offering ascended once the act was complete, so too did Jesus ascend to the Father once His sacrificial act and resurrection were complete (Heb. 9:24).

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

KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Son*

Jesus is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man.



THE GRAIN OFFERING (LEV. 2:1-3)

¹ “When anyone presents a grain offering as an offering to the LORD, it is to consist of fine flour. He is to pour olive oil on it, put frankincense on it, ² and bring it to Aaron’s sons the priests. The priest will take a handful of fine flour and oil from it, along with all its frankincense, and will burn this memorial portion of it on the altar, a fire offering of a pleasing aroma to the LORD. ³ But the rest of the grain offering will belong to Aaron and his sons; it is the holiest part of the fire offerings to the LORD.”

VERSES 1-3

As a sign of gracious instruction, God outlined the requirements and protocol for presenting a grain offering. The costly value of *fine flour* and *frankincense* indicate that God’s people were to offer their very best to God. The priest was called to burn a portion of the offering as a *memorial* to the Lord. The *pleasing aroma* of such an offering stresses the renewal of one’s dedication to the Lord (Rom. 12:1-2).

“Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship” (Rom. 12:1).

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

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

Types of Sacrifices in the Book of Leviticus

- *Burnt offering—voluntary; signified propitiation for sin and surrender, devotion, and commitment to God (Lev. 1; 6:8-13).*
- *Grain or cereal offering—voluntary; signified thanksgiving for firstfruits (Lev. 2; 6:14-23).*
- *Fellowship or peace offering—voluntary; symbolized fellowship with God; signified thankfulness or the expression of a vow (Lev. 3; 7:11-36; 22:17-30; 27).*
- *Sin offering—mandatory; made by one who sinned unintentionally or was unclean in order to attain purification (Lev. 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30; 12:6-8).*
- *Guilt offering—mandatory; made by a person who had deprived another of his rights or had desecrated something holy (Lev. 5:14-6:7; 7:1-6; 14:12-18).*

THE FELLOWSHIP OFFERING (LEV. 3:1-5)

¹ “If his offering is a fellowship sacrifice, and he is presenting an animal from the herd, whether male or female, he is to present one without blemish before the LORD. ² He is to lay his hand on the head of his offering and slaughter it at the entrance to the tent of meeting. Then Aaron’s sons the priests will splatter the blood on all sides of the altar. ³ He will present part of the fellowship sacrifice as a fire offering to the LORD: the fat surrounding the entrails, all the fat that is on the entrails, ⁴ and the two kidneys with the fat on them at the loins; he will also remove the fatty lobe of the liver with the kidneys. ⁵ Aaron’s sons will burn it on the altar along with the burnt offering that is on the burning wood, a fire offering of a pleasing aroma to the LORD.”

VERSES 1-5

Note again that God described the requirements and protocol in presenting a fellowship offering. The burnt offering and the fellowship offering are very similar. However, in the fellowship offering, only the fatty portions of the sacrifice were consumed by fire. The remainder of the animal was presented to the priests as God’s servants.



In ancient Israel, the fat of the animal was considered the most valuable or flavorful part of the animal. In this sense, presenting it first to God was an act of honoring God as most worthy of such portions. Another emphasis of this offering included the worshiper's eating the meat with the priest (Lev. 7:15-16). Therefore, this act symbolizes communion and reconciliation with God.

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

The fellowship offering finds its true fulfillment in Christ's act of sacrifice, allowing reconciliation between God and man.

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

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

IN MY CONTEXT

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

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

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

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

Prayer Needs





SET APART

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

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

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

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

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

LEVITICUS 8:1–10:20

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

Worship in the tabernacle began at the initiation of God in the way prescribed by God. Aaron and his sons offered a variety of sacrifices on behalf of the people on the first day of worship in the house of God (9:1-23). God sent fire and consumed the burnt offering (9:24), signifying His presence and acceptance of the sacrifices. The people fell to the ground in response to the manifestation of God, and they worshiped Him.

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

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

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

Thankfully, Leviticus provides the Old Testament pattern to dwell in God's presence, which is both fulfilled in Christ and modeled in the New Testament. The question the Israelites faced—the question we all face—is whether we will follow God's pattern for holiness. One of the key indicators that someone is



actually part of God's people is the evidence of fruit in his or her life (Gal. 5:22-23). We do not have to forge our own path to holiness. God has done that for us and has provided the pattern to live in response to His work on our behalf.

Read Leviticus 9:15-24 and 10:1-3 in your Bible. Highlight words and phrases that indicate obedience. What role does obedience play in these passages?

Key Themes in the Book of Leviticus

- *The Holiness of God—God is perfectly holy and has the absolute right to instruct His people in what holiness demands (Lev. 19:2).*
- *The Need for Atonement—The root word translated “atone” or “atonement” occurs fifty-three times in Leviticus and only forty-three times elsewhere in the whole Old Testament. Only God can bridge the great divide between His holiness and humans’ sinfulness. He provides the means of atonement (meaning “at-one-ment”). In His design, blood poured out through sacrifice is the key to atoning for sins (Lev. 17:11).*
- *The Need for Right Living—Relationship to God involves right living with others (Lev. 19:18).*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

CLEANSSED (LEV. 9:15-21)

¹⁵ Aaron presented the people's offering. He took the male goat for the people's sin offering, slaughtered it, and made a sin offering with it as he did before. ¹⁶ He presented the burnt offering and sacrificed it according to the regulation. ¹⁷ Next he presented the grain offering, took a handful of it, and burned it on the altar in addition to the morning burnt offering. ¹⁸ Finally, he slaughtered the ox and the ram as the people's fellowship sacrifice. Aaron's sons brought him the blood, and he splattered it on all sides of the altar. ¹⁹ They also brought the fat portions from the ox

and the ram—the fat tail, the fat surrounding the entrails, the kidneys, and the fatty lobe of the liver—²⁰ and placed these on the breasts. Aaron burned the fat portions on the altar,²¹ but he presented the breasts and the right thigh as a presentation offering before the LORD, as Moses had commanded.

VERSES 15-21

These verses remind us that the first duty of the priest was to offer sacrifices and offerings for the cleansing of God's people from their sins. Verse 15 notes that Aaron first offered a *male goat* as a *sin offering* for the people. The sin offering was a sacrifice of repentance for unintentional sin. We often sin without knowing it or intending to because we are sinful by nature. The instructions regarding sin offerings are in Leviticus 4:1–5:13.

The sin offering was followed by a *burnt offering* and a *grain offering*. Burnt offerings symbolized the complete surrender of one's whole life to God. The instructions for burnt offerings are in chapter 1 and in 6:8-13. The grain offering was given in recognition of God's blessings and was a reminder that everyday life is a gift from God. Instructions for grain offerings are given in chapter 2 and in 6:14-23.

In addition, Leviticus 9:18-21 notes that Aaron offered an ox and a ram as a peace or fellowship offering for God's people. In this offering, the priest received *the breasts and the right thigh* of the sacrificial animal. The person giving the offering received much of the meat of the animal to have a meal of celebration. This offering was given in response to an unexpected blessing, an answer to prayer, or for thankfulness in general.

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

We must remember that God has already provided everything we need to have fellowship with Him. He has provided Jesus as our way to Him (John 14:6; Rom. 5:8). Israel had to approach God in accordance with His instructions and provision. In the same way, we too must follow God according to His gracious provision and plan. When we do, we are able to have fellowship with Him.

It is no coincidence that the Old Testament patterns point forward to the New Testament realities. Just as Aaron presented



offerings on behalf of the Israelites, Jesus, our Mediator, has done the same by offering Himself. The only difference is that after Jesus' offering there is no need for another priest to represent humanity. We no longer require an earthly priest to approach God.

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

BLESSING (LEV. 9:22-24)

²² Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them. He came down after sacrificing the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the fellowship offering. ²³ Moses and Aaron then entered the tent of meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people, and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. ²⁴ Fire came from the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell facedown.

VERSES 22-24

After blessing the people, *Moses and Aaron then entered the tent* together. Their solidarity in this act was an indication that Moses was passing the torch to Aaron as the one who would mediate between God and man. When the two emerged from the tent and offered another blessing, God sent *fire* and *consumed the burnt offering ... on the altar*. The sending of fire indicates that God accepted their offerings.

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

Just as the people responded with praise and worship after Moses and Aaron's offering (Lev. 9:24), believers can rejoice in the blessing of being in God's presence through Christ and should respond in worship of Him. How much more can we as Christians respond in praise knowing that the perfect atonement has been made? How much more can Christians respond with worship knowing that Jesus is the final and eternal Mediator between God and people?

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

BIBLE SKILL: *Use a Bible concordance.*

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

HOLY (LEV. 10:1-3)

¹ Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu each took his own firepan, put fire in it, placed incense on it, and presented unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them to do.

² Then fire came from the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. ³ Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the



LORD has spoken: I will demonstrate my holiness to those who are near me, and I will reveal my glory before all the people.” And Aaron remained silent.

VERSES 1-3

Two of Aaron’s oldest sons—*Nadab and Abihu*—offered an unauthorized offering to the Lord. Each used *his own firepan* in presenting sacrifices to God. A firepan was a censer used to transport burning coals from one place to another. Nadab and Abihu failed to obey the pattern prescribed by God’s law. *Unauthorized* translates a word that means “strange” or “foreign.” Thus, it is likely that their *fire* came from some place other than the altar of the sanctuary. Leviticus 16:12 instructs the priests to “take a firepan full of blazing coals from the altar before the LORD.”

God decides how He will be worshiped; we do not get to decide that. The offense of presenting a sacrifice to God in their own way cost Nadab and Abihu their lives; they both were instantly killed. In light of the verses that immediately follow this account (vv. 8-10), it is also possible that these priests attempted to enter the most holy place after drinking alcohol. Priests were to obediently follow God’s prescribed pattern for carrying out their duties. Clearly, God cannot allow His *holiness* to be violated.

God decides how He will be worshiped; we do not get to decide that.

In what ways do we face the same temptation as Nadab and Abihu?

When people stray away from God’s demands of holiness, what effect does it have on their lives and relationships—both with God and others?

The text tells us that *Aaron remained silent*. In other words, Aaron had no justifiable objection to the due penalty of his son's offense. The holy God of Israel was justified in His judgment against Nadab and Abihu. These two brothers were well aware of the expectations they were to meet. This is a clear reminder that God is holy and should be revered as such.

KEY DOCTRINE: *God*

God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections.

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

In Christ, God's glory is revealed as so wonderful that His people cannot help but fall before Him and give Him glory!

God's requirements for entering and dwelling in His presence must be observed. We cannot approach God by our own invention. Christ is the only way to God (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Moreover, as we read in Hebrews 7:26-28, Christ is the perfect, holy, innocent, and unstained Priest who presents us to God. The definitive demonstration of God's presence with His people comes in Jesus Christ, who dwells in our midst, perfectly revealing the glory of God (John 1:14; 2:11; 2 Cor. 4:6). In Christ, God's glory is revealed as so wonderful that His people cannot help but fall before Him and give Him glory!



IN MY CONTEXT

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

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

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

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

Prayer Needs



SET FREE

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

LEVITICUS 16:3-10,29-30

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

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

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

LEVITICUS 11:1–16:34

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

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

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

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

Read Leviticus 16:3-10,29-30 in your Bible. As you read, identify the progression followed by Aaron. Why was completing each action in the order specified so important?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

PREPARING TO SACRIFICE (LEV. 16:3-6)

³ “Aaron is to enter the most holy place in this way: with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. ⁴ He is to wear a holy linen tunic, and linen undergarments are to be on his body. He is to tie a linen sash around him and wrap his head with a linen turban. These are holy garments; he must bathe his body with water before he wears them. ⁵ He is to take from the Israelite community two male goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering. ⁶ Aaron will present the bull for his sin offering and make atonement for himself and his household.

Leviticus 16:1 recalls Aaron’s two sons who died when they approached God in an improper way to offer sacrifices to the Lord (see 10:1-3). God gave the instructions concerning the Day of Atonement in chapter 16 in response to their sinful actions.

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

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

VERSES 3-6

First, Aaron was to prepare the offering. He prepared *a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering*. These offerings were *for himself and his household*.

Second, Aaron was to prepare himself. Aaron was not only to *bathe his body* but also to put on the proper *holy garments* for the offering. These priestly garments were to be used only when he was exercising this solemn part of his sacred office. After the conclusion



of the Day of Atonement, he would never again wear the white garments in which he officiated on this day (16:23).

The priestly preparations were to make sure that Aaron was cleansed and consecrated prior to acting on behalf of the people. Unlike Aaron, Christ needed no prior act to cleanse Himself before His sacrificial offering. Jesus is the perfect Priest (Heb. 7:27).

Over and over again throughout the Bible, it is clear that God is primarily concerned with the heart.

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

How do Christians rightly prepare themselves to enter into God's presence?

THE CHOSEN GOAT (LEV. 16:7-10)

⁷ Next he will take the two goats and place them before the LORD at the entrance to the tent of meeting. ⁸ After Aaron casts lots for the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other for an uninhabitable place, ⁹ he is to present the goat chosen by lot for the LORD and sacrifice it as a sin offering. ¹⁰ But the goat chosen by lot for an uninhabitable place is to be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement with it by sending it into the wilderness for an uninhabitable place."

VERSES 7-10

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

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

KEY DOCTRINE: *Salvation*

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

The Hebrew word translated *uninhabitable place* at the end of verse 8 is *azazel*. This word occurs in the Old Testament only in Leviticus 16. Bible scholars have proposed various interpretations of its meaning. One view focuses on the origin of the word. It comes from a compound Hebrew word combining the words for "goat" and "going away," meaning the goat that goes away. This view fits the context of Leviticus 16. Another interpretation, developed by rabbis, suggests that *azazel* means a "rough, difficult terrain"—that is, an *uninhabitable place*. As such, it refers to the goat's destination. This view also fits the context of Leviticus 16.

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



Believers can be confident that Jesus' death on the cross sufficiently removed the penalty and guilt of their sin.

The act of atonement in Leviticus 16 is beautifully symbolic of the atonement of Christ described in Hebrews 9:7-14. Not only did Jesus sacrifice Himself in a gruesome death on the cross to pay for the sins of the people, He also went "outside the camp" and bore the disgrace of sin on their behalf (Heb. 13:13). Therefore, believers can be confident that Jesus' death on the cross sufficiently removed the penalty and guilt of their sin.

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

.....
.....
.....

BIBLE SKILL: Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.

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

.....
.....
.....
.....

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT (LEV. 16:29-30)

²⁹ "This is to be a permanent statute for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month you are to practice self-denial and do no work, both the native and the alien who resides

among you. ³⁰ Atonement will be made for you on this day to cleanse you, and you will be clean from all your sins before the LORD.”

VERSES 29-30

God established the Day of Atonement as an annual ceremony held on the tenth day of the seventh month (Tishki). He declared, ***This is to be a permanent statute for you.*** The purpose of this most holy of days was to make **•atonement** for the sins of Israel.

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

In the Book of Hebrews, the writer makes it clear that Jesus' crucifixion was the definitive Day of Atonement.

The people of God (and foreigners) were called to humble themselves by practicing **self-denial**, probably through fasting and prayer. The word translated *practice self-denial* is literally “afflict yourself.” In Psalm 35:13, David prayed, “I humbled myself with fasting, and my prayer was genuine.” In Isaiah 58:3, the people complained, “Why have we fasted, but you have not seen? We have denied ourselves, but you haven’t noticed!” The Lord answered, “Look, you do as you please on the day of your fast, and oppress all your workers.” In both of these passages, fasting is correlated with humility. However, as the context of Isaiah 58 shows, God is not concerned with mere outward expressions but with inward repentance accompanied by obedience. In this sense, God’s instruction regarding the Day of Atonement was not only concerned with external acts but also with the people’s sincerity of heart.

In the Book of Hebrews, the writer makes it clear that Jesus’ crucifixion was the definitive Day of Atonement. Jesus’ sacrificial death was the long-awaited, final fulfillment of the purification offerings, by which He cleansed believers from sin through the shedding of His own blood (Heb. 9:12,14,24). Jesus was also the true and greater scapegoat in that He bore our sins away, taking them outside the camp (Heb. 9:28). As for the fulfillment of the burnt offerings, once again, Jesus made perfect and final atonement for our sin. As Christians, we look to Christ not only



with repentance of our sin but also with great joy, for His sacrifice cleanses us so that we can draw near to God with full assurance and acceptance.

What does the need for an annual sacrifice reveal about the nature of humanity? What does needing an annual sacrifice reveal about our need for Jesus?

The Superiority of Christ's Priesthood

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

IN MY CONTEXT

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

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

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

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

Prayer Needs





SET FUTURES

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

LEVITICUS 26:3-16,40-45

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

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

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

LEVITICUS 17:1–27:34

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

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

The final major section of Leviticus deals with God’s requirements for holy living. This is the longest section of the book (chaps. 17–27). These chapters have been titled the “Holiness Code” because they consist of a list of regulations related to holy living. The instructions contained in this section may be categorized under ten headings.

Sacrifice and blood (17:1-16)—Because blood represented life and was established by God as the means of atonement, it was not to be consumed.

Sexual prohibitions (18:1-30)—God’s people must reject abominable sexual practices—incest, adultery, child sacrifice, homosexuality, and bestiality.

Interpersonal relationships (19:1-37)—Right relationships with others are essential to a right relationship with God.

Capital offenses (20:1-27)—Capital offenses included worshiping false gods, cursing one’s parents, and sexual perversions.

Worship and holiness (21:1–22:33)—Priests must be models of holy living.

Holy days (23:1-44)—Israel’s weekly religious festivals and feasts must be properly observed.

Consecration and desecration (24:1-23)—The Lord provided guidelines for the administering of the affairs of the tabernacle.



The Sabbath and the Year of Jubilee (25:1-55)—The proper observance of the Sabbath and Jubilee years would testify to Israel’s status as a holy people.

Blessings and curses (26:1-46)—Blessings and curses would follow obedience and disobedience of God’s commands.

Vows and offerings (27:1-34)—God gave regulations concerning offerings of dedication. These regulations provide a fitting conclusion to the Book of Leviticus because dedicating oneself and one’s possessions to the Lord is the heart of holiness.

Read Leviticus 26:3-16,40-45 in your Bible. Notice the promises made in these passages. How is a warning a form of a promise?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

PROMISE (LEV. 26:3-13)

³ “If you follow my statutes and faithfully observe my commands,
⁴ I will give you rain at the right time, and the land will yield its produce, and the trees of the field will bear their fruit. ⁵ Your threshing will continue until grape harvest, and the grape harvest will continue until sowing time; you will have plenty of food to eat and live securely in your land. ⁶ I will give peace to the land, and you will lie down with nothing to frighten you. I will remove dangerous animals from the land, and no sword will pass through your land. ⁷ You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall before you by the sword. ⁸ Five of you will pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand; your enemies will fall before you by the sword. ⁹ I will turn to you, make you fruitful and multiply you, and confirm my covenant with you. ¹⁰ You will eat the old grain of the previous year and will clear out the old to make room for the new. ¹¹ I will place my residence among you, and I will not reject you. ¹² I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people. ¹³ I am the LORD

your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, so that you would no longer be their slaves. I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to live in freedom.

VERSES 3-6

According to these verses, the promises of abundance are tied to Israel's obedience to the word of God—*if you follow my statutes and faithfully observe my commands*. These blessings included rain, abundant crops, rich harvest, and protection from enemies.

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

God's promise of abundance, however, was a sign of His favor and grace in light of His people's obedience to His word and their trust in Him. Likewise, the promise of harmony between man and beast in this Leviticus passage (26:6) points back to man's initial dominion over the beasts of the land (Gen. 2:20).

VERSES 7-13

God also promised the Israelites would enjoy divine protection and victory over their enemies if they observed His commands. Also, if they were obedient, God would allow the people to be fruitful and multiply. This language of being fruitful and multiplying is reminiscent of the command in Genesis 1:28. It also appears in Genesis 9:7 after the flood and in Exodus 1:7.

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

In this passage we are also reminded that God desires His people to experience blessing. But we must be careful not to think that God's blessing is something earned; blessing is the proper consequence of being made the people of God. All of God's blessings are a sign of His grace.

One of the realities that becomes clear through the story of Israel—and is readily attested to in our own lives—is that the



people of God cannot live according to God's laws perfectly. The endless cycle of God's giving the law, the people's responding, then disobeying, then finally being brought to repentance attests to our need for a Savior. Praise be to God that Jesus perfectly lived in accordance with God's laws. The good news of the gospel is that in Christ we receive the blessings He deserved because He took on the punishment for sin that we deserve. Therefore, the promise of God in Leviticus 26:11-12—*I will place my residence among you, and I will not reject you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people*—finds its ultimate “amen” in Christ and will be experienced at the end of the age (Rev. 21:1-7).

God promised to sustain life and give peace to those who follow His commands faithfully. The greatest promise was His presence. God offers a future and peace to those who follow Him out of obedient love. Thankfully we find that peace in Christ and find the power for obedience in His Spirit.

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

WARNING (LEV. 26:14-16)

¹⁴ **But if you do not obey me and observe all these commands—
¹⁵ if you reject my statutes and despise my ordinances, and do not observe all my commands—and break my covenant, ¹⁶ then I will do this to you: I will bring terror on you—wasting disease and fever that will cause your eyes to fail and your life to ebb away. You will sow your seed in vain because your enemies will eat it.”**

VERSES 14-16

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

The personal curses of disobedience relate to inner turmoil, disease, and heartache. The curse of disobedience would also include difficulty with harvesting from the land and the inability to

ward off enemies, who would eat the fruits of Israel's labor. Either way, the results would be the same—no food. Their rejection of God's commands would result in their subsequent ejection from the blessings of God's favor (see also Lev. 26:17-39).

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

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

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

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

KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Father*

God is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

RETURN (LEV. 26:40-45)

⁴⁰ “But when they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers—their unfaithfulness that they practiced against me,



and how they acted with hostility toward me, ⁴¹ and I acted with hostility toward them and brought them into the land of their enemies—and when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, ⁴² then I will remember my covenant with Jacob. I will also remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. ⁴³ For the land abandoned by them will make up for its Sabbaths by lying desolate without the people, while they make amends for their iniquity, because they rejected my ordinances and abhorred my statutes. ⁴⁴ Yet in spite of this, while they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject or abhor them so as to destroy them and break my covenant with them, since I am the LORD their God. ⁴⁵ For their sake I will remember the covenant with their fathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God; I am the LORD.”

VERSES 40-43

Thankfully we see that God’s rejection of Israel was not final. If the people confessed their sin and humbly returned to God in faith and obedience, He would restore them.

The problem that Israel faced—and that we all face—is a problem with the heart. In verse 41 it is clear that even though the people had been circumcised in the flesh, their hearts could be far from God.

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

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

VERSES 44-45

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

As we have already learned, Jesus took upon Himself the curses that our sin deserves. Moreover, in His sacrifice, He provided a way for us to enter into the blessings of His perfect obedience (Gal. 3:8-14).

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

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

BIBLE SKILL: *Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a biblical doctrine.*

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



IN MY CONTEXT

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

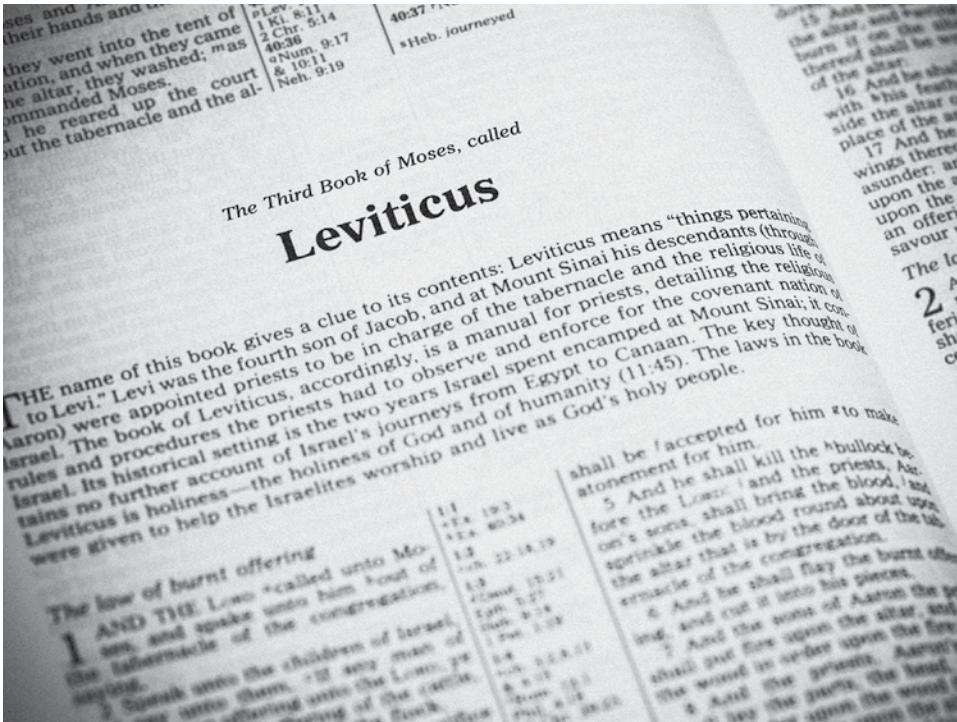
What blessing have you experienced as a result of being obedient to God? Remember that some blessings are found in what you avoided rather than in what you gained. Share these with your group, taking time to thank God for all He provides through salvation in His Son.

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

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

Prayer Needs

HOLY: A WORD STUDY



» In Leviticus 11:44-45, the Lord commanded His people, “For I am the LORD your God, so you must consecrate yourselves and be holy because I am holy.” To the modern ear, those words are unsettling. How can we be like the Creator and Sustainer of the universe? What is God calling us to be when He tells us to “be holy”?

“Holy” is one of the most common Old Testament words. The Hebrew verb form is *qdash* and occurs 171 times. The noun form, derived from the verb, is *qodesh*; it appears 470 times

in the Hebrew Old Testament. The other common derivative of the verb form is the adjective *qadosh*, occurring 116 times. The basic meaning of the verb is to belong to the realm of the sacred, as opposed to belonging to what is common or profane. The noun and adjectival forms refer to and describe, respectively, people, places, and things that God deems sacred.

The biblical concept of holiness has its foundation in God Himself. He is the source of the sacred; He imparts holiness to people, places, and objects.



When God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3), He informed Moses that the ground on which he stood was holy because of God's presence. The Lord set the ark of the covenant apart as holy because the holy one Himself was present there (1 Sam. 6:19-20). The temple, in particular the holy of holies, was sacred because Yahweh placed His name there forever (2 Chron. 7:16) and because it housed the ark.

Exodus 31:12-17 explains the Lord made the Sabbath sacred for His people: "It is a sign forever between me and the Israelites, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, but on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed" (v. 17). This establishment helps us understand the concept of holy. The first six days of the week are common or profane. They are days for working and for carrying out the normal activities. The seventh day, however, is set apart. No work is to be done. To emphasize the seriousness of this command, the Lord specified that any Israelite who performed any kind of work on the Sabbath was to be put to death (v. 15). That individual profaned or made common the Sabbath by the very act of working. Because the Lord set apart the seventh

day as sacred to Himself, a person who performed any act of work on the Sabbath not only disobeyed an explicit command from Him but also denigrated God's inherent nature. The Lord established the Sabbath as a day of rest from all labor and as a perpetual sign of the covenant relationship He made with His people (vv. 16-17).

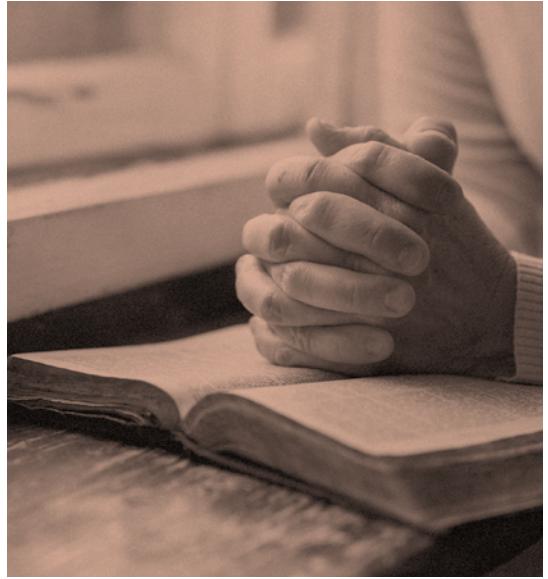
Since God Himself is holy in His essence, He therefore calls His people to be holy. Throughout the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, God provided instructions for how to become holy and how to maintain that holiness. The Lord was the basis of humanity's call and ability to be holy. The presence of God with all believers enables them to live out their lives in a holy relationship with the one who created and saved them. This holy relationship calls for a response from those who confess Him as Lord: live pure and clean lives.

Arguably the most cogent biblical reference to this call is Isaiah's temple vision (Isa. 6). The prophet was in the Lord's presence, in His holy temple. The seraphim were worshiping and serving the King on His throne. They continually called out to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Armies; his glory fills the whole earth" (Isa. 6:3).

The heavenly beings' praise caused Isaiah to understand that God alone is holy, probably leading to his most common title for God: the Holy One of Jacob/Israel. This passage teaches the believer that "what is holy is distinct from whatever does not pertain to deity."¹ The character of Israel's God determined the meaning and understanding for Israel. God is holy; He is not like any other being on earth or in heaven. He is pure and good and completely without evil. Thus, He demands the same moral and ethical behavior from His people.

When the Lord brought the Hebrews to Mount Sinai, He called them to be a "holy nation" to Himself (Ex. 19:6). How did Israel manifest itself as God's holy nation and not profane Him? God gave all of the laws of the Pentateuch in order to show His people how to live holy lives and be sacred to Him. Centuries later, the prophets called God's people not to oppress those who were helpless (Jer. 34:16; Amos 2:6-7) and, in so doing, not to profane God's holy name.

Today we are called in the same manner: "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires of your former ignorance. But as the one who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct; for it is written, Be holy, because I am



holy" (1 Pet. 1:14-16). We, too, are called to be holy—and we can be holy. We can be set apart and behave ethically because of the presence of God with us and within us. We do not act in a manner that profanes and makes common our God and His relationship with His creation. We behave ethically in all activities, and we obey His commandments.

1. John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 180.

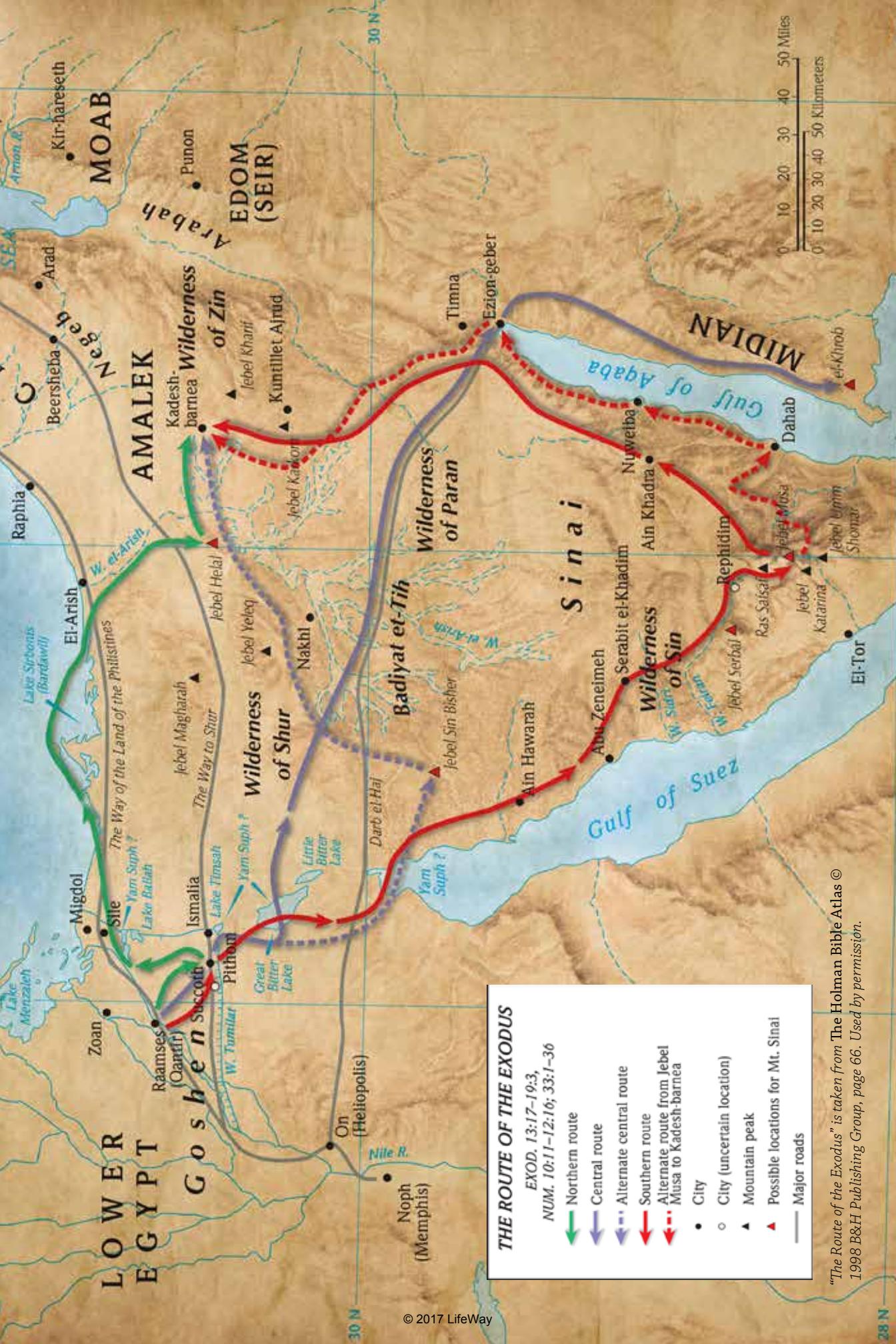
This article is adapted from an article that originally appeared in the Spring 2014 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Francis X. Kimmitt is vice president for academic services and dean of the School of Theology and Ministry at Tennessee Temple University in Chattanooga, Tennessee.



COMING NEXT QUARTER

ACTS 13–28

- Session 1** **The Gospel Message** > *Acts 13:26-39*
- Session 2** **Misguided Worship** > *Acts 14:8-20*
- Session 3** **Available to All** > *Acts 15:6-11,24-31*
- Session 4** **The Promised One** > *Luke 2:25-38*
- Session 5** **Strengthened** > *Acts 15:36-41; 16:1-5*
- Session 6** **A Changed Family** > *Acts 16:22-34*
- Session 7** **The Unknown Known** > *Acts 17:22-34*
- Session 8** **Value All** > *Acts 16:16-19; Psalm 139:13-16*
- Session 9** **Incomplete Picture** > *Acts 18:24-28; 19:1-7*
- Session 10** **Delivered** > *Acts 20:22-35*
- Session 11** **The Testimony** > *Acts 22:3-8,15-22*
- Session 12** **Answering Critics** > *Acts 26:19-29*
- Session 13** **Always on Mission** > *Acts 28:17-28*



THE ROUTE OF THE EXODUS

EXOD. 13:17-19:3,
NUM. 10:11-12:16; 33:1-36

- Northern route
- Central route
- Alternate central route
- Southern route
- - - Alternate route from Jebel Musa to Kadesh-barnea
- City
- City (uncertain location)
- ▲ Mountain peak
- ▲ Possible locations for Mt. Sinai
- Major roads

"The Route of the Exodus" is taken from The Holman Bible Atlas © 1998 B&H Publishing Group, page 66. Used by permission.

POINT YOUR HEART TO

True North



How do you make a deeper, clearer connection to God's Word?

The Christian Standard Bible is proven to be the optimal blend of accuracy and readability. So it's as literal to the original as possible without losing its ability to stir your heart. You'll find it to be highly trustworthy — and deeply satisfying. The CSB: Truth so clear, you'll want to read it, share it, and live it. **Learn more at CSBible.com.**



**CHRISTIAN
STANDARD
BIBLE**

SAVE 30% on all CSB text Bibles in LifeWay Stores and at LifeWay.com

Code: C15266 Valid until 04/30/18