SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

EXODUS
LESSONS FROM THE DESERT

WARD CHURCH
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Copyright and Acknowledgments

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We’re very excited that you’ve decided to join us for a journey of Biblical proportions over the next six weeks. We’ve designed this curriculum to complement our fall 2017 sermon series, Moses: Lessons from the Desert. Gathering at a worship service every Sunday will greatly enhance your group experience with this study. If you miss a Sunday at worship, you can watch the sermon online on our website. Though there’s not a one-on-one correlation between the sermons and the sessions of the study, we think you’ll find they fit hand in glove to help give you a fuller understanding of the entire book of Exodus. To further enhance your experience, we highly recommend that you read through the entire book of Exodus on your own. If you’d like to be on an email list that will send you a chapter a day to read throughout the series, you can sign up for this list at ward.church/exodus.

Another resource that we think you’ll find valuable is found on Right Now Media. You can search under “Exodus” and you’ll see “How to Read Exodus” under the “Customizable Training” heading in the search results. Or you can go to www.rightnowmedia.org/Training/Post/View/187884. If you’re not a member of Right Now Media, you can join through our website at www.rightnow.org/Account/Invite/wardchurch.

Deserts are definitely places of extreme conditions. Though they can be places of magnificent beauty, they are also places that impose a very credible threat to life itself. Enter a desert unprepared, and you will struggle just to survive. But those who have crossed through the deserts of life, who have braved the fierce and unforgiving conditions, will emerge from their journeys with stories to tell. The difficulties and the challenges they faced through the unrelenting wilderness forever shape their lives and character. This is especially true for the nation of Israel.

As we follow their journey from being slaves in Egypt and into the desert, we’ll observe that the Israelites have a front row seat to see the power, protection, mercy and holiness of God in a remarkable way. It’s our prayer that as you study the book of Exodus along with us over the next six weeks, you’ll also be amazed and awestruck at the character of the Almighty.

6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.

EXODUS 34:6-7

May you be richly blessed by your study of God’s Word in the next six weeks and beyond.

Scott McKee, Pam Dodge and Janet Branham
ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Thank you for committing to an Exodus: Lessons from the Desert group for the next six weeks. **We trust that you will find this study guide an easy way to facilitate discussion in your group and that it will help you connect with the others in your group and with God Himself on a deeper, more meaningful level.** Here are some tips for using this study guide most effectively...

**Headings:** Each session will be comprised of three components. These sections are based on our Next Steps for discipleship at Ward that encourage everyone to keep moving forward in their journey with Christ.

**GATHER** Primarily this means gathering for worship on Sunday mornings, but we also trust that during your time together as a group, you’ll engage in worship of God through prayer, worship songs (optional) and studying His Word. Ask God to speak to you during this series and give you a heart to hear what He is saying to you through His Word and through others in your group.

**CONNECT** We encourage all to connect with others through small group involvement, discussion and service opportunities. Life change happens as we connect with others. The synergy that happens as a group comes together is different than anything you can experience on your own. Each member of your group has something to offer, so enjoy the journey of discovering what that is! We have several ongoing service opportunities to help you connect at Ward, but we also encourage your group to find a way to serve together during the course of this series. A list of service opportunities can be found at https://ward.church/connect/serve/.

**INVITE** We want you to invite family and friends to church and ultimately to a relationship with Christ. We will have questions each week that will help you thoughtfully consider how to most effectively impact the world around you.

The headings of each section will encourage you to keep all three of these next steps as a part of your group on a weekly basis. This will encourage the group members to keep these components in their personal lives as well.

**DIGGING DEEPER**
There’s so much more that the Bible has to say about each of these topics than we can cover in a single time together as a group. That’s why we’ve included a “Digging Deeper” section designed for personal use to help expand your understanding of the topic at hand. This can be used for individual study or group discussion (if time permits).
GOD HEARS AND REMEMBERS
**GATHER  20-30 MINUTES**

Have all members of the group introduce themselves and share what they are looking forward to about the series. For groups that are continuing, take some time to catch up with each other before beginning the session. Before you begin the lesson, take time to review the group agreement and to fill out the group calendar and contact information located in Appendixes A, B and C.

Have someone in your group pray for focus, wisdom and understanding as you begin this series.

**CONNECT  30 MINUTES**

(1) In the opening chapters of Exodus, we see how the Israelites quickly go from enjoying favor in the land of Egypt to being oppressed as slaves and enduring unimaginable cruelty with the murder of their sons. Are God’s people being oppressed today? Provide some examples if you can think of some. We will take some time to pray for persecuted Christians at the end of our time together.

(2) What promises had the Israelites received that they would be clinging to during this difficult time of oppression? (See Genesis 12:2 and Genesis 15:18-21) Would these promises be easy for the Israelites to believe after 400 years of slavery? Why or why not?

(3) Though not much is visible to the Israelite slaves, how is God at work “behind the scenes” in the opening chapters of Exodus to prepare for the deliverance of His people?

(4) How could seeing that God was working on the Israelites’ behalf, even when they didn’t realize it, provide comfort and hope for God’s people today?

(5) One of the main ways God was preparing to redeem the Israelites was by preparing Moses, who would act as their deliverer. In what ways did Moses need preparation to become the deliverer for God’s people? (See Exodus 2:11-15 for reference.) How would spending time in the desert as a shepherd help prepare Moses to be a better leader?
(6) In Pastor Scott’s sermon on Exodus 3 and 4, he highlighted the fact that Moses was a reluctant leader. In what ways does he seem to be reluctant? What objections does he raise? (See Exodus 3:13; 4:1; 4:10; 4:13.)

(7) How does God respond to Moses? (See Exodus 3:14-21; 4:2-8; 4:11-12; 4:14-17.)

(8) Exodus 4:14 tells us that God grew angry with Moses. Why do you think God was angry with Moses?

(9) Most of us will never have a burning bush experience like Moses did, but most of us will be called by God to lead in some way, whether it’s leading at home, in a ministry at church or initiating a spiritual conversation with a co-worker. In what way are you or have you been a reluctant leader? What objections have you given to God when it seems that He is calling you to lead?

(10) Again, most of us won’t be able to see our staffs turn into snakes or other miraculous signs, but God will most likely have a response to our reluctance to lead. How do you think God would answer our objections to leadership?

(11) As we close out this section of Scripture (Exodus 5-6), we see the Israelites’ situation get worse before it gets better, which causes Moses to again raise objections to his leadership call. What can we learn from this passage of Scripture that we could apply to our own lives today? Is God’s promise of redemption for us always an easy road?

(12) Scott closes the video with a reminder that God hears and remembers His people today. How is this a comfort to you? If you feel comfortable enough, share with your group a way that God has heard your cry for help or something you’re crying out to God about now.

INVITE

(13) Think of who could benefit from what you’ve discussed in this session, jot down their names and make a plan to share with them.

(14) Think of who might want to join you for the next sermon in this series or small group discussion and invite them to join you.

GATHER

(15) Take some time as a group to share prayer requests, and pray for those requests. Also take time to pray for the people of God today who are enduring persecution. Feel free to ask for prayer for the people you are planning to invite.
God Hears and Remembers  In Exodus 2:24–25 we come across an interesting statement—"God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them." On one level, this is a very beautiful picture of the God of the universe showing care and concern for His people. If you stop to think about it, this statement can also raise a few questions. If God remembered His people, does that mean He had at some point forgotten the Israelites? We also read the words that God heard and looked on His people. Was there a point when He didn’t see or hear them? These are important questions to consider not just for ancient Israel but also for us as God’s people today.

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION PRINCIPLE  In general, it’s best to let clear passages of Scripture provide insight into passages of Scripture that are unclear or confusing.

Let’s look at some other passages of Scripture to see what they have to tell us about whether or not God can or would forget His people. Take some time to read Isaiah 44:21 and Isaiah 49:14–16.

(1) What does God say about forgetting His people? Is it possible?

(2) To whom does God compare Himself in Isaiah 49? What strikes you about this image?

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COVENANT  A bond entered into voluntarily by two parties by which each pledges himself to do something for the other. The notion was employed in a range of secular senses (in association with marriages, commercial contracts, etc.) before it was used as a theological model for the relationship between Yahweh and His people Israel.⁴

Take a few minutes to consider the following passages about what God sees and hears: Psalm 33:13–15; Psalm 121:4; Psalm 37:17; Psalm 145:19–20.

(3) Who is it that God sees?

(4) Does He miss anything?

(5) Whom does God hear?

(6) How does He respond to their cry for help?

A covenant relationship with God isn't just something to be found in the Old Testament. Jesus offered a new covenant to all who would follow after Him (see Luke 22:20). Because of this continuation of the covenant relationship initiated by God, we can rejoice in the promises of the Old Testament today.

(7) Which one of these promises (God seeing, hearing, not forgetting) means the most to you?

(8) Do you have trouble believing that these promises are true given your life circumstances right now? If so, what can you do to renew your mind with the truth of these promises this week?
PLAGUES, PHARAOH AND PASSOVER
Icebreaker In this session we’re going to talk about the powerful acts of God that He used to judge the Egyptian people for their cruel treatment of the Israelites. Which of the first nine (water into blood, frogs, gnats, flies, death of livestock, boils, hail, locusts or darkness) would have been your least favorite and why?

Have someone in your group pray for your time together in this session.

[1] God caused many awful things to happen to the Egyptian people in judgment. Why did Pharaoh refuse to let God’s people go?

[2] In the video, Pastor Scott mentioned that Pharaoh’s heart wasn’t hardened in a day. How do you think Pharaoh’s heart became hardened over time? What do you think he believed about himself? About the God of the Israelites?

[3] Pastor Scott mentioned Romans chapter 1 in his video message. Take a moment to read Romans 1:18-28. What does this passage say people do even though they know truth about God?

[4] How is the passage in Romans similar to what we see happening to Pharaoh’s heart in Exodus?

[5] How are people today in danger of “harden[ing] their hearts” like Pharaoh did or suppressing the truth as mentioned in Romans?
What was the purpose of the plagues according to Exodus 7:5 and Exodus 9:14-16?

Why were so many plagues needed? Whose beliefs were they meant to challenge?

As severe as the first nine plagues were, nothing could have prepared the Egyptians for the tenth and final plague, the death of the firstborn. However, the Israelites were warned and instructed how to protect their families. What does this teach you about God’s heart towards His people? What does it teach you about the importance of obeying God, even when it doesn’t make sense?

Have you ever had a circumstance in your life in which you felt God was leading you to do something and you didn’t understand it at the time, but in hindsight you were glad you followed the Lord?

The Passover celebration wasn’t meant to be just a one-time event for Israel but was to be celebrated every year according to Exodus 12:14-17. Why did the Lord want the Israelites to celebrate this every year? Why do you think this was important for the Israelites to do?

While we no longer celebrate Passover every year, we do celebrate Easter once a year and communion on a regular basis. What are the similarities between these celebrations and Passover? Do you think it’s important for Christians to celebrate these things? Why or why not?

Have you seen God do marvelous things in your life? Have you shared that with anyone? With whom might you share that this week?

Is there someone in your life in need of an “exodus” (exit) from their circumstances? How could you encourage them this week?

Take some time to share prayer requests, including those individuals with whom you would like to share the hope of God’s Word and promises.
DIGGING DEEPER

Pastor Scott eluded to how the Passover pointed forward to Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Let’s look at some New Testament passages to see how.

1. In the Gospel of John, the apostle records the words of John the Baptist as calling Jesus the “Lamb of God” (John 1:29, 36). What image would be brought to the Israelites’ minds when they heard this phrase?

2. The book of Revelation (also written by the apostle John) offers us a glimpse into what role the Lamb of God will play for all eternity (see Revelation 5:6; 7:17; 15:3; 19:9; 21:23; 22:1; 22:3). Which one of these realities of the Lamb of God are you most looking forward to and why? How can that eternal reality make a difference in your life today?

3. All four gospels and the book of Acts make clear that Jesus had the last supper and instituted our practice of communion right before His death and at the time of Passover. Why do you think the authors included that detail in each account?

4. The apostle Paul clearly identifies Jesus as “our Passover lamb” (1 Corinthians 5:7). In what ways is Jesus’ death on the cross similar to the death of the Passover lamb of Exodus? In what ways is it superior?

5. The author of Hebrews tells us that Moses kept the Passover and the application of blood by faith (Hebrews 11:28). In a similar way, how are we called to accept Jesus’ sacrifice by faith?
THE EXODUS EVENT:

GOD’S PROVISION AND PROTECTION IN THE WILDERNESS
Icebreaker  Our story resumes with the Israelites finding themselves “out of the frying pan and into the fire.” They have left behind their troubles in Egypt but now find a new set of challenges before them. Have you ever been in a situation like that? What was it like?

Have someone in your group pray for your time together in this session.

**CONNECT  30 MINUTES**

(1) Have you ever been in a scenario like Scott described in the video when it’s hard to admit you’re wrong? Why is it often hard for us to admit we’re wrong?

(2) Read Exodus 12:31-36. What material possessions did the people of Israel take with them as they left Egypt? What does this show us about God’s provision for them?

(3) Read Exodus 13:17-18. Why did God lead the people of Israel on the longer way? Have you ever found that the “long way” was the best way in your faith journey? What is it about the long way that builds character?

(4) If you were an Israelite leaving Egypt, would you have expected Pharaoh’s army to come after you? Why or why not?


(5) God told Moses that Pharaoh’s army would pursue them, and He instructed Moses to have the Israelites camp by the sea. Why do you think God had the Israelites camp in such a precarious place? Why did God say He was going to cause this to happen? When Pharaoh’s army did pursue, what was the Israelites’ reaction? Why do you think they responded this way after all they had seen God do on their behalf in Egypt?
SALVATION

Time and time again the writers of the Old Testament referred back to this very moment and saw it as Israel’s time of salvation through God’s delivering hand. It was their moment of freedom from slavery. Notice Moses’ comments in Exodus 14:13-14. “Stand firm and you will see the deliverance of the LORD.” They did nothing to gain their freedom; God did it all for them. He brought them up out of Egypt, out of slavery. This moment was for them what the Cross is for us today.

(7) In Exodus 14:13-14, Moses told the people not to be afraid but said that “the Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.” Would it be hard to be in that situation and “be still”? Why or why not?

(8) Almost humorously, God told the Israelites in Exodus 14:15 to “move on” (after Moses had told them to be still). What lessons can be learned about faith with the admonishment from Moses for the Israelites to “be still” and then be commanded to “move on” a verse later? In what ways does faith require not only resting and waiting but also action? Which one is easier for you to do and why?

(9) A transformation takes place in the hearts of God’s people at the end of chapter 14, when they have a new trust in God and Moses as His servant. Chapter 15 opens with a song of praising God for His deliverance, but three days later we find these same people grumbling against Moses. Read Exodus 15:22-27. Why do you think the change in heart? What does this tell us about our physical needs in relation to our spiritual condition?

(10) What can we learn from the Israelites’ quick descent from praise to grumbling? What can we do in our own lives to guard against a spirit of complaining and disbelief?

(11) Despite the grumbling of the Israelites, the Lord provides for His people anyway by purifying water and sending quail and manna for them to eat (chapters 15-16). What does this say about the faithfulness of God to His people?

INVITE

(12) Are there any steps of faith you could take in sharing the love of Christ with someone this week? Any stories to share after last week’s consideration?

(13) Are there any battles you’re facing right now? Do you feel like you need to “be still” or “move on”?

GATHER

Spend some time sharing prayer requests, especially steps of faith group members may need to take. Pray for one another and don’t forget to praise God for the victories you’ve seen in your life or for the amazing things about His character revealed in His Word.
DIGGING DEEPER

(1) The Israelites experienced God’s deliverance in remarkable ways through the Exodus from Egypt and the remarkable rescue by walking through the Red Sea. What are some ways you have experienced God’s deliverance in your life? This would, of course, include your salvation if you’ve asked Christ to come into your life and forgive you of your sins, but it could also include deliverance from a difficult life situation, an illness or an addiction.

(2) What was your response to God like during the time of your deliverance? Did you sing, pray or journal your gratitude?

(3) How often do you replay the circumstances of your deliverance?

(4) Do you believe there is value in remembering all that God has done for you to protect you and provide for you? Why or why not?

(5) While incorporating praise songs into your daily routine could be helpful in maintaining an attitude of thanksgiving in your life, singing isn’t the only way to express your gratefulness to God. There are other disciplines that could help as well, such as praying and journaling. You may be able to think of others as well. What’s one practice that you can incorporate this week to cultivate a grateful heart?

(6) Cultivating a thankful attitude helps us to avoid complaining and grumbling, but there are other safeguards we can take too. By identifying certain situations (places, people, even social media sites) that tempt us to complain, we can make efforts to avoid those situations when possible or at least make a plan ahead of time not to engage in grumbling behavior when faced with the temptation. What are those situations in your life in which you are tempted to grumble and complain? What can you do to avoid those situations completely or minimize the temptation to complain?
SESSION 4

EXODUS 19-24

GOD’S COVENANT ESTABLISHED WITH A NATION
GATHER 10 MINUTES

Icebreaker Would you call yourself a rule-follower or a rule-bender? What types of rules or laws do you appreciate? What types of laws get under your skin?

Have someone in your group pray for your time together.

CONNECT 30 MINUTES

[1] Read Exodus 19:3-6. Before God gave the Ten Commandments, He made three promises to the people of Israel. What did God promise He would do for the Israelites? What was required of the Israelites in return?

[2] Which one of the three promises of God means the most to you—treasured possession, holy (set apart) nation, royal priesthood (being able to intercede for other people before God)? Why does that mean the most to you?

[3] Why do you think God mentioned the promise of the Law before giving the Law?

[4] Pastor Scott mentioned that God wanted to show the Israelites how to live by providing the Law. Why would they need to know this? What other cultures or influences would have shaped their thinking before the giving of the Law?
The preamble of the Ten Commandments is found in Exodus 20:2. Take a moment to read this verse. According to the video, why did God remind the Israelites of this fact? What does it say about the relationship between being rescued or saved and following the Law?

Pastor Scott said in the video, “The Law is not about how to be saved, but how saved people live.” Is this easy for you to believe or do you struggle to believe it and live it out in your own life? Why is this either easy or hard for you?

Our modern society has lost the emphasis on the Ten Commandments that the Israelites had, especially regarding the Sabbath. What are things that we can do as a church and as individuals to follow the command to “remember the Sabbath”?

Read Matthew 5:21-30 and see what Jesus said about God’s heart behind the commandments not to murder or commit adultery (found in Exodus 20:13-14). We can tend to think of the commands to not murder and not commit adultery as limited to the physical acts themselves. In light of Jesus’ words, what are attitudes or practices we can cultivate to prevent breaking these commandments in our hearts?

In a similar manner, we can limit the command to “not steal” (Exodus 20:15) to burglary or armed robbery. What are other examples of stealing that are more socially acceptable in our society?

Read Exodus 24:3. How did the people respond to the words and commands of the Lord? Why do you think they were so eager?

Are there any individuals in your life who need to know that God’s love isn’t conditional? How can you help them understand that salvation is not dependent on works but that following God’s Law is a response to His rescue of us?

In what way would it be a witness to the world around us if we followed the heart of God’s Law instead of just the letter of the Law? (See previous questions on murder, adultery and stealing). How would this help distinguish us as a people of God if we followed these commands completely? Would our actions be perceived in a positive or negative light?

Take some time to share prayer requests as a group and close your time in prayer. It would be an appropriate time to confess some ways that we can ignore the heart behind God’s laws and to ask God for guidance and power to live out His heart more fully.
Exodus 20:22–23:19 contains what is sometimes referred to as case laws or judgments. These laws are the practical outworking of the Ten Commandments as applied not only to worship but also to situations that can come up in everyday life. Though some of them may seem obscure or outdated to us today (for example, Exodus 23:19b, “Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk”), if we look closely, we’ll find timeless principles about the character of God that we can easily apply to our lives today.

(1) Read about the crimes that are subject to capital punishment in Exodus 21:12–17. What does this say about what is important to God? Would our society look any different today if all of these crimes were still punishable by death?

(2) Read Exodus 22:21–24 and 23:9. What does this tell us about God’s heart toward foreigners? Why do you think this is so important to Him?

(3) Read Exodus 22:25–27. What considerations does God make for the poor? What character trait does God say drives these considerations?

(4) How should God’s heart for foreigners and the poor inform our practices today? How would things look different if we lived out God’s heart with the foreigners and poor among us?

(5) Take a moment and prayerfully consider for yourself whether your attitude and heart toward foreigners and the poor matches God’s. In what ways does your heart match God’s? In what ways do you need to grow in your concern or compassion?

(6) What are some ways you can renew your mind and transform your heart to be closer to the heart of God in these areas? You may want to consider the following verses.


(7) What could you do in the next few weeks as an individual (or with your group) to practically demonstrate God’s concern and love for the foreigners and/or the poor among us?
SESSION 5

EXODUS 25-34

IDOLATRY, INTERCESSION AND COVENANT RENEWAL
Icebreaker  In this session we’ll be talking about one of the people of Israel’s biggest blunders. Do you have a “blooper reel” of your life in your head? Can you describe a mistake you’ve made in the last few months? It doesn’t have to be serious!

Have someone in your group pray for your time together as a group.

In this session, Pastor Scott dives right into the subject of Israel worshiping the golden calf in chapter 32. Take a moment to read Exodus 31:18 through 32:6 and answer the following questions.

1. Where was Moses when this great sin took place? What was he doing?

2. Aaron was supposed to keep watch over the people in Moses’ absence (see Exodus 24:14), so the people made their request to him. How did he respond to their request? How was this a failure of his duties?

3. Where did the Israelites obtain the gold that was used to make the golden calf? What is the irony in this?

Pastor Scott mentioned in the video that the idolatry of today is far more subtle than a golden calf. He defined an idol as “anything in your life that occupies the space reserved for God alone.” As your group discusses questions 4 and 5, you may want to take a minute to write down your answers. This will help refresh your memory for the Digging Deeper session.

4. According to the above definition, what are some idols common in our current culture?

5. While people don’t often offer burnt sacrifices to our modern idols, what actions or priorities show the worship of idols?
Read Exodus 32:7–14 and answer the following questions.

(6) When God tells Moses that the people have sinned by worshiping an idol, what does He plan to do? Why do you think He is so angry at the Israelites?

(7) Moses intercedes for the people of Israel and pleads with God not to destroy His chosen people. To what does Moses appeal when he makes his appeal to God?

(8) Verse 14 tells us that God relented and did not destroy Israel as he had threatened to do. What does this tell us about the importance of prayer? Does this motivate you to intercede and pray for others?

(9) When Moses confronts Aaron with this sin, how does Aaron respond? (See Exodus 32:22–24.) Why do you think Aaron respond this way?

(10) Since the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 3:12–13), people have tried to place blame on other people or certain situations for their sin instead of owning up to their responsibility. What are some excuses people use to justify their sins or shift the blame someplace else?

God not only promises to go with the people moving forward, but He also blesses Moses with a unique appearance where He further reveals His character (see Exodus 34:5–7). Moses responds in worship.

(11) While Moses’ experience was unique, some of us may have experienced the presence of God in a powerful way. Have you ever felt the presence of God in a real way in your life? What was it like?

(12) Many people today can think of God as condemning and judgmental, not compassionate and gracious. Is there someone in your life with whom you can share this passage with this week, someone who needs to know more of the fullness of the character of God?

(13) While God’s Word is extremely powerful to share with others, sometimes it’s also best to show His characteristics to others ourselves. How can you demonstrate God’s compassion, grace, love, etc. this week? Is there someone you have in mind to show God’s character to this week?

In Exodus 33, God tells Moses He does not intend to send His presence with the people as they head out. The people and Moses are greatly concerned with this thought, and again Moses intercedes for the Israelites.
GATHER

Take some time to close your session in prayer. Give an opportunity for all to share prayer requests, particularly for their action steps from the Invite section.

DIGGING DEEPER

Let’s not skim past this section about Israel’s idolatry without taking a moment to consider our own hearts. True, most of us aren’t tempted to make a golden calf to worship. Idolatry can be far more subtle and difficult to identify. Take a few moments to prayerfully reflect on your own heart (not other’s motives) as you answer the questions below.

(1) What idols that are common in the world today are the most tempting to you? (Remember some good things in our lives can become idols if we allow them to take the place of God in our lives. Because of this, idols could include sports, children, marriage/relationships, sex, success, the approval of others, and material goods.)

(2) How can these things compete for God’s rightful place in your life? For example, are you distracted in worship by thinking about an upcoming sporting event? Do you long for a husband or wife more than you long for God? Is it more important to climb the corporate ladder than to follow God’s Law in your business practices?

(3) As you reflect upon the things that can become idols in your life, it’s good to examine why certain things are appealing to you. What types of feelings or fulfillment to you hope to get from that person, experience or thing?

(4) As you think about the types of feelings and fulfillment you’re seeking when you’re tempted to pursue an idol, can you imagine how God could meet those desires? If not, why not look up some Scriptures to see how God can meet your every need?

(5) In closing out this section, don’t be discouraged as you think about times when you’ve let idolatry slip into your life. Instead, confess it to God, knowing that He is compassionate and gracious, mindful of our weaknesses (Psalm 103:13-14). Reflect upon the grace and mercy He showed Israel and, most importantly, the grace He offers through the cross (1 Peter 2:24). Ask Him for forgiveness for your failures and for the strength and wisdom to move away from the idols that tempt you. You may find it helpful to come up with an action plan for how best to avoid temptation in this area.
SESSION 6

EXODUS 35-40

TRUE WORSHIP:

CONSECRATION
OF THE
TABERNACLE
**Gather 10 Minutes**

**Icebreaker** Have you ever been to a beautiful church or cathedral that has taken your breath away? What were your emotions? Did you admire the artistry, feel a sense of awe, wonder how much it cost to build?

Have someone pray for your time together as a group.

**Play Session 6 of the DVD Now 13 Minutes**

**Connect 30 Minutes**

The instructions for the construction of the tabernacle are found in Exodus 25-29, but the actual construction doesn’t begin until chapter 35, after the golden calf incident and the covenant renewal.

1. Read Exodus 36:2-7. Who was doing the work to build the tabernacle? What seemed to be the qualifications? Were they “drafted” or did they volunteer?

2. Who brought the materials to build the tabernacle? How did they provide them—were there guidelines about quantity provided or did the people decide on their own how much to bring?

3. Why did they have the people stop bringing their freewill offerings for the construction of the temple? Why do you think the people gave so willingly?

4. What principles can we take away from the construction of the tabernacle that could apply to contemporary church volunteer needs and giving?

5. In the video, Pastor Scott mentioned that God would dwell in a tent as His people dwelled in tents. What do you think is the significance of that?
Though God identified with His people in choosing to dwell in a tent, He also chose a dwelling fit for a king. What about this tent was different from the Israelites’ other tents? For example, think about the materials used, the position in the camp or other things that may come to mind.

Each piece of furniture in the tabernacle had a purpose, and the most central piece was the Ark of the Covenant. Read Exodus 37:1-9 and answer the following questions.

(a) What was the Ark made of? Covered in?
(b) What was used to carry the Ark?
(c) What type of creatures were carved on the Ark?
(d) How do your answers to 7a-7c point to the fact that the ark was holy, special?

In Exodus 25:16, we discover that the tablets of the Law were to be placed in the ark. (The budding staff of Aaron and the jar of manna are also added but mentioned later in Scripture. See Numbers 17:10; Hebrews 9:4.) Why would the Law be at the focal point of the worship space?

Three times in Exodus 39, it is mentioned that the construction of the tabernacle was just as the Lord had commanded. (See verses 32, 42, and 43.) Have someone in your group read Exodus 26:30 and another read Hebrews 8:5. (The word “they” in Hebrews 8:5 refers to Old Testament priests.) Why was it so important that the Israelites did everything exactly as the Lord commanded? Do you think this has implications for following God’s commands in general? Why or why not?

Pastor Scott shared that the tabernacle was meant to teach us a lot about God. He gave a list of contrasting characteristics about God, including the following: God is real and present but God remains holy and distinct. He is friend and He is fire and He is power. He wants to be known and yet He cannot be fully known. A lot of us tend to view God on one end of the spectrum or the other. Which side of the spectrum do you tend to fall on? Why do you think you favor that side of the spectrum?

It’s our prayer that this series was more than a study for you and that your time in God’s Word and your time together as a group has led to a new perspective and life change. Is there anything you care to share with the group about how your life has changed or how your perspective will be different moving forward?

If we who are Christians struggle to hold the tension with the proper view of God, then we should expect that those in the world around us struggle to have the right view of God as well. Is there someone in your life who has an unhealthy fear of God? Someone who doesn’t understand the grace and forgiveness that Jesus offers, who thinks “God wouldn’t want anything to do with me after all I’ve done?” How can you share the mercy and forgiveness of God with this person?
(13) Likewise, others can fall on the other end of the spectrum toward God, thinking, “God loves us and doesn’t judge people anymore” or “He can’t expect us to live today with the same standard of 2,000 years ago.” What’s a good way to thoughtfully engage people to understand and appreciate the holiness of God? Do you have someone in your life that you should lovingly point toward understanding not only God’s love and forgiveness but His holiness too?

(2) With this character trait from the above question in mind, what do you think would change in your life if you responded to God and the people around you fully aware of this characteristic? (For example, if I truly comprehended the compassion of God, I might come to Him more readily in prayer with my concerns and needs, and I would be more compassionate to others.)

(3) What can you do to incorporate this characteristic in your everyday life? Are there verses to meditate on? Steps of faith to take? Attitudes to change?

(4) Finally, in this last session, we talked about the tension of God being very personable, knowable and close as well as being holy, incomprehensible and separate. Which side of the spectrum do you tend to fall on? What can you do to have a more balanced view of who God is, holding both sides of the spectrum in tension?

**GATHER 10-20 MINUTES**

Take some time to close your session in prayer. Give an opportunity for all to share prayer requests, particularly for their action steps from the Invite section.

This ends our group discussion element. We encourage each of you to take some time on your own for personal reflection in this last Digging Deeper section.

**DIGGING DEEPER**

Through our study of the book of Exodus, we’ve learned so much about the character of God. We’ve seen God’s power to deliver His people from Egypt, His protection and provision for Israel in the wilderness. We’ve seen His graciousness in providing the Law, His forgiveness and mercy when the covenant was broken, His compassion for foreigners and the poor. We’ve seen both His holiness and His desire to live among His people in the tabernacle.

(1) Which characteristic of God has caught your attention the most? Was there something about the character of God that surprised you? Was there a trait you needed to be reminded of?

(2) With this character trait from the above question in mind, what do you think would change in your life if you responded to God and the people around you fully aware of this characteristic? (For example, if I truly comprehended the compassion of God, I might come to Him more readily in prayer with my concerns and needs, and I would be more compassionate to others.)

(3) What can you do to incorporate this characteristic in your everyday life? Are there verses to meditate on? Steps of faith to take? Attitudes to change?

(4) Finally, in this last session, we talked about the tension of God being very personable, knowable and close as well as being holy, incomprehensible and separate. Which side of the spectrum do you tend to fall on? What can you do to have a more balanced view of who God is, holding both sides of the spectrum in tension?

Make a plan to implement these changes in your life. Write it down. Pray and ask God for strength and wisdom to be more like Him.
Small groups thrive on participation! The purpose of this agreement is to help you discuss and clarify your group’s goals, expectations, and commitments.

**Purpose**
The purpose of small groups is to connect people to Jesus Christ and one another in authentic community that will promote transformation through living the Truth of Jesus Christ in our relationships, study of God’s Word together, prayer, and outreach. To that end, small groups help us...

- To know God in a more personal way
- To understand what the Bible teaches us about community
- To belong to a group with others who will support us in our spiritual growth
- To care for one another and reach out to others
- To have fun

**Components**

Connect With One Another  Each meeting we’ll take time to enjoy refreshments and fellowship. Our discussion time will open with sharing questions that will help us get to know one another and share what is happening in our lives. This part of the lesson is designed to introduce everyone to the day’s topic and to get the discussion flowing.

Praying Together  Each meeting we’ll learn how to care for each other as Christ commanded. This care can take many forms such as prayers, encouragement, listening, challenging one another, and meeting real needs.

Serving Together  We commit as a group to serve outside the walls of the home at least one time during or after the six-week study.

**GROUP AGREEMENT**

**Commitment**  At times schedules can become complex and people might miss a meeting. With that in mind, for the course of this study we commit to keeping participation in the life of the group a high priority. In the event that someone cannot attend, we will let the group know. We also commit to keeping personal things shared in the group confidential.

**Details**

Dates  We’ll meet every week / every other week on _____________ for _____ weeks. Our final meeting will be on _________________.

Time  We’ll meet from ________ to ________. We commit to beginning and ending on time.

Children
- Group members are responsible to arrange their own childcare
- Children are welcome; group childcare will be arranged

We agree together in Christ to honor this commitment. (To be decided by each person by the second group meeting)

1_________________________  7_________________________
2_________________________  8_________________________
3_________________________  9_________________________
4_________________________ 10_________________________
5_________________________ 11_________________________
6_________________________ 12_________________________
It is appropriate to switch locations. Many groups will meet at different houses to allow a week off from hosting in the home. It is also encouraged that the group rotate the facilitator allowing for different people to get a shot at facilitating discussion.

It is recommended that whoever is hosting the meeting and facilitating be freed from the responsibility to provide snacks and beverages. As a group, you may decide how this will work best because every group is different.
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Deserts are definitely places of extreme conditions.

Though they can be places of magnificent beauty, they are also places that impose a very credible threat to life itself.

Enter a desert unprepared, and you will struggle just to survive.

But those who have crossed through the deserts of life, who have braved the fierce and unforgiving conditions, will emerge from their journeys with stories to tell. The difficulties and the challenges they faced through the unrelenting wilderness forever shape their lives and character.