



the **GOSPELPROJECT**  
FOR STUDENTS

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**THE GOSPEL PROJECT FOR STUDENTS**  
LEADER GUIDE

**VOLUME 2**

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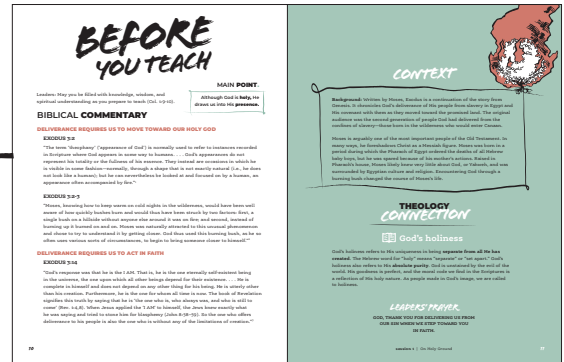
# PREPARATION

- Access the leader training for each session at [gospelproject.com/leader-training](http://gospelproject.com/leader-training).
- Read through the main passage and surrounding chapters of Scripture listed on the opening page of each session.
- Study the **Before You Teach** section, focusing on which aspects of the study you will cover during group time.
- Check each session for a pack item list or description.

## BEFORE YOU TEACH

These pages are designed to help leaders prepare for each session, providing content that digs deeper into the focal passages and main point emphasized throughout the session.

- **Biblical Commentary:** This content is compiled to help leaders understand how the passage connects to today's culture.
- **Theology Connection:** Each session contains a biblical doctrine that directly relates to the Bible study material.

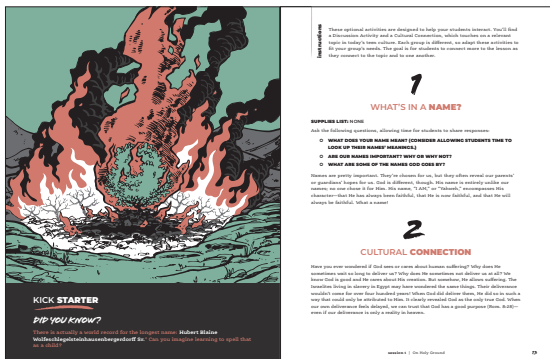


## CONTEXT

We believe Scripture should be studied within the context in which it was written. This section breaks down where the passage fits in the grand narrative of God's Word. At the beginning of each book, we highlight the author, time period, original audience, and purpose. This section also features important historical facts to help leaders and students understand the message.

## INTRO OPTIONS

- **Kickstarter** This is the shortest option for groups which may not have time for longer activities. They rotate between "Did You Know?" facts, short polls, and Heart Checks, which refer to the previous lesson as a form of accountability.
- **Activity** This activity is mostly discussion-based. They're designed to take up minimal time with few or no supplies.
- **Cultural Connection** This starter helps connect the week's content to the students' culture. It will hit on real-life questions and difficult topics. It's designed to encourage deep discussion between students and leaders.



# DISCUSSION SECTION

The **Discussion** section is designed to show how God's story connects with our own stories today. Here we will see how the biblical storyline for each session challenges the way we think, feel, and live each day. While this certainly happens on an individual level, we do want to stress to students that all Christians share this calling and mission to live differently. Leaders will also find suggested answers with sentences in bold as a guide for more reluctant groups.

## DISCUSSION

**DELIVERANCE REQUIRES US TO MOVE TOWARD OUR HOLY GOD**  
READ EXODUS 3:1-8

**MAIN POINT:**  
Although God is holy, He does not desire to punish. He desires to help us.

**WHY DO WE NEED GOD TO DELIVER US FROM OUR SINS?**  
How do we deliver ourselves from sin? How do we deliver ourselves from the consequences of sin? How do we deliver ourselves from the consequences of sin? How do we deliver ourselves from the consequences of sin?

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**CHRIST CONNECTION**

This icon indicates questions that look at how the content connects with Christ, emphasizing to students how all of Scripture points to Him.



**THEOLOGY CONNECTION**

This icon indicates questions that directly relate to the doctrine for the week. We want to encourage discussion about these doctrines to expand students' biblical worldview.

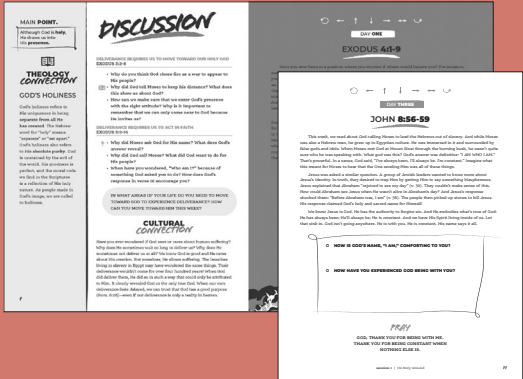
# LEADER PACK

The **Leader Pack** provides additional ways to make the session interactive with One Sheets, PowerPoint templates, posters, and other additional resources to support both leader preparation and group time.



# STUDENT DEVOTIONS

Students remember thirty percent of what they hear and seventy percent of what they say and write. To get students more involved in the biblical storyline of Scripture and in their personal discipleship, we have included five days of devotions following each session in the **Daily Discipleship Guide**. As a leader, emphasize weekly how important it is for students to read these devotions and develop the spiritual discipline of being in the Word of God. These devotions will provide simple techniques for studying the Bible as illustrated by the **Seven Arrows**. The pages are perforated so that students can tear them out and take them home.



# SEVEN ARROWS



What does this passage say?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What does this passage tell us about man?



What does this passage demand of me?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



How does this passage prompt me to pray?

VOLUME 2 | CSB

# LAW AND LIFE



**4.1** ON HOLY GROUND

**4.2** LET MY PEOPLE GO

**4.3** THE LORD WILL FIGHT FOR YOU

**4.4** BREAD FROM HEAVEN

**4.5** THEY WILL BEAR IT WITH YOU

**5.1** BY THE FINGER OF GOD

**5.2** MAKE GODS FOR US

**5.3** THE GLORY OF THE LORD

**5.4** ATONEMENT FOR ALL THEIR SINS

**6.1** A STRONG CRAVING

**6.2** FROM EGYPT UNTIL NOW

**6.3** WE HAVE SINNED

**6.4** FROM A DISTANCE



**6.4**

**4.3**

**5.1**

**4.2**

**4.5**

**6.2**



AUTHOR & CONTENT EDITOR

## ALECIA BRYANT

---

Welcome to Volume 2! I'm really excited to study Exodus together. As we journey along with the Israelites, we may find several parallels to our own journeys.

The Israelites had been living in Egypt for over four hundred years. They were slaves under the Pharaoh. They cried out for freedom, wondering if God had forgotten them. But God heard every cry for help. In a display of power and glory, God delivered His people from slavery. He used ten plagues to make one thing clear: Yahweh alone is God. Only Yahweh could part a sea for His people to walk on dry ground to safety. Only Yahweh could send the waters back down over the enemy. And only Yahweh could provide for His people in a wilderness by sending manna—bread from heaven.

In return, the Israelites grumbled, complained, doubted, and bowed to idols. They carried Egypt in their hearts. But God would walk with His people through the wilderness and continue to sanctify them. He would keep His covenant with them, despite all their failures. They would wander for forty years, but the wandering wouldn't be wasted.

God heard our cry for salvation too. He saw our slavery to sin and death, and in a mighty display of power and glory, He sent Jesus to die for our sin. He raised Jesus from the dead to make it possible for us to rise as well. In this, He provided for our deepest need: salvation. And in return, we often respond with grumbling, complaining, doubting, and bowing to the idols of our culture. But God is faithful. He walks with us. He lives within us—sanctifying us by His Word, teaching us how to be His people. And He'll continue to walk with us until we reach heaven.

*Alecia Bryant*



**“DO NOT  
COME CLOSER,” HE  
SAID. “REMOVE THE  
SANDALS FROM YOUR FEET,  
FOR THE PLACE WHERE  
YOU ARE STANDING IS  
HOLY GROUND.”**

EXODUS 3:5

ON  
HOLY

# GROUND

## MAIN POINT.

Although God is **holy**, He draws us into His **presence**.



## CHRIST CONNECTION

God saw His people suffering as slaves in Egypt and sent Moses to rescue them. We all suffer as slaves to sin and desperately need to be saved from it (**John 8:34**). So, God sent Jesus, who walked in perfect obedience to the Father, to be the sacrifice for our sins. God then raised Jesus from the dead to give us new life.





This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

**Exodus 1****Exodus 4****DELIVERANCE REQUIRES US TO MOVE TOWARD OUR HOLY GOD****EXODUS 3:2-8**

2 Then the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire within a bush. As Moses looked, he saw that the bush was on fire but was not consumed. 3 So Moses thought, "I must go over and look at this remarkable sight. Why isn't the bush burning up?" 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.

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.

**DELIVERANCE REQUIRES US TO ACT IN FAITH****EXODUS 3:9-14**

9 So because the Israelites' cry for help has come to me, and I have also seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them, 10 therefore, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh so that you may lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." 11 But Moses asked God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" 12 He answered, "I will certainly be with you, and this will be the sign to you that I am the one who sent you: when you bring the people out of Egypt, you will all worship God at this mountain." 13 Then Moses asked God, "If I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors 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."

# BEFORE YOU TEACH

## MAIN POINT.

Leaders: May you be filled with knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual understanding as you prepare to teach (Col. 1:9-10).

Although God is **holy**, He draws us into His **presence**.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

### DELIVERANCE REQUIRES US TO MOVE TOWARD OUR HOLY GOD

#### EXODUS 3:2

“The term ‘theophany’ (‘appearance of God’) is normally used to refer to instances recorded in Scripture where God appears in some way to humans. . . . God’s appearances do not represent his totality or the fullness of his essence. They instead are occasions in which he is visible in some fashion—normally, through a shape that is not exactly natural (i.e., he does not look like a human); but he can nevertheless be looked at and focused on by a human, an appearance often accompanied by fire.”<sup>1</sup>

#### EXODUS 3:2-3

“Moses, knowing how to keep warm on cold nights in the wilderness, would have been well aware of how quickly bushes burn and would thus have been struck by two factors: first, a single bush on a hillside without anyone else around it was on fire; and second, instead of burning up it burned on and on. Moses was naturally attracted to this unusual phenomenon and chose to try to understand it by getting closer. God thus used this burning bush, as he so often uses various sorts of circumstances, to begin to bring someone closer to himself.”<sup>2</sup>

### DELIVERANCE REQUIRES US TO ACT IN FAITH

#### EXODUS 3:14

“God’s response was that he is the I AM. That is, he is the one eternally self-existent being in the universe, the one upon which all other beings depend for their existence. . . . He is complete in himself and does not depend on any other thing for his being. He is utterly other than his creation. Furthermore, he is the one for whom all time is now. The book of Revelation signifies this truth by saying that he is ‘the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come’ (Rev. 1:4,8). When Jesus applied the ‘I AM’ to himself, the Jews knew exactly what he was saying and tried to stone him for blasphemy (John 8:58–59). So the one who offers deliverance to his people is also the one who is without any of the limitations of creation.”<sup>3</sup>

# CONTEXT



**Background:** Written by Moses, Exodus is a continuation of the story from Genesis. It chronicles God’s deliverance of His people from slavery in Egypt and His covenant with them as they moved toward the promised land. The original audience was the second generation of people God had delivered from the confines of slavery—those born in the wilderness who would enter Canaan.

Moses is arguably one of the most important people of the Old Testament. In many ways, he foreshadows Christ as a Messiah figure. Moses was born in a period during which the Pharaoh of Egypt ordered the deaths of all Hebrew baby boys, but he was spared because of his mother’s actions. Raised in Pharaoh’s house, Moses likely knew very little about God, or Yahweh, and was surrounded by Egyptian culture and religion. Encountering God through a burning bush changed the course of Moses’s life.

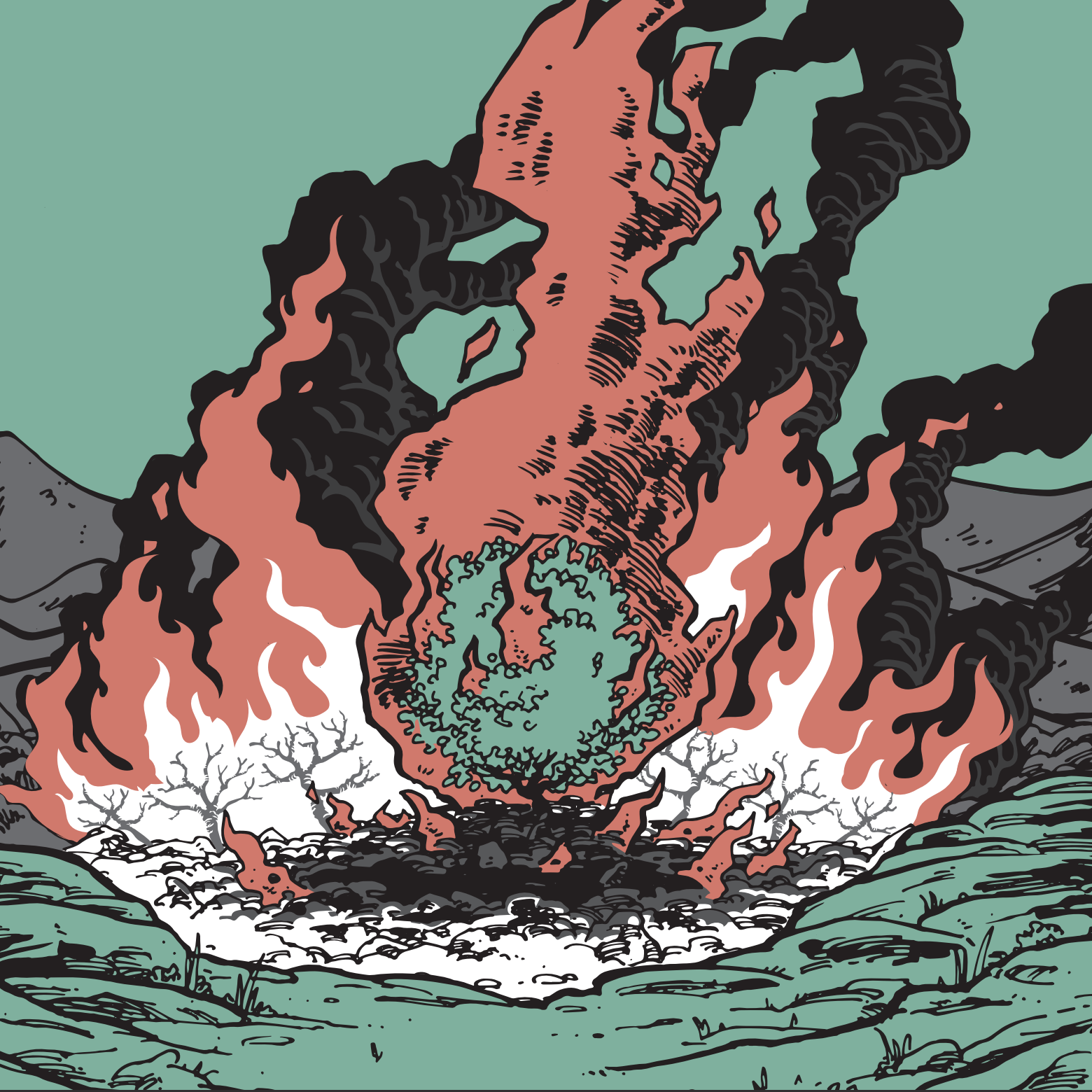
## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

### God’s holiness

God’s holiness refers to His uniqueness in being **separate from all He has created**. The Hebrew word for “holy” means “separate” or “set apart.” God’s holiness also refers to His **absolute purity**. God is unstained by the evil of the world. His goodness is perfect, and the moral code we find in the Scriptures is a reflection of His holy nature. As people made in God’s image, we are called to holiness.

### LEADERS' PRAYER

GOD, THANK YOU FOR DELIVERING US FROM  
OUR SIN WHEN WE STEP TOWARD YOU  
IN FAITH.



## KICK STARTER

### *DID YOU KNOW?*

There is actually a world record for the longest name: **Hubert Blaine Wolfeschlegelsteinhausenbergerdorff Sr.**<sup>4</sup> Can you imagine learning to spell that as a child?

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

# 1

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

### **SUPPLIES LIST: NONE**

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHAT DOES YOUR NAME MEAN? (CONSIDER ALLOWING STUDENTS TIME TO LOOK UP THEIR NAMES' MEANINGS.)**
- **ARE OUR NAMES IMPORTANT? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- **WHAT ARE SOME OF THE NAMES GOD GOES BY?**

Names are pretty important. They're chosen for us, but they often reveal our parents' or guardians' hopes for us. God is different, though. His name is entirely unlike our names; no one chose it for Him. His name, "I AM," or "Yahweh," encompasses His character—that He has always been faithful, that He is now faithful, and that He will always be faithful. What a name!

# 2

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

Have you ever wondered if God sees or cares about human suffering? Why does He sometimes wait so long to deliver us? Why does He sometimes not deliver us at all? We know God is good and He cares about His creation. But somehow, He allows suffering. The Israelites living in slavery in Egypt may have wondered the same things. Their deliverance wouldn't come for over four hundred years! When God did deliver them, He did so in such a way that could only be attributed to Him. It clearly revealed God as the only true God. When our own deliverance feels delayed, we can trust that God has a good purpose (Rom. 8:28)—even if our deliverance is only a reality in heaven.

# DISCUSSION

## MAIN POINT.

Although God is **holy**,  
He draws us into His  
**presence.**

## DELIVERANCE REQUIRES US TO MOVE TOWARD OUR HOLY GOD

READ EXODUS 3:2-8

### WHY DO YOU THINK GOD CHOSE FIRE AS A WAY TO APPEAR TO HIS PEOPLE?

Fire is beneficial for warmth and light yet will burn anything it comes in contact with, leaving it completely changed. Fire draws us in but creates a boundary—and it purifies. God often chose to use fire as a way to appear to humans. But isn't fire so much like Him? **He is light (John 8:12); He is untouchable because He is holy; He changes us completely; and He purifies us.** We are kept safe in His presence only because of Jesus's blood covering us.



### WHY DID GOD TELL MOSES TO KEEP HIS DISTANCE? WHAT DOES THIS SHOW US ABOUT GOD?

Moses didn't intimately know the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This scene is critical because God made Himself known to Moses. And in doing so, God set a boundary—a boundary which spoke to His holiness and separateness from humans. **When God warned Moses to keep a safe distance, He kindly protected him. This is a reminder for us that entering God's presence is a very serious matter—one we often take too lightly.**

### HOW CAN WE MAKE SURE THAT WE ENTER *GOD'S PRESENCE* WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT WE CAN ONLY COME NEAR TO GOD BECAUSE HE INVITES US?

When we say God is holy, we mean that He is perfect and pure. He is completely and totally separate from us. Nothing else is like Him; nothing else compares to Him. Knowing God is holy should create a healthy fear (reverence) in us. Entering His presence is something we must take seriously, both individually and corporately. How often do we scroll on our phones or talk to our neighbor during worship? How often do we forget that we're entering the presence of the King of kings? When Moses encountered God, he knew to keep his distance. He took his sandals off—a gesture of respect and obedience. **Though God is holy, He kindly invites us into His presence. And as believers, we're able to enter because Jesus's blood covers us and presents us as righteous.** May we never take that lightly!

## DELIVERANCE REQUIRES US TO ACT IN FAITH

READ EXODUS 3:9-14



### WHY DID MOSES ASK GOD FOR HIS NAME? WHAT DOES GOD'S ANSWER REVEAL?

Moses had been immersed in Egyptian culture, and while he had likely heard of the God of his ancestors, he didn't know Him. Moses asked a fundamental question in verse 13—one we must all ask: “Who are you?”

**God's answer encompasses His nature. When God said, “I AM,” He meant “I have been; I am now; and I will be.”** Jesus would later answer a similar question from the Pharisees with “before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58).

### WHY DID GOD CALL MOSES? WHAT DID GOD WANT TO DO FOR HIS PEOPLE?

God wasn't ignoring His people's needs; He heard their cries for help (Ex. 3:7). God chose Moses to act as the deliverer of the Hebrews. **He is the same God who also hears us and sees our needs.** Ultimately, God met our greatest need for salvation by sending Jesus to deliver us from an eternity of separation from Him.

### WHEN HAVE YOU WONDERED, “WHO AM I?” BECAUSE OF SOMETHING GOD ASKED YOU TO DO? HOW DOES GOD'S RESPONSE IN VERSE 12 ENCOURAGE YOU?

This call seemed to come out of nowhere, but God had set Moses apart for the job. When God calls us to do something, we often focus on our own shortcomings. But we can have peace that God will give us what we need as we faithfully obey Him. **We can know He has promised to be with us in all things. Our feelings of inadequacy can help reinforce our dependence on God to accomplish what He asks of us.**

## WRAP-UP

### IN WHAT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE DO YOU NEED TO MOVE TOWARD GOD TO EXPERIENCE DELIVERANCE? HOW CAN YOU MOVE TOWARD HIM THIS WEEK?

Imagine if Moses had not moved toward God. Imagine if he had simply ignored the burning bush. Instead, Moses moved toward it and toward God's presence. He positioned himself to hear God's voice. **If we want to experience deliverance—not only for salvation but also for freedom from the sins that threaten to enslave us—we must move toward God. We have to hear His voice and respond to it with obedience.** Maybe you need God to deliver you from something that has been holding you captive—insecurity, addiction, or a toxic attitude. Listen for His voice by praying and getting into God's Word. He will speak to you and invite you to respond in faith. He is your great Deliverer.

# LET MY PEOPLE

# GO

## MAIN POINT.

Deliverance requires us to **trust** in God's plans.



## CHRIST CONNECTION

The first Passover revealed God's judgment against those who would not obey Him, but He rescued those who obeyed through the blood of a lamb. Many years later, during the Passover celebration, Jesus Christ provided salvation for those who believed in His name through His blood—the blood of the Lamb—shed on the cross.





# DELIVERANCE

# REQUIRES TRUST

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Exodus 5

Exodus 12

## THERE IS PURPOSE IN DELAYED DELIVERANCE

### EXODUS 5:1-2

1 Later, Moses and Aaron went in and said to Pharaoh, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival for me in the wilderness." 2 But Pharaoh responded, "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."

### EXODUS 7:4-7

4 Pharaoh will not listen to you, but I will put my hand into Egypt and bring the military divisions of my people the Israelites out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. 5 The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the Israelites from among them." 6 So Moses and Aaron did this; they did just as the LORD commanded them. 7 Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.

## THERE IS PURPOSE IN GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS

### EXODUS 12:5-7,11-13,30-32

5 You must have an unblemished animal, a year-old male; you may take it from either the sheep or the goats. 6 You are to keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembly of the community of Israel will slaughter the animals at twilight. 7 They must take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses where they eat them. . . . 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. 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. . . . 30 During the night Pharaoh got up, he along with all his officials and all the Egyptians, and there was a loud wailing throughout Egypt because there wasn't a house without someone dead. 31 He summoned Moses and Aaron during the night and said, "Get out immediately from among my people, both you and the Israelites, and go, worship the LORD as you have said. 32 Take even your flocks and your herds as you asked and leave, and also bless me."

# BEFORE YOU TEACH

## MAIN POINT.

Leaders: May you be filled with knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual understanding as you prepare to teach (Col. 1:9-10).

Deliverance requires us to **trust** in God's plans.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

### THERE IS PURPOSE IN DELAYED DELIVERANCE

#### EXODUS 5:1-2

“The reader must not lose sight of the identity of the combatants. It is easy to assume that the contest for Israelite deliverance was between Moses and Pharaoh, or between Israel and Pharaoh, or between Israel and Egypt. It was none of these. Rather, it was between Yahweh and Egypt’s gods, the pharaoh being a devotee of, representative of, and human focal point for those gods.”<sup>5</sup>

#### EXODUS 7:4-7

“Sin is whatever offends God, and sin is an enslaver. But this slavery can be escaped—not by skill or cunning but by changing masters from sin to God. This comes about not by human initiative but by God’s gift, to which humans can only respond. In Exodus, likewise, freedom from bondage is accomplished only by God. The Israelites are portrayed as having no chance whatever to save themselves. God must make the demands (‘Let my people go!’); the people on their own, with or without Moses, would never have dared even asked. Moreover, God makes those demands through his chosen representative Moses so that the people cannot take credit for having thought up the idea themselves.”<sup>6</sup>

### THERE IS PURPOSE IN GOD’S INSTRUCTIONS

#### EXODUS 12:5-7

“The choice of a lamb or a kid without defects signifies a level of both innocence and perfection. This animal is the best of the oncoming generation. Something is conveyed here of the power of death. Death is not to be confronted with the leftovers or the castoffs of life. If it is to be defeated, it will take the best there is to offer. . . . there is still the powerful symbolism that in the end death can only be defeated by death and in our partaking in the death of another. Ultimately, all this symbolism comes together in the death of Jesus Christ (Matt. 26:26–29; John 1:29; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:19–22; Heb. 10:19–20; 1 Pet. 1:18–19; Rev. 5:6).”<sup>7</sup>

# CONTEXT

The Hebrew people witnessed God inflict ten plagues on Egypt (Ex. 7–11). Each one was a direct assault against the Egyptian gods. For example, the plague of the frogs was an assault against the goddess of childbirth, Heqet. Frogs were sacred, and it was a crime to kill them. Egypt was covered in dead frogs—a visual display of their sheer inability to save or give life. Many people view these plagues as merciless, but they weren't. With each one, God gave Pharaoh and his people an opportunity to acknowledge God as the only true God. He not only wanted to redeem the Israelites, but His heart was also to make Himself known even to those who had enslaved His people. One by one, these false gods fell, completely powerless to save. Because the Israelites had been enslaved and surrounded by Egyptian paganism for over four hundred years, this event also reintroduced them to Yahweh. It was important for them to know He alone is God and that He alone has authority, even over death. This moment in Hebrew history would serve as their gospel: the big event when God saved them from certain death by providing deliverance. And it points to the gospel: salvation in Christ alone.

## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

### Christ as sacrifice

Several signs, symbols, and situations in the Old Testament foreshadowed Christ as being the **sacrificial Lamb of God** who would take away the sins of the world. But Jesus's sacrifice on the cross permanently paid for our sins—unlike the sacrifices from the Old Testament system that had to be repeated every year (Heb. 10:4).

### LEADERS' PRAYER

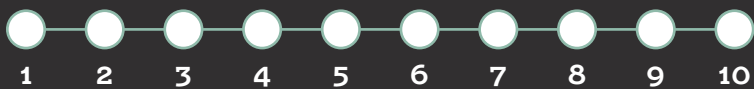
LORD, YOU ARE OUR MIGHTY DELIVERER.  
THANK YOU FOR THE PROVISION OF JESUS'S  
BLOOD—THE ONLY THING THAT CAN SAVE US  
FROM OUR SIN.



## KICK STARTER

### RATE IT!

On a scale of 1-10 (1=easy and 10=impossible), how difficult is it to admit you're wrong?



These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

# 1

## HOW MANY CHANCES?

### **SUPPLIES LIST: NONE**

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHEN HAS SOMEONE GIVEN YOU A SECOND CHANCE?**
- **DO YOU NORMALLY HAVE A LIMIT ON HOW MANY CHANCES YOU'RE WILLING TO GIVE SOMEONE ELSE?**
- **HOW MANY CHANCES DOES GOD GIVE US BEFORE WE FACE CONSEQUENCES?**

Today, we're going to read a well-known biblical account. In it, God brought judgment on a nation that opposed Him, but before doing so, He gave them chance after chance to turn to Him. God is merciful, and He gives us many chances to turn to Him as well. But we must respond in faith instead of hardening our hearts.

# 2

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

Have you sometimes wondered if God was too harsh? He did bring down some heavy judgment in the Bible. Why didn't He give people more time? Well, let's adjust our perspective. First, we feel like everything is happening quickly in these passages. But in reality, God gave more time, often allowing hundreds of years of rebellion. If we look more deeply, we'll see God patiently gave people many chances. Look at Pharaoh's decree in Exodus 1:22: every male Hebrew baby would be put to death. In return, God extended justice, but He still showed mercy. He would only take the firstborn, and He provided a way out! Here's the part we must remember: God willingly gave His only Son, Jesus. He allowed Him to be broken and bruised for our sin. He suffered our ultimate consequence of death. God is anything but harsh with us. He is patient, kind, and merciful.

# DISCUSSION

## MAIN POINT.

Deliverance requires us to **trust** in God's plans.

## THERE IS PURPOSE IN DELAYED DELIVERANCE

READ EXODUS 5:1-2; 7:4-7

### THE EGYPTIANS WORSHIPED PHARAOH AS A GOD. WHAT DOES HIS RESPONSE IN VERSE 2 REVEAL ABOUT HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD?

Egyptians believed that Pharaoh embodied the sun god, Ra—the most important of ancient Egyptian deities. Pharaoh didn't know the Lord, nor did he believe he owed Him any honor. **Pharaoh's attitude was arrogant, stubborn, and dismissive.**

### WHAT HAPPENS IF WE HARDEN OUR HEARTS TOWARD GOD?

Consider sharing a brief overview of the nine plagues (Ex. 7–10). Pharaoh's heart was hardened toward the Lord, meaning he resisted submitting to Him. God repeatedly displayed His authority and power, but Pharaoh refused to bow. **Every time we ignore the Lord's voice or activity in our lives, our hearts harden. And the longer we ignore His voice, the more difficult it becomes to submit to Him.** We must work to keep our hearts soft—moldable and willing to submit to the Lord.

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SHOW SOMEONE MERCY? HOW WAS IT MERCIFUL FOR GOD TO *DELAY* THE ISRAELITES' DELIVERANCE?

Has someone ever shown you kindness when you deserved punishment? You experienced mercy. **Mercy is withholding punishment from someone who deserves it and instead showing compassion and patience.** At first glance, it may not look like God showed mercy in this account. But consider this: God could have destroyed the Egyptians with just a word and without any warning. Because God is just, it was His right to do so. Egypt opposed Him, murdered Hebrew children, and enslaved His people. Instead of acting ruthlessly toward them, God gave them the chance to acknowledge Him. He sent nine plagues on them to show He alone is God. Even after nine chances, God provided a way for them to escape death by wiping the blood of a lamb over their doors. **Delaying the Israelites' deliverance was God's mercy in action; it gave the Israelites, Pharaoh, and the Egyptians opportunities to believe.**

## THERE IS PURPOSE IN GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS

READ EXODUS 12:5-7,11-13,30-32



### WHAT PARTS OF THIS STORY FORESHADOW THE GOSPEL AND WHAT CHRIST WOULD LATER DO?

This account, the gospel (“good news”) of the Hebrew nation, points to the gospel. Before placing our faith in Jesus, we are enslaved to sin and in need of deliverance. **We are freed only by placing our faith in Jesus Christ, the spotless Lamb of God, who spilled His blood for our sin.** We’re then renamed and welcomed as God’s people and marked forever with the Holy Spirit until we reach our promised land—heaven.



### VERSE 30 SAYS THERE WAS DEATH IN EVERY SINGLE HOUSE. WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH US ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT TRUSTING IN GOD?

Every house experienced death. The death was either a consequence of disobedience—the firstborn—or a result of faith—a spotless lamb. Regardless, every home paid a price. Those who acted in faith and wiped the blood of a sacrificial lamb over their doors experienced release from slavery. **When we trust God and obey His instruction, we will experience freedom from sin and death.**

### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE “GODS” IN OUR CULTURE? WHAT IS THE DANGER IN TRUSTING IN THEM?

Share context about Heqet. The gods of Egypt couldn’t stand against the one true God—Yahweh. And neither will our idols. Our culture worships self, fame, sex, money, success. We bow to these idols by giving them our time and our devotion. We bow to them when we compromise who God has created us to be. **But these idols are perishable and unworthy of our worship. Submitting to them is submitting to slavery instead of walking in freedom.**

## WRAP-UP

### WHAT DO THESE EVENTS SHOW US ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER? HOW CAN UNDERSTANDING HIS CHARACTER HELP YOU TRUST HIM THIS WEEK?

At first glance, we may read this account and come away thinking God was harsh. But pause and look again. God repeatedly called Pharaoh to Himself. He sent nine other plagues as warnings. He displayed His authority over the false gods of Egypt. And He offered the people a way out—even Pharaoh—by simply placing faith in the Lord and smearing an unblemished lamb’s blood over their doors. **The plagues displayed God’s righteous judgment, but they also displayed His patience.** We aren’t given a time frame for how long the plagues lasted. **God could’ve freed the Israelites without any plagues at all. But He slowed down the process, extending patience and mercy to anyone who would walk toward Him in faith. And God proved that He is faithful to save us when we trust Him.**

# THE LORD WILL FIGHT

# FOR YOU

## MAIN POINT.

Deliverance from God often **looks different** than what we **expect**.



## CHRIST CONNECTION

The Israelites faced certain death, but God made a way for them to be miraculously saved by parting the Red Sea. We are all sinners and face certain death for our sin, but God made a way for us to be miraculously saved, too, by sending Jesus to die in our place for our sin and rise again (**Rom. 6:23**).





This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Exodus 13

Exodus 15

## WE CAN'T TURN BACK

### EXODUS 14:10-14

10 As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up and there were the Egyptians coming after them! The Israelites were terrified and cried out to the LORD for help. 11 They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? 12 Isn't this what we told you in Egypt: Leave us alone so that we may serve the Egyptians? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." 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."

## WE MUST STEP FORWARD

### EXODUS 14:21-31

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. 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. 29 But the Israelites had walked through the sea on dry ground, with the waters like a wall to them on their right and their left. 30 That day the LORD saved Israel from the power of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31 When Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and believed in him and in his servant Moses.

# BEFORE YOU TEACH

## MAIN POINT.

Leaders: May you be filled with knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual understanding as you prepare to teach (Col. 1:9-10).

Deliverance from God often **looks different** than what we **expect**.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

### WE CAN'T TURN BACK

#### EXODUS 14:14

“The Lord’s deliverance demanded trust which expressed itself in quietude. The word translated be still (*charash*) basically means to be silent, dumb, or speechless. In the particular verbal form in which it appears in this verse, it means to be silent (Judg. 18:19; Gen. 24:21; 34:5; 2 Sam. 13:20).”<sup>8</sup>

#### EXODUS 14:10-14

“Faced with what they believed to be their imminent death, they redefined their recent history. Their pessimism was ill-founded entirely. The Egyptians were interested in capturing them and returning them to slavery rather than killing them (14:5), so their claim that ‘it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians’ was actually only a statement of the very thing the Egyptians had in mind for them. So they were wrong on two counts: they thought the Egyptians were coming to kill them, and they did not believe that God would rescue them.”<sup>9</sup>

### WE MUST STEP FORWARD

#### EXODUS 14:31

“What was important for Israel was not merely that they were safe and the Egyptians were not; what mattered was that faith saves, and God had shown them how faith in him could pay off to their lasting benefit. They were still new to good theology. Many of them at this early point understood very little of who Yahweh was and what he expected of them. But they had now seen one final, awesome act of deliverance from Egypt, and it prompted their fear and trust.”<sup>10</sup>

## CONTEXT

After the plague of the firstborn, the Pharaoh commanded the Hebrew people to leave Egypt. In fact, the Egyptians handed over silver, gold, and clothing to hurry the Hebrew people away (Ex. 12:35-36). But it didn't take long for Pharaoh to change his mind and gather chariots to pursue them. Pharaoh had lost his laborers, and he determined to retrieve them. We must keep in mind that the Israelites were not a people of war. They weren't skilled or trained in defense. In fact, they didn't possess the same weaponry as other nations; they had been living in total servitude in Egypt. The threat of battle would be exceptionally frightening for them because they simply weren't equipped.

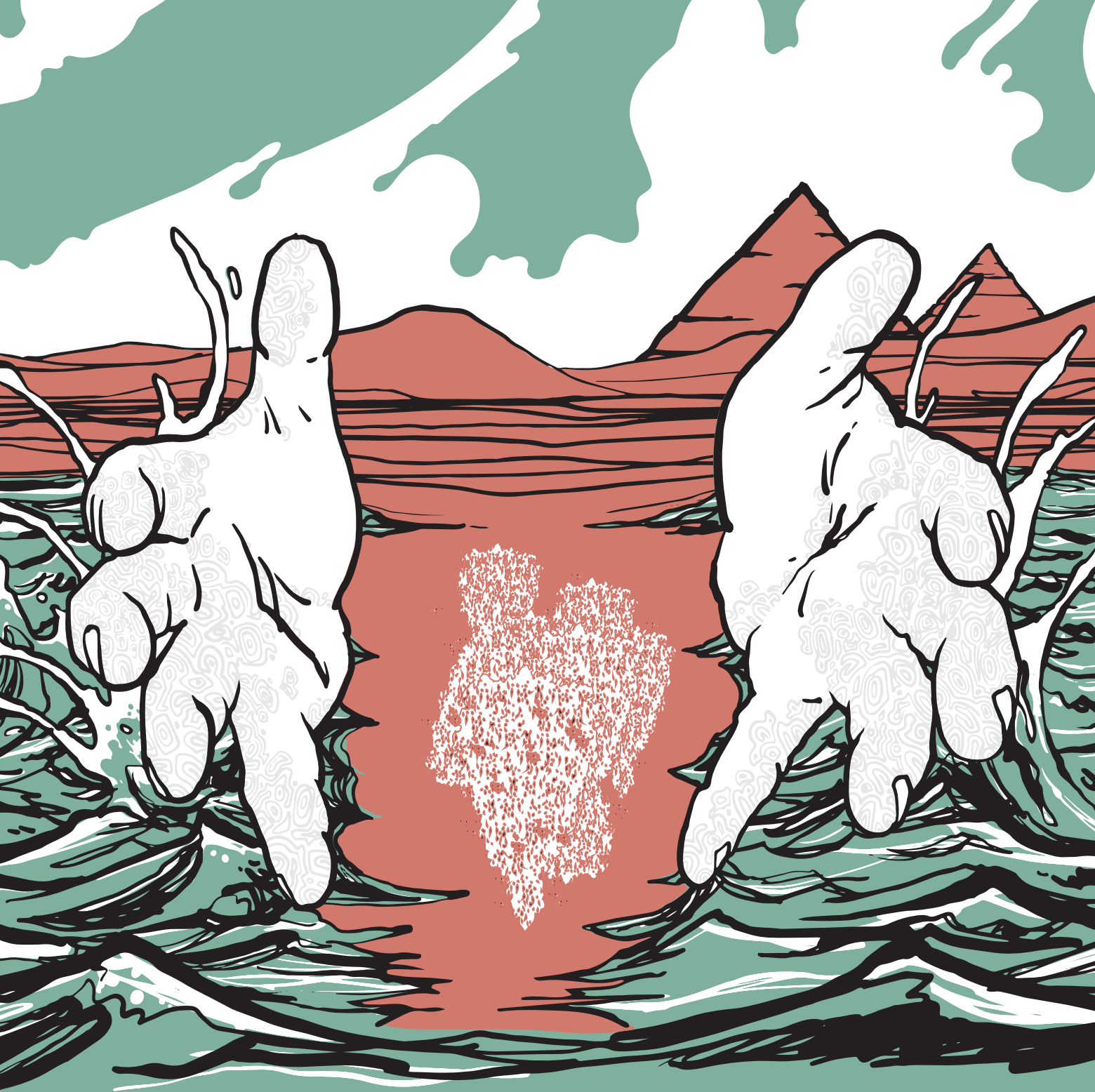
## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

### God is omnipotent

God is **all-powerful**; nothing is beyond the scope of God's power, so long as it does not contradict His own nature or law. God has power and **authority** over the universe He created, from the largest solar system to the smallest particle. Affirming that God is all-powerful does not mean God can sin—since that would go against His perfect moral nature. As Christians, we rest in the belief that the God who has all power is good, and we gain great comfort by knowing **our all-powerful God is working for our good and joy.**

## LEADERS' PRAYER

GOD, HELP US TO TRUST IN YOU FOR  
DELIVERANCE RATHER THAN FIGHTING ON  
OUR OWN.



## KICK STARTER

### ♡ HEARTCHECK

Last week, we talked about not hardening our hearts toward God. How'd you do this week? What are you doing to keep your heart soft—moldable and obedient?

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

# 1

## MIGHTY DELIVERANCE

### **SUPPLIES LIST: TV OR SCREEN**

Consider showing a clip of the parting of the Red Sea from *The Prince of Egypt*. Ask the following questions:

- **WHAT IS FREEDOM?**
- **IF YOU'D SEEN THIS EVENT TAKE PLACE, WHAT WOULD YOU THINK OF GOD?**
- **COULD GOD HAVE FREED THE ISRAELITES IN A SIMPLER WAY? WHY DO YOU THINK HE DID THIS INSTEAD?**

We appreciate our freedom, and if we were given the option to give it up, we likely wouldn't. Right before God parted the Red Sea, the Israelites wondered if it might be better to go back to Egypt and live in slavery. They couldn't see the deliverance that was just ahead of them. Instead, their eyes were on the sea. Today, we'll read about God's plan to deliver them in a powerful way.

# 2

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

Many of us have tried to walk away from sin only to find that we keep returning to it. Scripture compares sin to slavery: It holds us captive. It's like shackles on our hands and feet. God sent Christ to set us free from this slavery, but instead of running in that freedom, we often return to the very things that enslaved us. When we read about the Israelites debating on returning to Egypt after God set them free, we might think they're crazy. Why would they want to return to captivity? But aren't we kind of doing the same thing when we look over our shoulders at the sin we left behind to follow Jesus and when we go back to what enslaved us? Jesus miraculously delivered us. He gave us a new home in His kingdom. Our life of sin, our "Egypt," isn't home anymore. We weren't better off there, so let's stop looking back.

# DISCUSSION

## MAIN POINT.

Deliverance from God often **looks different** than what we **expect**.

### WE CAN'T TURN BACK READ EXODUS 14:10-14

#### WHAT DID THE ISRAELITES WANT TO DO WHEN THEY REALIZED THE EGYPTIANS WERE CHASING THEM?

When the Israelites left, they may have thought the worst danger was behind them. So, they were overcome with fear and wondered why God would lead them to a trap. In fact, they wanted to turn back—to Egypt and slavery. Egypt wouldn't be better for them, but it was all they knew. **In a moment of terror, they questioned if staying enslaved would have been better. They forgot what they'd seen God do in Egypt through the plagues.**

#### HAS FOLLOWING GOD EVER FELT TOO DIFFICULT? WHEN HAS IT BEEN TEMPTING TO TURN BACK?

We react to difficult situations a lot like the Israelites reacted to theirs. When life gets tough or we face circumstances we didn't expect, we are tempted to turn back to our "Egypt." It can be painful when God refines us. We may have to walk away from sin we've felt very comfortable in or attached to. **The enemy wants to convince us that going back to our sin would be easier—that living in sin is better or more fun. But in reality, it makes us slaves.**



#### LOOK AT MOSES'S INSTRUCTIONS IN VERSES 13-14. WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE FOR US TO ALLOW GOD TO FIGHT OUR BATTLES—TO BE *QUIET*? WHY DO WE STRUGGLE WITH THIS?

The Egyptian Pharaoh and his army charged toward the Israelites, who were trapped by the sea. Instead of telling them to prepare for battle or to run, Moses told the people to simply stand and watch. Can you imagine how vulnerable they must have felt? Most of us would want to act in that moment. Most of us would look for ways to fight back or to run away. **But God wanted them to simply stand in faith and watch Him gain their victory. God often asks the same of us. When we face problems, we often look for ways to fix them on our own. We look for a way out. We allow our minds to wander away with worry and anxiety.** For example, maybe someone gossiped about you and turned others away from you. Acting on your own would be gossiping in an attempt to turn people back to your side. Being quiet would look like allowing God to deal with that person in His timing. **We can trust God to fight for us. His deliverance is better than any false sense of victory we may gain on our own.**

## WE MUST STEP FORWARD

### READ EXODUS 14:21-31

#### **WHY WOULD GOD LEAD HIS PEOPLE INTO THIS SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION OF BEING TRAPPED BETWEEN THE SEA AND THE EGYPTIANS?**

Sometimes our road to deliverance doesn't look like what we expect; sometimes it first takes us through deep waters. The Israelites' situation seemed impossible, and their first response was fear. **But God purposely directed them to the sea because He had a mighty plan to deliver them there. Not only would it show the Egyptians the power of God, but most importantly, it would also teach the Israelites that they could depend on God for deliverance.** Our "traps" can teach us the same. God is all-powerful, and we can trust Him for our deliverance.

#### **THE ISRAELITES HAD TO STEP INTO THE SEA TO BE FREE. DESCRIBE WHAT THEY MIGHT HAVE EXPERIENCED.**

We're told that God sent a strong east wind to split the sea, causing two walls of water to rise up. We have to wonder: Was the water roaring and loud, or was it eerily quiet? Did they fear the water collapsing on top of them? **They couldn't have predicted this was the way to freedom. But they had to trust God and take physical steps to be delivered.** Many times, we do too.



#### **HOW DOES MOSES PARTING THE SEA SYMBOLIZE WHAT CHRIST WOULD DO FOR US?**

The miracle at the Red Sea was a mighty act of God, but it points to an even mightier deliverance: salvation from sin. When Jesus was crucified and resurrected, He provided our ultimate deliverance. **Like the Israelites, our situation was hopeless before Christ made a way for us to be forgiven. We could never free ourselves, but God sent Jesus to be our great Deliverer.**

## WRAP-UP

#### **WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH YOU ABOUT DELIVERANCE? HOW CAN YOU APPLY IT TO SITUATIONS IN YOUR OWN LIFE?**

This is one of the most well-known stories in Scripture and for good reason. It teaches us so much about God and the way He delivers us. We see that God sometimes allows us to be in difficult circumstances—not to be cruel but to display His mighty hand of deliverance to us and to those around us. It also shows us that God is all-powerful; He often asks us to be still and trust Him instead of fighting on our own. Most importantly, this story reminds us that we can trust Him. He is with us even in the deep waters (Isa. 43:2). He remains in control even when our circumstances seem chaotic. **Deliverance isn't always immediate relief from a difficult situation, but it is God's presence with us in these circumstances. It is knowing God can use them to gain glory and to teach us more of His character.**

# BREAD FROM

# HEAVEN

## MAIN POINT.

**Worship and trust** are right responses to God's provision.



## CHRIST CONNECTION

The people complained against Moses and against God, but God still chose to give them the food and water they needed. We are all sinners and enemies of God, but God still sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us so that we might be saved ([John 3:16](#)).





# **MANNA** FROM HEAVEN

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

**Exodus 15**

**Exodus 17**

## **INGRATITUDE LEADS TO COMPLAINING**

### **EXODUS 16:2-3**

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!"

## **GOD PROVIDES EVEN WHEN WE'RE UNDESERVING**

### **EXODUS 16:4-5,8-20**

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." . . . 8 Moses continued, "The LORD will give you meat to eat this evening and all the bread you want in the morning, for he has heard the complaints that you are raising against him. Who are we? Your complaints are not against us but against the LORD." 9 Then Moses told Aaron, "Say to the entire Israelite community, 'Come before the LORD, for he has heard your complaints.'" 10 As Aaron was speaking to the entire Israelite community, they turned toward the wilderness, and there in a cloud the LORD's glory appeared. 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." 13 So at evening quail came and covered the camp. In the morning there was a layer of dew all around the camp. 14 When the layer of dew evaporated, there were fine flakes on the desert surface, as fine as frost on the ground. 15 When the Israelites saw it, they asked one another, "What is it?" because they didn't know what it was. Moses told them, "It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat. 16 This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Gather as much of it as each person needs to eat. You may take two quarts per individual, according to the number of people each of you has in his tent.'" 17 So the Israelites did this. Some gathered a lot, some a little. 18 When they measured it by quarts, the person who gathered a lot had no surplus, and the person who gathered a little had no shortage. Each gathered as much as he needed to eat. 19 Moses said to them, "No one is to let any of it remain until morning." 20 But they didn't listen to Moses; some people left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. Therefore Moses was angry with them.

# BEFORE YOU TEACH

Leaders: May you be filled with knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual understanding as you prepare to teach (Col. 1:9-10).

## MAIN POINT.

**Worship and trust**  
are right responses to  
God's provision.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

### INGRATITUDE LEADS TO COMPLAINING

#### EXODUS 16:2-3

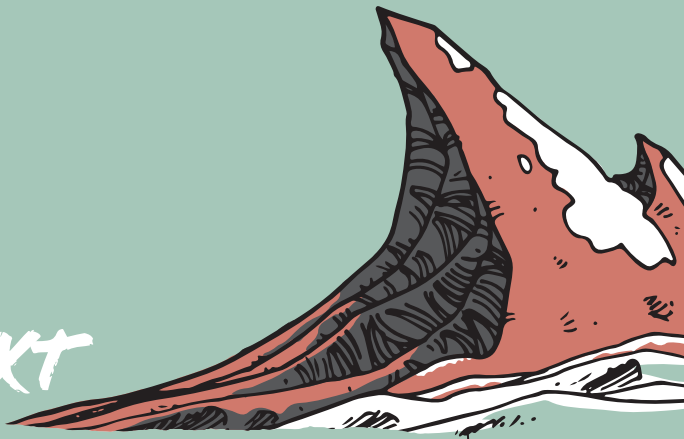
“When it appears this need is not going to be met, or at least not met in a timely fashion, the response of the people is not faith and prayer, but complaint, and interestingly enough, complaint against their leaders, Moses and Aaron. As Fretheim (1991:187) says, ‘a crisis of need creates a crisis of faith.’ . . . The response of the people in this crisis was more hysterical and sarcastic than in the previous one (15:24). ‘If God was going to kill us anyway, why not do it in Egypt when we had full stomachs?’ they asked. Another new feature is the idealizing of the memory of Egypt. This is certainly a common human trait. Memory has a way of diminishing the troubles of the past and magnifying the good things. But in this case, it was a hindrance to the Israelites, making them ungrateful for the deliverance they had experienced and thus unable to apply the lessons of that deliverance to the subsequent crises of their lives. Another unfortunate trait manifested here—one that would continue to dog Moses and the people through the coming years—was their failure to remind themselves that God, not Moses, had brought them into the wilderness.”<sup>11</sup>

### GOD PROVIDES EVEN WHEN WE'RE UNDESERVING

#### EXODUS 16:4

“God was testing his people throughout the exodus events: leading them in odd directions without fully explaining why (14:1–4), surprising them with potentially destructive enemy attacks even after they had left Egypt (14:10; 17:8), requiring them to walk into and through deep ocean water (14:15), and taking them to locations that lacked the necessities of life (as in 15:23 and 16:2). All of these challenges were part of a plan to develop a people's willingness to trust him. Explaining everything in advance would have run counter to that plan. It was necessary for Israel to learn faith while confused, while afraid, while desperate—not just in theory but under pressure of actual conditions where survival was uncertain and faith was tested to the limit.”<sup>12</sup>

## CONTEXT



The Israelites took provisions from Egypt, but roughly forty days passed after leaving Egypt, and they began to panic over basic necessities—first water, then food. In Exodus 15, God made the waters of Marah, which means “bitter,” drinkable (vv. 23-24). God then led them to “twelve springs and seventy date palms” for shade (v. 27). He continued to provide for the Israelites’ physical needs as part of a covenant: if they would obey the Lord and pay attention to His commands, He wouldn’t inflict them with any of the diseases He inflicted on the Egyptians (v. 26). God continued to show His faithfulness; in return, He wanted their hearts—their obedience. God would also teach the people to depend on Him. They were accustomed to gathering as much food as possible during harvest, but God would ask them to gather only what they needed for the day—their “daily bread.”

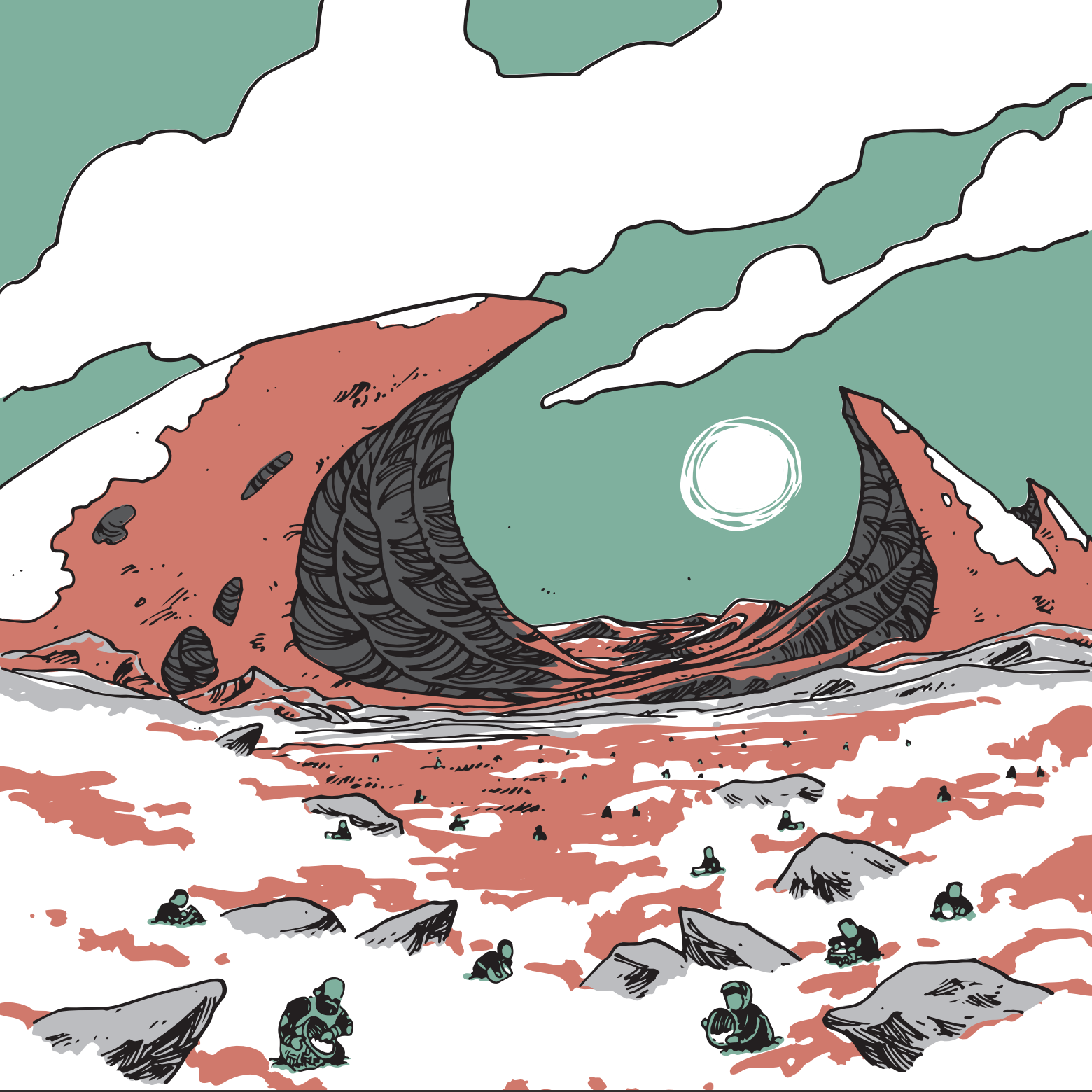
## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

### God the Father

God as Father reigns with **providential care** over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. **He is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving, and all-wise.** God is Father in truth to those who become His children through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

## LEADERS' PRAYER

**GOD, THANK YOU FOR CARING FOR US AND  
GIVING US ALL WE NEED. HELP US TO HAVE  
HEARTS OF GRATITUDE.**



## KICK STARTER

### DID YOU KNOW?

Research shows that most people complain 15-30 times a day! It also shows that complaining leads to physical shrinking of the hippocampus—the part of the brain that helps us solve problems and think intellectually. Maybe complaining is something we should take more seriously!<sup>13</sup>

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# 1

## FAVORITE FOOD

### **SUPPLIES LIST: NONE**

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHAT FOOD COULD YOU EAT EVERY DAY WITHOUT GETTING TIRED OF IT?**
- **IF YOU COULD ONLY PICK TWO THINGS TO EAT FOR THE NEXT FORTY YEARS, WHAT WOULD YOU CHOOSE?**
- **HOW LONG DO YOU THINK IT'D TAKE BEFORE YOU BEGAN TO COMPLAIN?**

This scenario likely won't happen to us, but it did happen to the Israelites. After leaving Egypt, God provided food for them in the wilderness—manna and quail. But here's the catch: they ate only these two foods for forty years! Instead of being grateful for God's provision and care, they responded with complaining and grumbling.

# 2

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

Does it sometimes feel good to complain? Sure. But complaining isn't as innocent as culture makes it seem. Culture casts "venting" as a healthy way to detox negativity. And yes, we often need to talk through our hurt and pain with trusted friends. But complaining is rooted in something different, usually in selfish motives. We didn't get what we wanted or dislike how something happened—and we want others to know it. Complaining harms our relationships with others because it's poisonous; it encourages them to complain and forget God's goodness too. It harms our relationship with God because it causes us to fixate on the ways we feel He has been unfaithful. In reality, God can't be unfaithful; it's not who He is (2 Tim. 2:13). Instead, we can respond to all situations with trusting and worshiping God.

# DISCUSSION

## MAIN POINT.

**Worship** and **trust** are right responses to God's provision.

## INGRATITUDE LEADS TO COMPLAINING

READ EXODUS 16:2-3

### ARE YOU SURPRISED THAT THE ISRAELITES COMPLAINED SO SOON AFTER BEING DELIVERED? WHAT DID THEY SEEM TO FORGET?

Think about what the people had just witnessed: the parting of the Red Sea! It's shocking that they so quickly seemed to forget God's power to deliver them and provide for them. But it only took a little over a month for this to happen. **It only took hunger and thirst to cause them to long for the pleasures of the past in Egypt—to idealize their former lives of slavery.**

### HOW ARE WE OFTEN LIKE THE ISRAELITES? WHAT DOES GRUMBLING REVEAL ABOUT OUR FAITH?

We sometimes forget all God has done in our lives when we face difficult or inconvenient situations—when we lack something we want. **We shift from gratitude to grumbling because we feel like God might be withholding something from us, or we believe He isn't providing for us.** When we complain and grumble, we reveal a lack of faith—a lack of trust in God to always care for us and, ultimately, to do what's best for us.

### IT DIDN'T MAKE SENSE TO THE PEOPLE TO ESCAPE DEATH IN EGYPT ONLY TO POTENTIALLY DIE OF HUNGER IN THE WILDERNESS. WHY IS IT DIFFICULT TO TRUST GOD WHEN OUR CIRCUMSTANCES DON'T MAKE SENSE?

Logic and faith don't always go hand in hand. Obeying Jesus often leads us to follow Him to places others would tell us make no sense, like living godly lives, serving on the mission field, or saving sex for marriage. It may lead us to wait when we want to run ahead. It may lead us to walk away from toxic relationships and experience loneliness for a season. **When we seek to obey God in situations that go against cultural norms, others may not always understand; we may even struggle to understand why God allows us to, in a sense, "hunger" or "thirst."** The Israelites questioned if leaving Egypt was pointless because it looked like they might die of hunger. But God had a good purpose: He was teaching them dependence on Him. He was showing them He was unlike any other gods they'd previously known in Egypt. He was refining them.

## GOD PROVIDES EVEN WHEN WE'RE UNDESERVING

READ EXODUS 16:4-5,8-20



**HOW DID GOD RESPOND TO THE ISRAELITES' GRUMBLING? IS IT THE WAY YOU EXPECTED HIM TO RESPOND? EXPLAIN.**

In exchange for grumbling, God graciously provided for the Israelites. Instead of punishment, He offered provision. **At the core of who God is, He is Provider.** He is our heavenly Father who loves us and cares for us, whether we deserve it or not.



**READ JOHN 6:51. WHAT CONNECTION DO YOU SEE BETWEEN MANNA AND JESUS?**

Much of the Exodus narrative points to a greater deliverance in Jesus. God provided sustenance for the Israelites during their time in the wilderness. But it would only fulfill physical hunger for a limited time; they'd be hungry again, and it couldn't satisfy their spiritual hunger. **Jesus, the Bread of Life, came to permanently fulfill our spiritual hunger, and when we trust in Him for salvation, we'll experience lasting contentment.**

**AFTER SEEING GOD WORK, WHY DID THE PEOPLE STILL DISOBEY HIM (V. 20)? WHY DO WE?**

It can be easy for us to look at the Israelites' disobedience and lack of faith and judge them. But we often act just like them. **At the core of their disobedience was a distrust of the Lord, and it's at the core of our disobedience too. We don't fully believe that what God does—or what He asks us to do—is best. We believe our way is better.** But the Israelites' own way would only lead back to slavery, and our own way will as well. We can trust the Lord's way is better because He has been faithful; He is faithful; and He will be faithful.

## WRAP-UP

**THIS WEEK, HOW CAN YOU PRACTICE REMEMBERING GOD'S FAITHFULNESS INSTEAD OF GRUMBLING?**

If we're honest, we might admit it's easier to grumble and complain. And sometimes it's even satisfying to complain and call it "venting." **Forgetting God's faithfulness affects the way we walk with Him. Forgetting leads us to be hesitant, but remembering helps us trust God.** We can actively practice remembering God's faithfulness each day; we can actively practice gratitude. This could look like keeping a prayer journal so you can recall the ways God answers your prayers. It could look like making a worship playlist to center your mind on Jesus. It could also look like verbally expressing gratitude to other people who've helped or encouraged you. **Gratitude is the very opposite of grumbling, so when we find ways to remain grateful, we'll also remain fixed on God's faithfulness.**

# THEY WILL BEAR IT WITH YOU

## MAIN POINT.

We need **community** and **encouragement** from other believers.



## CHRIST CONNECTION

Moses was a great leader, but he was just a man. He was not able to defeat his enemies or meet all the needs of all the people by himself. Jesus is fully God and fully man. He is able to hear and respond to all of our prayers, and His death and resurrection provides salvation to everyone who trusts in Him.





# COMMUNITY AS A NECESSITY

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Exodus 17

Exodus 18

## GODLY COMMUNITY HELPS US DEFEAT THE ENEMY

### EXODUS 17:8-16

8 At Rephidim, Amalek came and fought against Israel. 9 Moses said to Joshua, "Select some men for us and go fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the hilltop with God's staff in my hand." 10 Joshua did as Moses had told him, and fought against Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 While Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, but whenever he put his hand down, Amalek prevailed. 12 When Moses's hands grew heavy, they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat down on it. Then Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other so that his hands remained steady until the sun went down. 13 So Joshua defeated Amalek and his army with the sword. 14 The LORD then said to Moses, "Write this down on a scroll as a reminder and recite it to Joshua: I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek under heaven." 15 And Moses built an altar and named it, "The LORD Is My Banner." 16 He said, "Indeed, my hand is lifted up toward the LORD's throne. The LORD will be at war with Amalek from generation to generation."

## GODLY COMMUNITY HELPS US KEEP GOING

### EXODUS 18:17-23

17 "What you're doing is not good," Moses's father-in-law said to him. 18 "You will certainly wear out both yourself and these people who are with you, because the task is too heavy for you. You can't do it alone. 19 Now listen to me; I will give you some advice, and God be with you. You be the one to represent the people before God and bring their cases to him. 20 Instruct them about the statutes and laws, and teach them the way to live and what they must do. 21 But you should select from all the people able men, God-fearing, trustworthy, and hating dishonest profit. Place them over the people as commanders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. 22 They should judge the people at all times. Then they can bring you every major case but judge every minor case themselves. In this way you will lighten your load, and they will bear it with you. 23 If you do this, and God so directs you, you will be able to endure, and also all these people will be able to go home satisfied."

# BEFORE YOU TEACH

## MAIN POINT.

Leaders: May you be filled with knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual understanding as you prepare to teach (Col. 1:9-10).

We need **community** and **encouragement** from other believers.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

### GODLY COMMUNITY HELPS US DEFEAT THE ENEMY

#### EXODUS 17:8-13

“When God’s power is at work and his blessing is in play, God’s agents succeed in his purposes. The use of the staff in the previous miracle must have also been a factor. Yes, God’s power ruled the realm of nature, but it was in no way limited to that realm. It was just as dominating in the realm of human affairs. But why was it necessary to hold up the staff throughout the entire day? Perhaps it is because this time the involvement of the people and their continuing faith was a much more essential factor in the accomplishment of God’s plan than it had been previously.”<sup>14</sup>

#### EXODUS 17:15-16

“Altars were for worshiping God, and worship always involves the expression of gratitude for blessing, whatever else it also properly includes. The patriarchs tended to build altars wherever they located because they understood their obligation to worship consistently. Moses was carrying on this tradition in building the altar at Rephidim to express thanksgiving to God for delivering the Israelites.”<sup>15</sup>

### GODLY COMMUNITY HELPS US KEEP GOING

#### EXODUS 18:21

“These would lead the people as ‘officials’—people who were appointed to an actual societal office and did not take on a judging role merely as a task ancillary to their tribal rank or the like. Thus contrary to the Israelite priesthood or the ancient Near Eastern monarchy, the Israelite judiciary was to be appointed on the basis of honesty and ability rather than occupy an office automatically by reason of being born into a hereditary role.”<sup>16</sup>

## CONTEXT

**Amalekites:** Amalek was a grandson of Esau, and because of the family rift between Esau and Jacob, there was a history of strife between the Amalekites and the Israelites. The reason for the attack in Exodus 17 is unknown, but the Amalekites were certainly better prepared and more skilled than the Israelites—a nation that had lived in servitude for decades. The Amalekites were known for attacking and plundering other people groups.

**Moses's staff:** It's often referred to as "God's staff" (17:9). In ancient eastern culture, staffs were common, but they were also essential to providing protection and identification, along with being symbols of power. Moses's staff was totally unique in that it was symbolic of God's presence and an avenue through which God performed miraculous wonders.

## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

### body of Christ

The New Testament describes the **church as the body of Christ**. The church lives and operates as **Christ's representative** here on earth, with Christ as its head (Col. 1:18). This means the church is an extension of Christ's ministry, carrying out His work by fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). In addition, the picture of the church as the body of Christ shows us the **interconnectedness of individual Christians**, with each member dependent on one another for growth and sanctification (1 Cor. 12).

## LEADERS' PRAYER

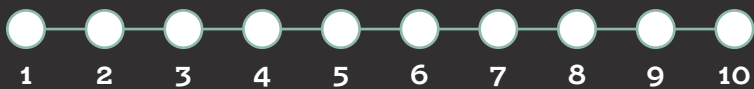
GOD, HELP US MODEL GODLY  
ENCOURAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY  
TO OUR STUDENTS SO THEY'LL SEEK IT  
FOR THEMSELVES.



## KICK STARTER

### RATE IT!

On a scale of 1-10 (1=never and 10=always), how much do you enjoy being alone?



These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

# 1

## ALONE OR TOGETHER

### **SUPPLIES LIST: NONE**

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHAT ARE SOME GAMES, ACTIVITIES, SPORTS, AND HOBBIES THAT CAN'T BE DONE ALONE?**
- **WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT CAN BE DONE ALONE BUT ARE BETTER WHEN DONE WITH OTHERS?**
- **DO YOU THINK IT'S OKAY FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE TO BE DONE INDIVIDUALLY, OR SHOULD IT BE IN COMMUNITY? EXPLAIN.**

Sure, there are certain activities we can do on our own and maybe even enjoy them more that way. But walking with God isn't one of them. We're designed to walk with others as we learn to follow Jesus. We'll see Moses exemplify this truth in the passage today.

# 2

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

There is a push in current culture to isolate. It celebrates being antisocial or not needing other people—like it's a badge of honor. Honestly, it's really easy to be alone, like when we're on our phones or playing video games. But is this how God wants us to live—individual, separate lives? Is it better to be disconnected from others so they don't know our struggles? Scripture is pretty clear here. While some of us may believe it's less complicated to live disconnected, we're designed to walk with God and with others. We're even commanded to help carry each others' burdens (Gal. 6:2), which means we have to know one another well enough to do so. We're commanded to help one another in difficult seasons and to rejoice with one another during joyful seasons (Rom. 12:15). We're commanded to hold one another accountable and draw one another away from sin (Gal. 6:1). And the only way we can do any of this is if we're connected. So, don't buy into the narrative that you're better off alone.

# DISCUSSION

## MAIN POINT.

We need **community** and **encouragement** from other believers.

## GODLY COMMUNITY HELPS US DEFEAT THE ENEMY

READ EXODUS 17:8-16

### DOES IT MATTER WHAT TYPE OF PEOPLE WE SURROUND OURSELVES WITH? EXPLAIN.

Scripture is clear that we must be wise in our choice of friends. Here's the truth: **Always surrounding ourselves with those who willingly live in sin will tempt us to also make sinful choices. Surrounding ourselves with godly friends will encourage us to be more like Jesus (Prov. 27:17).**

While we're certainly called to love and share the gospel with all people, we would be naive to think it doesn't matter who we hang out with most.

### WHY DO YOU THINK MANY PEOPLE PRIVATELY WRESTLE WITH THEIR STRUGGLES RATHER THAN ASKING FOR HELP?

We usually keep struggles to ourselves for a few reasons: shame, pride, or hurt. **Shame whispers that our struggles are our fault and that we deserve them.** Shame keeps us silent. Pride also keeps us silent but for a different reason: It tells us **we don't need help.** It shouts that we can handle things on our own. **And previous hurts can cause us to distrust others as a way to protect ourselves from being hurt again.**



### WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO HAVE OTHER BELIEVERS TO HELP YOU FIGHT LIFE'S BATTLES?

In this passage, Joshua couldn't have defeated the Amalekites without Moses keeping God's staff lifted. And Moses couldn't have supported Joshua and the rest of the army without Aaron and Hur supporting him. Do we even realize how much we rely on those who are holding up the people who support us? Many times in Scripture the life of faith is referred to as a battle—we're even told to "put on the full armor of God" (Eph. 6:11). But battles are best fought alongside others. **As believers, we are part of a community of other believers—the church. These are the people we can lean on to fight life's battles—our struggles with sin, our heartaches, our losses, and our grief. These are the people God places in our lives to hold up our arms in a sense—to pray with us and for us, to hold us accountable, to guide us in wisdom.** And we have the privilege of doing this for others too.

## GODLY COMMUNITY HELPS US KEEP GOING

### READ EXODUS 18:17-23

#### WHY SHOULD GOOD LEADERS BE ABLE TO RELY ON OTHERS AS THEY LEAD?

Being a leader is sometimes a much heavier responsibility than people realize. A good leader knows how to include others in leading—how to accept help, how to take advice, how to delegate. Moses showed the ability to be a great leader, but he wouldn't be a perfect one.

**Like any good leader, Moses needed other people to speak truth to him and to help him.**

#### WHAT DOES IT SHOW YOU ABOUT MOSES THAT HE WAS WILLING TO ACCEPT JETHRO'S WISE ADVICE?

Jethro's advice for Moses to enlist help was wise because if Moses didn't, he would likely experience burnout. It wasn't possible for Moses to hear every single case among the Israelites and have time to meet with God as a prophet for the people. **Moses revealed humility when he accepted that he had limitations and needed help to carry the heavy responsibility of leading God's people.**



#### WHAT ARE SOME WAYS JESUS MODELED THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY?

Think about this: Jesus didn't walk alone. He invited twelve men to walk closely with Him—to learn from Him and to grow together in a deeper knowledge of who He was. For three years, they lived in tight community with Him. **And in one of Jesus's most agonizing moments on the night before His arrest, He prayed to the Father in the garden of Gethsemane and asked Peter, James, and John to come with Him—to wait and to pray (Mark 14:32-42).** Jesus modeled how His followers are to do life and ministry together while also helping to carry one another's burdens.

## WRAP-UP

### HOW CAN YOU ASK OTHERS FOR HELP THIS WEEK? HOW CAN YOU HELP OTHERS?

Sometimes it's helpful to think about why we aren't asking for help. Maybe you believe you're strong enough on your own and need to ask God to help you lay down pride. Maybe you need to ask God to help you know His great love toward you instead of allowing shame to keep you silent. Maybe you need to ask God to heal any hurt from the past so that you can trust people again. And then, ask God to show you a godly person who can walk with you. **Ask Him for wisdom in choosing a friend or mentor. Then look for other people who are also in need of community.** Ask the Holy Spirit to help you be sensitive to the needs of others and to show you how to encourage other people in their own battles. When you do these things, you're putting yourself in a position to walk in community with other believers.

# BY THE FINGER OF GOD

## MAIN POINT.

How we **love God** affects the way we **love others**.



## CHRIST CONNECTION

God gave us the law to show us how to live for Him. Since we could never perfectly keep the law, it also pointed to our need for a Savior. Jesus came to fulfill the law in our place so that we might be saved by His perfect righteousness (**Matt. 5:17**).





# LEADS TO LIFE

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Exodus 19

Exodus 20; 31

## GOD SHOWS US HOW TO LOVE HIM

### EXODUS 20:1-11

1 Then God spoke all these words: 2 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery. 3 Do not have other gods 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, bringing the consequences of the fathers' iniquity on the children 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.

## GOD SHOWS US HOW TO LOVE OTHERS

### EXODUS 20:12-21

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. 18 All the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the ram's horn, and the mountain surrounded by smoke. When the people saw it they trembled and stood at a distance. 19 "You speak to us, and we will listen," they said to Moses, "but don't let God speak to us, or we will die." 20 Moses responded to the people, "Don't be afraid, for God has come to test you, so that you will fear him and will not sin." 21 And the people remained standing at a distance as Moses approached the total darkness where God was.

# BEFORE YOU TEACH

## MAIN POINT.

Leaders: May God give you instruction, hope, and encouragement as you study His Word this week (Rom. 15:4).

How we **love God** affects the way we **love others**.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

### GOD SHOWS US HOW TO LOVE HIM

#### EXODUS 20:1

“It has been well said that the commandments are God’s nature expressed in terms of moral imperatives: and it is significant that God chose to reveal himself so, rather than in terms of philosophical propositions. So, to the Israelite, he is the God of history (verse 2) and of daily life (verse 13) rather than the God of speculation.”<sup>1</sup>

#### EXODUS 20:1-2

“Before the Ten Words, a statement about God’s salvation is made: ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery.’ This is the gospel. . . . God frees us by His grace, giving us new life, and then calls us to obedience to His words. Because Yahweh is Israel’s God, who has brought them out of Egypt, they are to live for His glory by following His commands.”<sup>2</sup>

### GOD SHOWS US HOW TO LOVE OTHERS

#### EXODUS 20:1-17

“The Ten Words point us to the Savior. Christ was ‘born under the law, to redeem those under the law’ (Gal. 4:4–5). He fulfilled the law in every respect (Matt. 5:17–18). He paid the penalty of the law and bore the curse of the law on the cross (Gal. 3:10–14; Col. 2:13–14). We cannot keep God’s law perfectly. We need another to do this for us. The law drives us to Jesus for forgiveness and a new heart, and the Spirit then empowers for obedience. While in this life we cannot keep the law perfectly and are always in need of grace, we are never crushed by the law because there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). Because the weight has been lifted, we are able to delight in God’s law. We do not see His commandments as burdensome (1 John 5:3).”<sup>3</sup>



# CONTEXT

In Exodus 20, God audibly spoke to the people of Israel for the first time. Previously, God used Moses as a prophet, but here on Mount Sinai, God left no doubt that He was present. The Ten Commandments, or the Ten Words, outlined the covenant between God and His people. In ancient eastern culture, a king making a covenant with his subjects would first identify himself and his relationship to the parties involved. Here, God clearly identified Himself as the only true God, who saved them from Egyptian slavery. In the next step, the king outlined the stipulations of the covenant. The Ten Commandments contained those stipulations: how to love God and how doing so should affect the way the Israelites were to love and interact with one another.

God is omniscient, or all-knowing. When He gave the people the Ten Commandments, He already knew they couldn't follow them perfectly, and neither can we. Instead, they pointed all of humanity to the need for a Savior. The law always pointed to Jesus—the only One who could perfectly fulfill it.

## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

### God the Son

Jesus honored the divine law by His **personal obedience**. In His substitutionary death on the cross, He made **provision for the redemption of men from sin**.

### LEADERS' PRAYER

GOD, THANK YOU FOR TEACHING US HOW  
TO LOVE YOU AND OTHERS. THANK YOU FOR  
USING THE LAW TO MAKE US AWARE OF OUR  
NEED FOR A SAVIOR.



## KICK STARTER

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### ♥ HEART CHECK

How have you worked on letting others walk with you through life's battles?  
What are some ways you've worked on walking with other people through theirs?

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

# 1

## ALL TEN

### **SUPPLIES LIST: NONE**

Allow students to pair up. Set a timer and challenge pairs to write down the Ten Commandments. The first group to finish and get them all correct wins. Then ask the following questions:

- **WHICH COMMANDMENTS ARE EASIER TO REMEMBER? WHICH ONES DID YOU LEAVE OFF?**
- **DO YOU THINK ALL OF THEM ARE STILL RELEVANT TODAY? EXPLAIN.**
- **WHY DO YOU THINK THEY ARE SOMETIMES POSTED ON PUBLIC BUILDINGS? WHAT DOES THAT SHOW US?**

The Ten Commandments are some of the most recognizable words in Scripture. Many unbelievers can even state at least a few of them. But do we really live them out? Today, we'll look at why they're relevant and what Jesus said about them.

# 2

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

The command to honor our parents can be difficult if they aren't honoring God. How do you honor a mom who abandoned you for drugs or a dad who doesn't spend time with you? Asking these questions shows that you want to honor God by keeping His command even when it isn't easy. Honoring parents means we show them respect because God put them in a position of authority in our lives. It's obeying them as long as it doesn't go against God's Word. It's loving them and serving them—even if their actions haven't earned it—because they're made in God's image. It means taking care of them or showing kindness in our words and actions. It looks like imitating Christ as a son or daughter. However, it's never tolerating abuse of any kind. If this is taking place, seek help from a trusted adult.

# DISCUSSION

## MAIN POINT.

How we **love God** affects the way we **love others**.

## GOD SHOWS US HOW TO LOVE HIM

### READ EXODUS 20:1-11

#### WHY DO YOU THINK GOD STARTED WITH THE COMMANDS TO HAVE NO OTHER GODS OR IDOLS?

Remember: the Israelites were delivered from four hundred years in Egypt's polytheistic culture, which was more familiar to them than a monotheistic system. God was bringing them to a new land of their own, but it would be surrounded by polytheistic cultures. **It could be very easy to slide back into what they'd always known: the worship of many gods and the making of idols.** These commands taught them that to follow Yahweh was to follow only Yahweh.

#### LOOK AT VERSES 4-5. WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT GOD, AND HOW SHOULD THIS AFFECT US?

Most of us hear the word *jealous* and associate it with sin, right? But in this context, we learn that God demands what rightfully belongs to Him alone—our worship. **He isn't envious of something we have; He is jealous for what belongs to Him.** This should frame the way we worship. Rather than serving money, fame, sports, social media, famous people, and so on, we serve only the Lord. **We give Him what He so rightly deserves: our hearts.**

#### READ PSALM 40:8. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SIMPLY KNOWING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND ACTUALLY *DELIGHTING* IN GOD'S LAW?

Knowing God's Word and delighting in it are two different things. We can recite God's commands and still be far from Him in our hearts and actions (Matt. 15:8). We can even know all the right answers but dread following God's commands because to us, they feel like a list of rules. But they're so much better than rules. **God's law—His holy Word—teaches us how to live in right relationship with Him. It shows us more of His character. It teaches us what it looks like to live holy lives and to imitate Jesus, who perfectly followed every single command.** Following God's commands doesn't make us legalistic or narrow-minded. Rather, when we know and delight in God's commands, we show that we love Him. We can delight in the truth that God didn't leave us on our own to figure things out, but He gave us a road map for following Him. He points us to what citizens of heaven—anyone in Christ—live like here on earth. What a joy it is to represent the King of kings in our words, thoughts, and actions!

## GOD SHOWS US HOW TO LOVE OTHERS READ EXODUS 20:12-21



### WHY WOULD GOD GIVE PEOPLE COMMANDMENTS THEY COULD NEVER FOLLOW PERFECTLY?



Since the fall in Eden, humans have been born into sin. We're incapable of living sinless lives. **But without the law, we may never recognize sin. We may never see the difference between holy and unholy. The law—the Ten Commandments along with all of God's commands throughout Scripture—is a gift that points us to our desperate need for salvation.** This salvation is only possible through Jesus, who lived a sinless life and gave His life on our behalf.

### WHY SHOULD OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AFFECT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS?

The commandments follow a format: our relationship with God affects relationships with others. **If we have no other gods, if we don't bow to idols, if we use our words as worship and practice Sabbath, then how could our relationships with others not be affected?** Being right with God helps us live in godly community with others; in fact, being right with Him is necessary to do so.

### WHAT HAS CULTURE DONE TO THE MEANING OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS? HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM WHAT JESUS EXPLAINED IN MATTHEW 5:21-48?

Culture, and at times the church, has softened God's Word to make it more appealing or easier to follow. But Jesus did quite the opposite when He explained the meaning of the law. Jesus heightened it. In doing this, **Jesus made it even more apparent that following God is about our hearts and not just our right actions.** Jesus showed us that we need Him, along with the help of the Holy Spirit, to live in a way that honors the Father—not by following rules but by loving Him and others.

## WRAP-UP

### WHAT IDOL HAVE YOU WORSHIPED ALONGSIDE GOD? THIS WEEK, HOW CAN YOU COMMIT TO WORSHIPING GOD ONLY?

We can often look at the Egyptians or the Israelites and distance ourselves from their idol worship. We falsely assume it's just an issue for that time period, but in reality, it's very much an issue for us today. Our idols just look a little different. They appear innocent, so we attempt to worship God *and* these things at the same time. They may come in the form of an extra-curricular activity that consumes us, a relationship that causes us to sin, popularity that invites us to compromise, social media that tempts us to covet, or our phones that demand our full attention. **When we put something in the place of God and devote our hearts, time, and attention to it, then we're worshiping an idol. Many of these things aren't inherently sinful, but our elevation of them is.** We must keep our worship centered on God alone.

# MAKE GODS

# FOKUS

## MAIN POINT.

We're made to  
**worship God alone.**



## CHRIST CONNECTION

“The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love” and truth (**Ps. 103:8**). He will judge sin, yet He is faithful to forgive and save all who come to Him in repentance and faith.





# MADE TO

# WORSHIP

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Exodus 32

Exodus 34

## WE'RE MADE TO WORSHIP

### EXODUS 32:1-6

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!" 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.

## ONLY GOD IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP

### EXODUS 32:7-14

7 The LORD spoke to Moses: "Go down at once! For your people you brought up from the land of Egypt have acted corruptly. 8 They have quickly turned from the way I commanded them; they have made for themselves an image of a calf. They have bowed down to it, sacrificed to it, and said, 'Israel, these are your gods, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.'" 9 The LORD also said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and they are indeed a stiff-necked people. 10 Now leave me alone, so that my anger can burn against them and I can destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation." 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.

# BEFORE YOU TEACH

## MAIN POINT.

We're made to **worship  
God alone.**

Leaders: May God give you instruction, hope, and encouragement as you study His Word this week (Rom. 15:4).

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

### WE'RE MADE TO WORSHIP

#### EXODUS 32:1-6

“But even Israel we must not judge too harshly; they were a slave people, still with the minds of slaves, even if God had set them free. Paul makes the same complaint about Christians in Galatians 5:1. Indeed, much of his language in describing them seems drawn from the descriptions of erring Israel in the Old Testament. It is because Israel is so like us in every way that the stories of Israel have such exemplary value (1 Cor. 10).”<sup>4</sup>

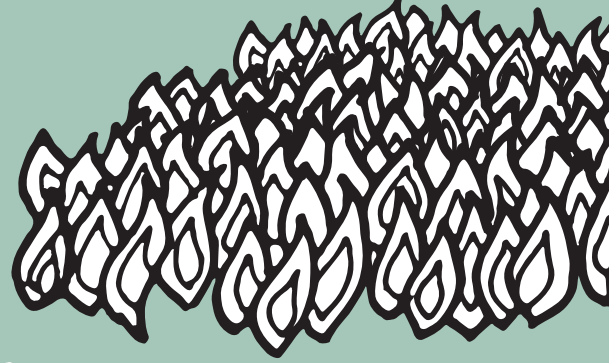
#### EXODUS 32:1-6

“Whatever Aaron may have thought, the Israelites were not thinking of YHWH at all. Not for them the higher levels of imageless worship, or even of monotheism. As later Israel wanted a human king, not the invisible divine king (1 Sam. 8:4–8), so now they want a god ‘with a face’, like everybody else. The last thing that they want is to be different, by their new relationship to God: yet this is God’s aim (Ex. 19:5,6).”<sup>5</sup>

### ONLY GOD IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP

#### EXODUS 32:7-14

“The wonder here is not that God became angry; the wonder is that he was so easily and quickly pacified. He was so gracious because of his own fundamental nature, the revelation of which was further confirmed in the word given to Moses in 34:6–7. He is slow to become angry and swift to forgive. We do not have here a picture of an implacable monster who is only barely and grudgingly placated by a terrified and cowering intercessor. Instead, we find God saying that all it will take for justice not to be carried out is for one person, Moses, to remain before God, interceding (32:9–10). Thus, we have a picture of the justice of the universe being set aside in a moment merely on the basis of one person’s calm demonstration to God that he understands who God really is.”<sup>6</sup>



## CONTEXT

The worship of a young bull wasn't foreign to the Israelites. Apis was the sacred bull of Egypt, represented in physical form. The bull was also associated with the worship of Baal, representing strength and fertility. It's possible Aaron's choice in a bull reached back to Egypt, or the Israelites had already met with Canaanite groups who worshiped Baal. This account is a strong example of religious pluralism, or the merging and acceptance of two different religious beliefs. Although God had already disproved the "gods" of Egypt and exposed them as false, His people struggled with converting to monotheism. The practice of merging belief in Yahweh with belief in other gods would continue to pose a problem for them, even when they made their way into Canaan. The wilderness was a process of getting Egypt out of them—polytheistic beliefs and idolatry—and teaching them that Yahweh is the one true God.

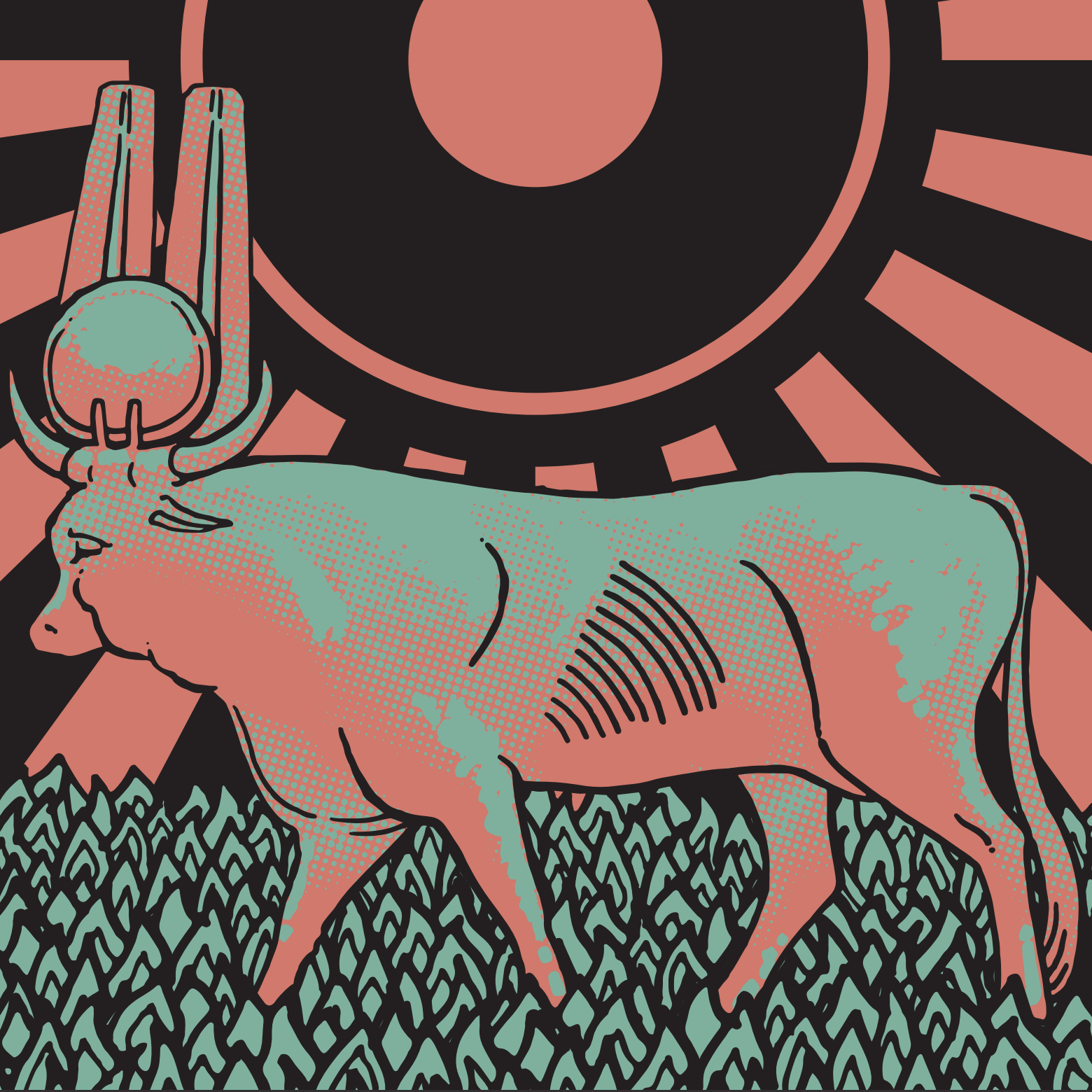
## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

### sin as idolatry

Sin is not only a physical act of rebellion against God, such as lying or stealing, but it is also a **matter of the heart**. The physical displays of sin are the fruit of what has been birthed in the heart of a person (Matt. 15:10-20). In Scripture, idolatry usually refers to bowing down to a statue made of wood or gold, worshiping created things instead of the Creator. But idolatry can take on more subtle forms: a seeking of approval, security, power, pleasure, and so on. We can diagnose the **idolatry of our hearts** by examining the areas where the desires of our hearts have turned into idolatrous demands (James 4:1-2).

## LEADERS' PRAYER

LORD, SHOW US WHERE WE'VE BOWED TO  
IDOLS. HELP US TO REMEMBER YOUR LOVING  
KINDNESS AND WORSHIP YOU ALONE.



## KICK STARTER

### *DID YOU KNOW?*

There were over two thousand deities, or gods, in Ancient Egypt! They ranged from the more major gods over nature to gods of certain regions. Many of them were depicted as part animal part human.<sup>7</sup>

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

# 1

## HAVING BOTH

### **SUPPLIES LIST: NONE**

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHAT DOES THE PHRASE, "HAVE YOUR CAKE AND EAT IT TOO" MEAN?**
- **WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF THIS—THINGS PEOPLE WANT WITHOUT HAVING TO GIVE SOMETHING UP? (FOR EXAMPLE, BEING A GOOD ATHLETE WITHOUT PUTTING IN TIME TO PRACTICE.)**
- **WHAT DO YOU THINK IT SHOWS ABOUT OUR SOCIETY WHEN WE APPROACH LIFE THIS WAY?**

To "have your cake and eat it too" often means that we can have two good things at once. And sometimes that really is possible! For example, we may be able to make a lot of money by hardly working. But usually, this isn't the case. It's usually one or the other. With worshipping God, it can never be Him plus something else. It's only ever Him.

# 2

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

Many of us operate with a both/and mentality. You've probably heard the phrase, "have your cake and eat it too." We want to make a lot of money and not work too hard. We want to get good grades yet be free from studying. Here's what it means spiritually: we think we can have both God and other things. We both love Him and our sin; we both worship Him and obsessively follow culture's guidelines; we want both to go to heaven and to live like the world; we want both to praise Him and to gossip or curse. We think it's okay because God loves us; we're only human. God does love us, and we are imperfect. But we don't—we can't—follow God and other gods. The Bible makes it clear: gain the world and lose your soul (Matt. 16:26-27). It's never both/and. But here's the good news: losing the world and finding life in Christ is so much better. When we follow God's commands, we live the way God designed us to live—free from sin and shame.

# DISCUSSION

## MAIN POINT.

We're made to **worship God alone.**

## WE'RE MADE TO WORSHIP READ EXODUS 32:1-6



### WHY DO YOU THINK HUMANS ARE SO PRONE TO WORSHIP THINGS OTHER THAN GOD? WHAT ARE SOME OF THOSE THINGS?

Deeply embedded in our makeup is the desire to worship because we were created to give God glory. But because of sin, we're prone to idolatry. **Our hearts, which were created to worship only God, drift into worshipping created things.** We center our lives on what will fade away: money, popularity and reputation, sex, self, social media, sports, beauty. But they can only offer temporary fulfillment.

### HOW DO WE JUSTIFY MERGING DIFFERENT BELIEFS OR CULTURAL IDEAS INTO THE WAY WE FOLLOW GOD? WHY DO WE DO THIS?

Share context about religious pluralism. The Israelites combined idolatry with belief in Yahweh. We can also mix wrong cultural ideas about God into our beliefs. For example, culture may teach that Scripture is outdated or that concepts about gender have changed. It may teach that sex before marriage is okay. It may teach that there are different paths to God—different truths. **We often accept these ideas to fit our own desires or to make following God feel easier.**

### HOW DO YOU DEFINE WORSHIP? READ PSALM 115:4-8. HOW DO WE BECOME LIKE WHAT WE WORSHIP?

Worship is often misunderstood. It is not simply a song or a means for experiencing emotion. It isn't confined to only our words or the lifting of our hands. In fact, worship isn't at all about something we receive but rather what we give. **Worship is the prostrating, or laying down, of our hearts and lives before God out of reverence for Him because of His infinite worth. In simple terms, it's the bowing down of our hearts.** These verses in Psalm 115 issue a great warning for us: we become like what we worship. If we bow to the things of this world, we'll become like them. And if you look closely at these verses, you'll notice that these idols are lifeless. Breathless. **If we devote ourselves to idols, we'll share in their lifelessness because life is only found in Christ. We'll share in their eventual destruction. But when we bow only to God, devoting our hearts and attention to Him, we'll share in the richness of His glory. We'll enjoy true freedom from the bondage of sin and idolatry.**

## ONLY GOD IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP

READ EXODUS 32:7-14

### WHY DOES GOD WITHHOLD JUSTICE, AND WHAT DOES THIS SHOW ABOUT HIS HEART FOR US?

The Israelites had made a covenant with God to do all He commanded (Ex. 24), and this act of idolatry violated that covenant. According to this covenant, God would've been completely justified in destroying them. But God "relented" because His heart was to continue refining Israel. His heart for us is the same. **God would be completely just to cast us from His presence because of our sin. But He relents because of the saving work of Jesus Christ. His heart is for our salvation and to make us like His Son.**

### WHAT DIDN'T THE ISRAELITES SEEM TO FULLY UNDERSTAND ABOUT GOD?

The people still needed to understand that God won't share His glory with another. He alone is worthy of worship. He was nothing like the Egyptian deities, which numbered into the thousands. And we so often still need to understand this as well. **When we attempt to worship God and other things, it isn't worship at all because true worship means we're devoted to God alone.**



### HOW DOES MOSES'S INTERCESSION FOR THE PEOPLE POINT TO JESUS?

Let's remember that Moses hadn't always identified with the Hebrew people; he once lived in Pharaoh's house. Moses now not only identified with them, but he also boldly claimed the promises God made to the Patriarchs. He interceded for the people, or spoke on their behalf. **Jesus would do all this and more: He'd descend from a heavenly throne to identify with humanity, fulfill God's promise for a Savior, and make intercession for our sin with His blood.** Jesus is the greater Moses.

## WRAP-UP

### THE ISRAELITES GREW IMPATIENT WAITING FOR MOSES AND FELL INTO IDOLATRY. WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO WORSHIP GOD EVEN WHEN YOU'RE WAITING?

Like the Israelites, our worship is often misdirected toward temporary things of this world, and it's usually when we're in seasons of waiting, pain, or doubt. **Like the Israelites, we struggle with the need to see God because it brings us comfort; we so badly want God to be tangible, so we shrink our ideas of Him to meet that need.** We want ease for our anxiety or answers to our problems. And when we can't see what God is doing, we look to other things for comfort. Instead of doing this, we can pause. We can look back at our lives and see where God has already been faithful. We can look at His faithfulness in the lives of others. We can claim truth in Scripture and recall how God descended from heaven for our salvation! **Exchanging our trust in God for trust in idols will never bring real comfort because all idols end in destruction.**

# THE GLORY OF THE LORD

## MAIN POINT.

Although God is **holy**, He makes a way for us to come into His **presence**.



## CHRIST CONNECTION

God made a way to dwell among His people through the tabernacle. God's desire to dwell with His people came to full fruition in the person of Jesus Christ, called Immanuel, God with us (**Matt. 1:23**). God the Son humbled Himself and took on flesh to be with and to save His people.





This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Exodus 35

Exodus 40

## GOD IS SEPARATE FROM US

### EXODUS 40:1-17

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. 5 Place the gold altar for incense in front of the ark of the testimony. Put up the screen for the entrance to the tabernacle. 6 Position the altar of burnt offering in front of the entrance to the tabernacle, the tent of meeting. 7 Place the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. 8 Assemble the surrounding courtyard and hang the screen for the gate of the courtyard. 9 “Take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and everything in it; consecrate it along with all its furnishings so that it will be holy. 10 Anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils; consecrate the altar so that it will be especially holy. 11 Anoint the basin and its stand and consecrate it. 12 “Then bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the tent of meeting and wash them with water. 13 Clothe Aaron with the holy garments, anoint him, and consecrate him, so that he can serve me as a priest. 14 Have his sons come forward and clothe them in tunics. 15 Anoint them just as you anointed their father, so that they may also serve me as priests. Their anointing will serve to inaugurate a permanent priesthood for them throughout their generations.” 16 Moses did everything just as the LORD had commanded him. 17 The tabernacle was set up in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month.

## GOD IS WITH US

### EXODUS 40:34-38

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. 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.

# BEFORE YOU TEACH

## MAIN POINT.

Leaders: May God give you instruction, hope, and encouragement as you study His Word this week (Rom. 15:4).

Although God is **holy**, He makes a way for us to come into His **presence**.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

### GOD IS SEPARATE FROM US

#### EXODUS 40:1-17

“The other symbolic dimension is Eden. The tabernacle, like the garden of Eden, is where God dwells, and various details of the tabernacle suggest it is a mini-Eden. These parallels include the east-facing entrance guarded by cherubim, the gold, the tree of life (lampstand), and the tree of knowledge (the law). Thus God’s dwelling in the tabernacle was a step toward the restoration of paradise, which is to be completed in the new heaven and earth (Revelation 21–22).”<sup>8</sup>

#### EXODUS 40:17

“The first month was an important time in the Israelite calendar, not only because it was the time established for the Exodus-honoring Passover festival (12:12) but also because it was apparently God’s intention that it be closely connected with the tabernacle (Num. 9:15–23). Thus the first Passover celebrated in the wilderness—that of the first month of the second year—required the erection of and availability of the tabernacle for the presentation of the appropriate Passover offering there by all Israelites (Num. 9:7,12–13; Ex. 23:15, ‘No one is to appear before me empty-handed’).”<sup>9</sup>

### GOD IS WITH US

#### EXODUS 40:34-35

“Everything in the book realizes its purpose in the moment when ‘the cloud covered the Tabernacle, and the glory of the LORD filled the Tabernacle’ (40:34). Yahweh had been moving toward this point from the moment Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, from the moment when he first addressed Abram, from the moment when he spoke to Moses from the bush, from the moment when he directed Moses to extend his staff over the sea. This moment of God’s taking up residence among his people in the fullness of his glory, yet without destroying them, was the reason why God had revealed himself in all those previous movements.”<sup>10</sup>

## CONTEXT

This moment is a significant moment in the entire biblical narrative—when God’s presence came down to be among His people. When reading about the tabernacle, we can easily miss how significant every element was in pointing to Jesus. The tabernacle itself was portable, foreshadowing the Holy Spirit one day coming to live within us. The bread, or manna, pointed to Jesus as the “bread of life”—the only One who could sustain us (John 6:35). The lampstand pointed to Jesus as the “light of the world” (John 8:12), and the altar and sacrifices were a shadow of Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross. Even the curtain pointed to the temple veil, which would tear in two by the hand of God when Jesus gave up His life, giving us unhindered access to the Father (Matt. 27:51). The beauty of the tabernacle reached back to the beauty of Eden and forward to the city where believers will live with God in eternity (Rev. 21:3). As we read about the planning and building of the tabernacle, we must take time to digest how every detail intentionally points to God’s plan of salvation—His plan to be with us.<sup>11</sup>

## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

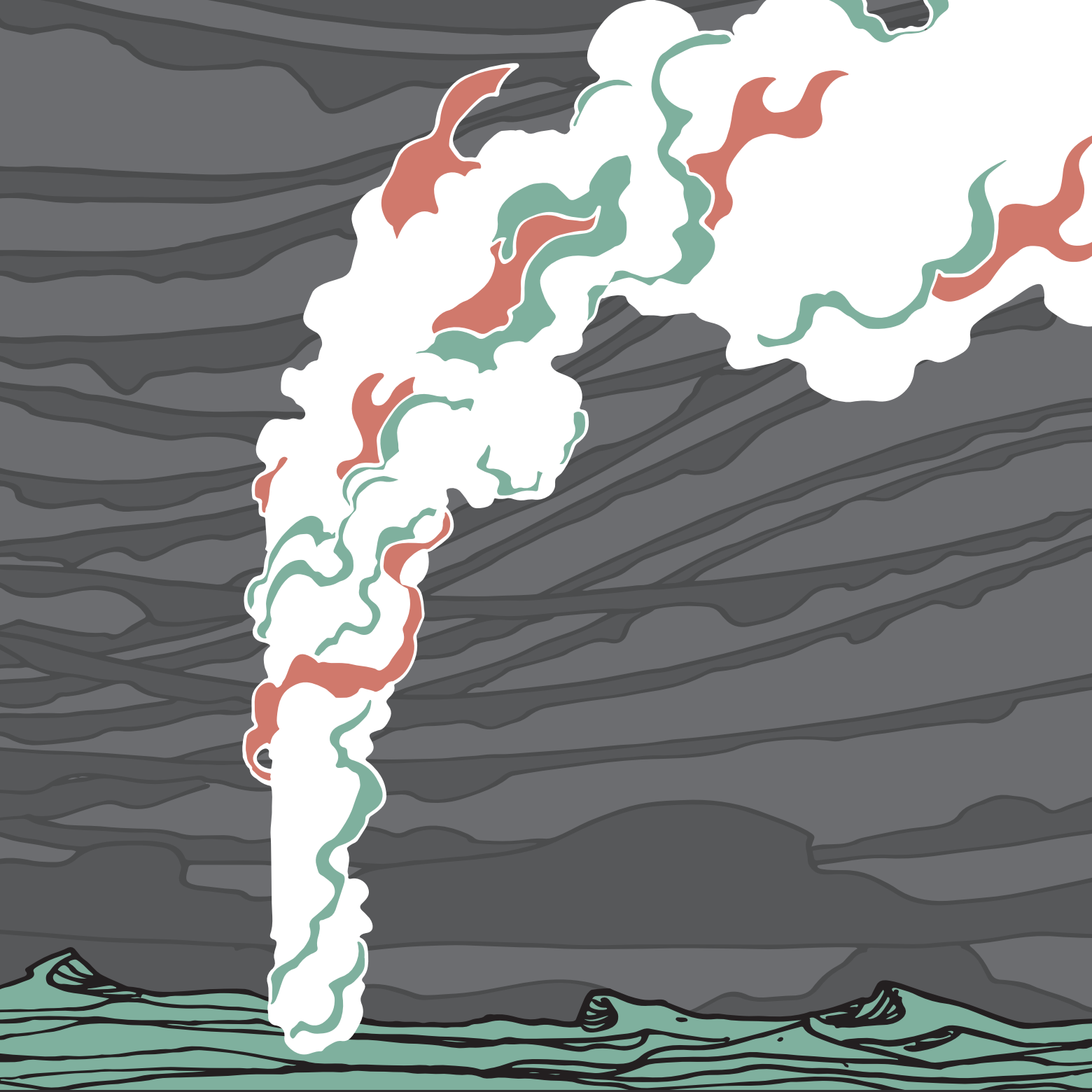


### God is immanent

When we say God is immanent, we mean **God is personable and relatable** to those made in His image, while remaining completely **distinct and unique** from all of His creation. It means God is not a distant deity (as imagined by the deist) who only sits on His heavenly throne with no interaction, but instead, He is a personal God who created people in His image to be in **personal relationship with Him**.

## LEADERS' PRAYER

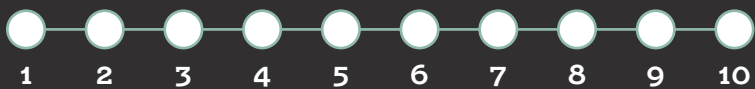
**GOD, HELP US TO NEVER TAKE FOR GRANTED  
THAT YOU CHOOSE TO DWELL WITH US—THAT  
YOUR PRESENCE IS A GIFT.**



## KICK STARTER

### *RATE IT!*

How important is it for you to have an expensive, elaborate home one day  
(1=doesn't matter, 10=it's a must)?



These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

# 1

## PERFECT HOME

### **SUPPLIES LIST: NONE**

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHAT WOULD THE PERFECT HOME BE LIKE? WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE?**
- **WHAT WOULD IT HAVE INSIDE OF IT?**
- **WHERE WOULD IT BE?**

Many of us have probably thought about what we'd like in a home one day, especially if our home now doesn't feel so perfect. We make plans for what it'll look like and maybe even where it'll be. But have you ever thought about what a home would be like that's acceptable for God? If we were to attempt to build Him a dwelling place, where would we even start? Today, we'll study the tabernacle, God's portable dwelling place, and all the ways it points us to Jesus.

# 2

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

Maybe you've asked, "If God is with me, then why can't I always feel Him?" Maybe you've felt God's nearness when you were at camp or in a hospital room, but in your daily life, you aren't sure He's there. He is. He absolutely is. Jesus promised to send a Helper and Advocate to us after He returned to heaven (John 14:26). As believers, the Holy Spirit dwells inside of us. To hear Him, we must "keep in step" with Him (Gal. 5:25). Imagine what it'd be like to try to hear a whisper in a stadium at a college football game. The noise surrounding us would drown out the whisper. We often don't hear God or feel His nearness because we're surrounded by noise. We've packed our calendars and filled every minute of the day, and hearing His voice is difficult. To hear God, to feel His presence, we must draw near to Him, and He promises to draw near to us when we do so (James 4:8).

# DISCUSSION

## MAIN POINT.

Although God is **holy**, He makes a way for us to come into His **presence**.

## GOD IS SEPARATE FROM US READ EXODUS 40:1-17

### WHY DO YOU THINK GOD REQUIRED SPECIFIC ELEMENTS FOR THE TABERNACLE (VV. 1-8)?

It seems like God had a lot of requirements for the tabernacle, but it wasn't because He was being difficult. God does everything with purpose. **Each item would serve a specific purpose to make it possible for the people to be near to Him. And every single item was a shadow of something greater to come—in Christ and in eternity.** The strict requirements were gifts, helping the people (and us) see God's intentionality in dwelling with us.

### WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRIESTS (AARON AND HIS SONS) WASHING THEMSELVES BEFORE ENTERING THE TENT?

The word consecrate refers to making something holy, or set apart. **Every part of the tabernacle had to be purified if God's presence was to dwell there.** And those entering inside, the priests, would also have to be clean. **This helps us see God's holiness against our filth and sin. He is pure, perfect, set apart. And even though we're not, He still invites us close.**

### READ EXODUS 33:3. MOSES BEGGED GOD TO GO WITH THEM (V. 14). HOW DID THE TABERNACLE ENABLE GOD TO GO WITH THEM? WHAT DOES THIS SHOW US ABOUT GOD'S FAITHFULNESS DESPITE OUR SIN?

If the Israelites truly got what they deserved, they would've experienced death and separation from God. When they broke the covenant with Him and worshiped an idol, God would've been justified in punishing them. But in His loving kindness, He listened to Moses's plea. Instead of turning away, God came near with compassion. He worked out every single detail in the tabernacle to make this possible. If we got what we deserved, it'd be death and separation from God because we've sinned, and God is holy and just. **But God's faithfulness doesn't hinge on our perfection. God is faithful despite our sin.** And His plan was always to make a way for us draw near to Him by confessing Christ as Lord and being cleansed through His atoning blood.

## GOD IS WITH US

### READ EXODUS 40:34-38



#### **READ JOHN 1:14. HOW DID JESUS BECOME THE TRUE TABERNACLE? WHAT OTHER TABERNACLE ELEMENTS DO YOU SEE FULFILLED IN JESUS?**

Share Context information. The holy of holies, the deepest recess of the tabernacle, was where God's presence dwelled. Only the high priest could enter once a year after making the appropriate sacrifice. But Jesus would be the better tabernacle. The word "dwelt" in verse 14 literally means "tabernacled." **Jesus would be physically accessible to all He came in contact with—and accessible to us who believe, giving us access to the Father. Even His name, Immanuel, means "God with us" (Matt. 1:23). All of God's fullness lived within Jesus, contained in human form—a living tabernacle.**



#### **WHAT DOES THE TABERNACLE SHOW US ABOUT GOD'S DESIRE TO BE WITH HIS PEOPLE?**

It's often difficult for us to understand the impact of God's holiness. People couldn't come into His presence and live (Ex. 33:20). The tabernacle shows just one of the lengths God went to so that He could be with His people. **Though God is high above us, He bends from heaven to be with us. In fact, this is the gospel: God bending down to save us and be with us through Jesus Christ.**

#### **HOW DOES IT AFFECT YOU TO KNOW THAT ALTHOUGH GOD IS HOLY, HE HAS ALWAYS WANTED TO BE NEAR TO US?**

Maybe you've felt at times that God is too far away or that He doesn't see you or care about you. And you couldn't be more wrong. **All of Scripture points to the reality of God moving heaven and earth to reach you and for you to reach Him.**

## WRAP-UP

### **HOW DOES KNOWING THAT GOD IS PHYSICALLY WITH YOU HELP YOU TO WALK CONFIDENTLY THROUGH THE WEEK?**

At the very end of Exodus, we see God's presence in the tabernacle acting as a guide for the people. If the cloud above the tabernacle rose up and moved, then the Israelites knew it was time for them to move as well. **We have something better—even Jesus said so (John 16:7).**

God doesn't dwell in a room behind a curtain. As believers, He lives within us. **The Holy Spirit of God is our Guide, our Counselor, our Friend (John 14:26). He presses on our hearts when we need to move or act and when we need to stay or be still.** If we "keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25) by staying in God's Word and praying to Him, we will hear His voice. He has always been faithful to guide His people as they seek Him, and He will always be faithful to do so for us.

# ATONEMENT FOR ALL THEIR SINS

## MAIN POINT.

We depend on Jesus's **sacrifice** to enter God's holy presence.



## CHRIST CONNECTION

The Lord graciously prescribed animal sacrifices as a part of His law so His people could be forgiven and their sins atoned for, but this was a temporary measure. Because the blood of animals can never take away our sins (**Heb. 10:4**), Jesus Christ came to lay down His life in our place. With His perfect blood, He paid the price through His death to atone for our sins once and for all (**Heb. 10:10**).





# ATONEMENT THROUGH SACRIFICE

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Leviticus 16:1

Leviticus 16:34

## APPROACHING GOD IS A PRIVILEGE

### LEVITICUS 16:1-6

1 The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of two of Aaron's sons when they approached the presence of the LORD and died. 2 The LORD said to Moses, "Tell your brother Aaron that he may not come whenever he wants into the holy place behind the curtain in front of the mercy seat on the ark or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud above the mercy seat. 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."

## THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM POINTED TO JESUS

### LEVITICUS 16:15-22

15 "When he slaughters the male goat for the people's sin offering and brings its blood inside the curtain, he will do the same with its blood as he did with the bull's blood: He is to sprinkle it against the mercy seat and in front of it. 16 He will make atonement for the most holy place in this way for all their sins because of the Israelites' impurities and rebellious acts. He will do the same for the tent of meeting that remains among them, because it is surrounded by their impurities. 17 No one may be in the tent of meeting from the time he enters to make atonement in the most holy place until he leaves after he has made atonement for himself, his household, and the whole assembly of Israel. 18 Then he will go out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement for it. He is to take some of the bull's blood and some of the goat's blood and put it on the horns on all sides of the altar. 19 He is to sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times to cleanse and set it apart from the Israelites' impurities. 20 When he has finished making atonement for the most holy place, the tent of meeting, and the altar, he is to present the live male goat. 21 Aaron will lay both his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the Israelites' iniquities and rebellious acts—all their sins. He is to put them on the goat's head and send it away into the wilderness by the man appointed for the task. 22 The goat will carry all their iniquities into a desolate land, and the man will release it there."

# BEFORE YOU TEACH

## MAIN POINT.

Leaders: May God give you instruction, hope, and encouragement as you study His Word this week (Rom. 15:4).

We depend on Jesus's **sacrifice** to enter God's holy presence.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

### APPROACHING GOD IS A PRIVILEGE

#### LEVITICUS 16:1-6

“[Aaron’s sons] disobeyed God in the way they worshiped Him, and as a result of their disobedience flames leaped from the Lord’s presence ‘and burned them to death before the Lord’ (10:2). After that, when God spoke, Aaron must have been ready to obey, especially when God said that Aaron was not to enter the holy place ‘or else he will die’ (16:2). . . . God gave Aaron directions about everything he was to do on the Day of Atonement. God also told Aaron how and where he was to do them. God was specific. That illustrates a truth that is expressed in various ways throughout the Bible—we are not to approach God in a haphazard way or in the way that suits us at the moment. We submit to what God says in His Word about how to approach Him.”<sup>12</sup>

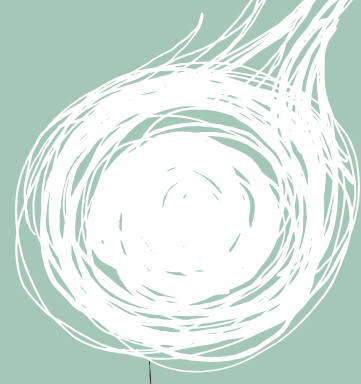
### THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM POINTED TO JESUS

#### LEVITICUS 16:15-22

“The Christian concept of a ‘scapegoat’ and atonement comes from the Jewish Day of Atonement, where the sacrifice prescribed for this holy day required two goats. One goat was killed in the usual manner. The second goat was not killed but was led away outside the camp of the Israelites. Sin was confessed over this goat, and he was set free in order to portray the removal of sin from God’s presence. This concept is both precious and vital to our understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ’s death as not only covering our sins, but also taking them away.”<sup>13</sup>

#### LEVITICUS 16:16-17

“Atonement was made for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites (16:16a). The word *peša’*, translated ‘rebellion’ in the NIV, is the most grievous word for sin in the Old Testament. The term refers to sin in its grossest manifestation. It indicates a breach of relationship between two parties and was probably borrowed from the diplomatic realm, where it indicated a covenant-treaty violation. The word thus indicates that a violation of the covenant has been perpetrated. This initial use of the word in Leviticus indicates that on the Day of Atonement not only were intentional sins atoned for but that the tabernacle was purified to allow God’s presence to reside.”<sup>14</sup>



## CONTEXT

**Background:** Leviticus, which means “book of priests,”<sup>15</sup> is credited to Moses. Primarily a collection of laws, its purpose was to give instructions for Israel on how to live holy lives so that God could dwell among them.

This chapter outlines the events that were to take place each year on the Day of Atonement, also known as Yom Kippur. It’s one of the most solemn, sacred days in the Old Testament. Two offerings took place on the Day of Atonement, made by the high priest in the holy of holies. A burnt offering involved the burning of an unblemished male bull, sheep, or goat (except the hide), which allowed the smoke to ascend to heaven as a “pleasing aroma to the LORD” (Lev. 1:9). The sin offering was for unintentional sin or sin committed out of ignorance. Both of these offerings acknowledged personal and collective human sin and the need for forgiveness. Every detail of the ritual was a reminder of God’s holiness and of what violating His commands for sacrifice led to for Aaron’s sons—death (Lev. 10:1-2).

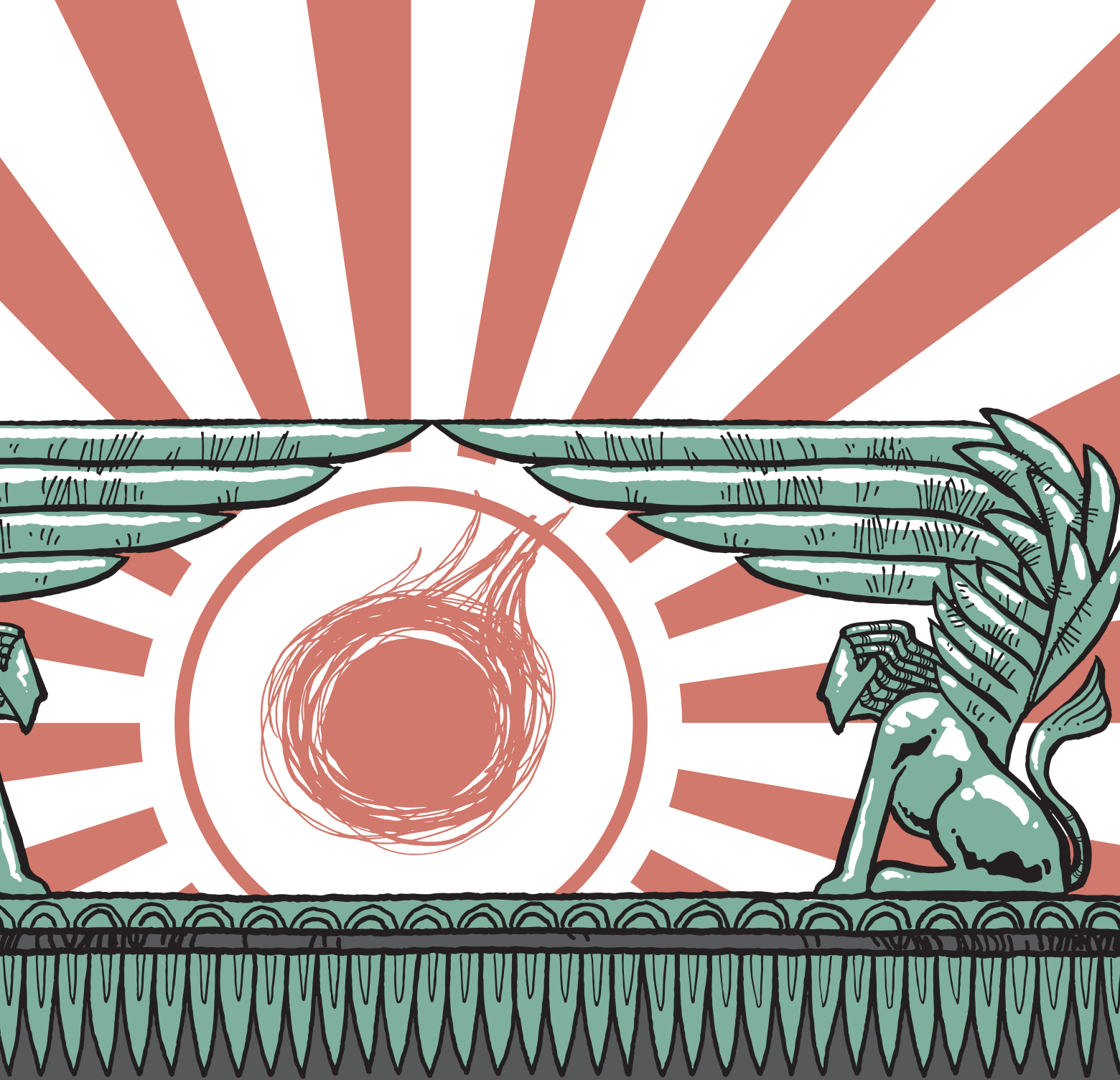
## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

### aspects of the atonement

Christ’s substitutionary death on our behalf stands at the center of His atoning work. **Without this work, there is no gospel** (1 Cor. 15:3). While this substitutionary aspect is central to the atonement, His death also supremely demonstrates **God’s love for sinners** (John 15:13; 1 John 4:10). It shows us how seriously God takes sin; it satisfies every requirement for God to forgive the failures of humanity; and it puts Christ’s cosmic victory over sin, Satan, and death on display through His resurrection (Col. 2:15). Every aspect of the atonement should inspire gratitude, praise, and a desire for obedience, because it is only through Christ that we are reconciled.

### LEADERS’ PRAYER

**JESUS, THANK YOU FOR ATONING FOR  
OUR SIN. MAY OUR GRATITUDE, PRAISE,  
AND OBEDIENCE INSPIRE THE SAME IN  
OUR STUDENTS.**



## KICK STARTER

### ♡ HEART CHECK

What have you been doing to draw near to God and to experience His presence?

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

# 1

## UNLIMITED ACCESS

### **SUPPLIES LIST: NONE**

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHO IS SOMEONE FAMOUS YOU'D LOVE TO MEET ONE DAY? WHY?**
- **HOW WOULD YOU ACT? CALM OR FRANTIC?**
- **IS IT EASY TO GAIN ACCESS TO PEOPLE LIKE THIS?**

Think about how much personal security many famous people travel with, even to places like grocery stores or restaurants. Many of them are so heavily guarded that we would never have access to them. God is holy, and without Jesus's atoning sacrifice, we wouldn't have access to His presence either. But until Christ came, God kindly made a way for people to be forgiven if they would make sacrifices for their sins.

# 2

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

Certain passages can spark difficult questions due to our limited understanding of ancient eastern cultures. A question most of us may ask about the sacrificial system—the sacrificing of animals for sin—is “Why all the blood?” Here's a simple answer: because of all the sin. Scripture explains that there can't be forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood (Heb. 9:22). Why? Blood is the source of life (Lev. 17:11). It satisfies the payment of death. Imagine the thousands of years in which animal sacrifice took place and all of the blood that was spilled. Yet it could never be enough to permanently pay the price of sin. This should be an alarming realization. But what's more shocking is that it was because of human sin. What's most shocking is that Jesus voluntarily shed His blood for our redemption.

# DISCUSSION

## MAIN POINT.

We depend on Jesus's **sacrifice** to enter God's holy presence.

## APPROACHING GOD IS A PRIVILEGE

### READ LEVITICUS 16:1-6

#### HAVE YOU EVER HAD SOMEONE ACT AS A GO-BETWEEN FOR YOU? HOW DID AARON DO THIS?

We've probably all had people step in on our behalf before, maybe to help us avoid punishment we didn't deserve or to help us get something we wanted. **Aaron, as the high priest, was a mediator between Israel and God when it came to forgiveness of sin.** He stepped into the holy of holies to offer sacrifices for the people's forgiveness. But this role came with huge responsibility: Aaron himself first had to be purified to withstand God's presence.



#### WHAT DOES THE DAY OF ATONEMENT TEACH ABOUT THE SEVERITY OF SIN? HOW DOES THIS DIFFER FROM THE WAY SATAN WOULD WANT US TO VIEW SIN?

Sin is a big deal. **It always leads to death and separation from our Creator. And God simply won't tolerate it—not even a little—because He can't do so and remain righteous.** Satan wants us to view sin differently—with apathy and acceptance. He wants us to downplay it and justify it. But God always had a plan for our victory over sin and death through the atoning work of Christ.

#### HOW DO VERSES 1-2 CHALLENGE THE WAY YOU APPROACH GOD'S PRESENCE? HOW CAN WE FIND A BALANCE BETWEEN ENJOYING ACCESS TO GOD WHILE MAINTAINING REVERENCE FOR HIM?

At times, most of us have taken God's presence for granted; we've taken it lightly. **It's easy to forget the heavy price that was paid for us to have access to the Father: the death of His Son.** Let that sink in for a moment: we can only approach God because His Son came here in human likeness and took our sin on His shoulders. **We can be near Him because He came near to us in the most miraculous way: Jesus.** When we remember this, we should be overwhelmed with gratitude and praise for what God sacrificed so that we could be forgiven. We should overflow with the desire to love Him in return and obey His commands because they're for our good. When we feel ourselves slipping into apathy concerning the ease with which we can meet with God, we can center ourselves on Jesus's sacrifice—His love poured out for us.

## THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM POINTED TO JESUS

READ LEVITICUS 16:15-22



### WHERE DO YOU SEE TRACES OF THE GOSPEL IN THIS PASSAGE?

The Day of Atonement beautifully points to the gospel of Jesus. The garments that covered the high priest hint at Jesus's blood clothing us in righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21).

**The spilling of blood points to Jesus spilling His blood for our sin—the final and perfect sacrifice.** Jesus, like the scapegoat, removes our sin “as far as the east is from the west” (Ps. 103:12).

### THE PEOPLE'S SIN HAD DEFILED, MADE IMPURE, THE TABERNACLE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. HOW DOES OUR SIN STILL DEFILE OUR SPACES TODAY?

Sin's effects reach outside of our own hearts. In this passage, even the presence of those who sinned defiled the tabernacle. **Our sin does the same thing: it affects our friends, our families and our homes, and people who overhear our conversations.** Sin's effects are rarely, if ever, contained.

### HOW IS THE FORGIVENESS BELIEVERS RECEIVE FROM CHRIST BETTER THAN THE FORGIVENESS OFFERED IN THIS PASSAGE?

Being forgiven is a great feeling, like a weight being lifted from your shoulders. Imagine if someone forgave you but the forgiveness would only last for a certain time before expiring. In a similar sense, Israel's forgiveness would only be temporary. They'd have to faithfully make these sacrifices each year because the blood of animals could never purchase the permanent forgiveness of sin (Heb. 10:4). **But our forgiveness is so permanent, so complete, we never have to worry about it expiring. The debt we owe has been paid forever!**

## WRAP-UP

**READ PSALM 51:16-17. SINCE THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM IS ABOLISHED BECAUSE OF CHRIST, WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE TO PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES IN YOUR HEART?**

The sacrificial system was a temporary solution to humanity's sin problem; Christ's final sacrifice means we no longer take part in it. But how do we carry the heart of sacrifice with us each day? David's words in Psalm 51 help us to see the way. Our salvation was purchased by Christ, but we're still sinners in need of daily forgiveness. We'll still disobey the Lord. And the way we can accept God's ongoing gift of forgiveness is through confession—through a broken spirit and humbled heart. It's by seeing sin for what it is—a great offense to our holy God. **When we read these verses, we learn an important truth: Forgiveness was never about works. It was always about the condition of our hearts.** Ask God to help you see sin in light of Jesus's sacrifice, and ask Him to align your attitude toward sin with His.

# A STRONG CRAVING

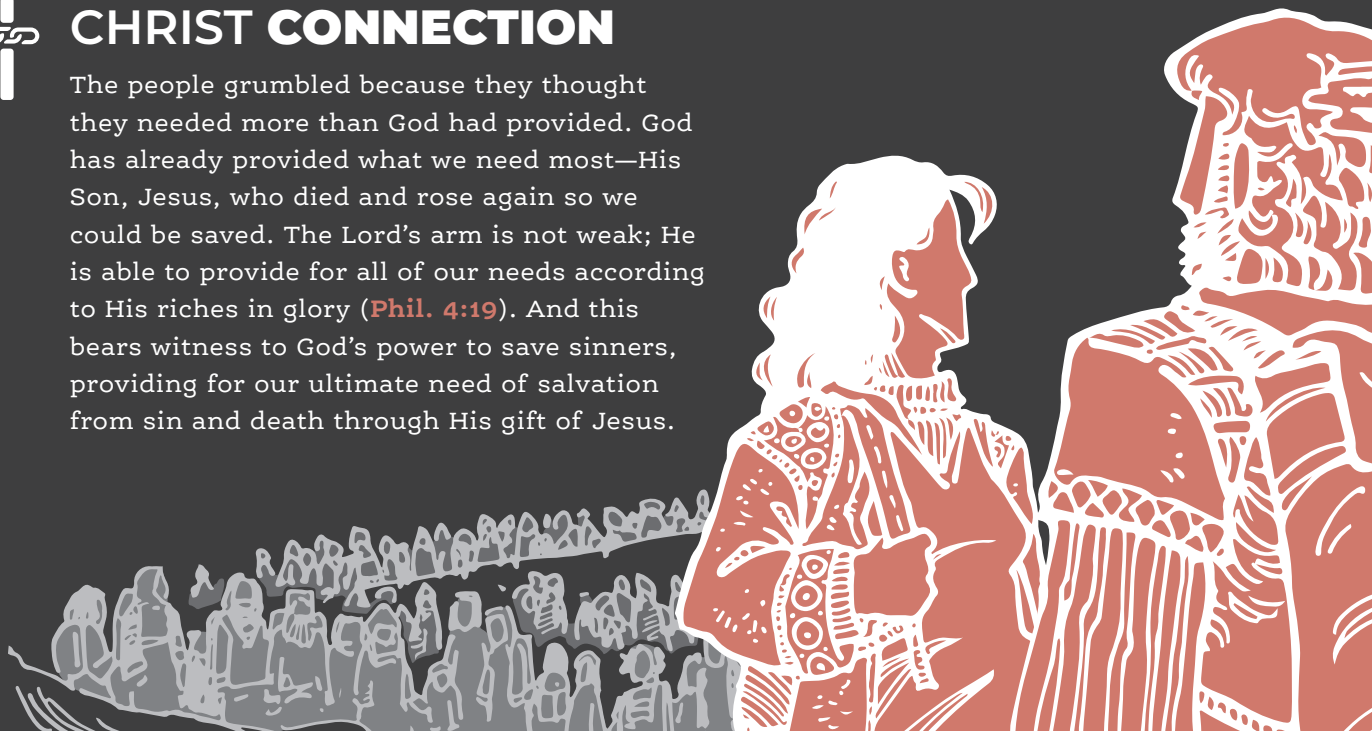
## MAIN POINT.

**Ingratitude** leads us to long for something other than God's provision.



## CHRIST CONNECTION

The people grumbled because they thought they needed more than God had provided. God has already provided what we need most—His Son, Jesus, who died and rose again so we could be saved. The Lord's arm is not weak; He is able to provide for all of our needs according to His riches in glory (**Phil. 4:19**). And this bears witness to God's power to save sinners, providing for our ultimate need of salvation from sin and death through His gift of Jesus.







## — A STRONG DESIRE

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

**Numbers 11**

**Numbers 12**

### **COMPLAINING REVEALS OUR HEART**

#### **NUMBERS 11:4-6**

4 The riffraff among them had a strong craving for other food. The Israelites wept again and said, "Who will feed us meat? 5 We remember the free fish we ate in Egypt, along with the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. 6 But now our appetite is gone; there's nothing to look at but this manna!"

### **GOD'S PROVISION IS BETTER**

#### **NUMBERS 11:16-23**

16 The LORD answered Moses, "Bring me seventy men from Israel known to you as elders and officers of the people. Take them to the tent of meeting and have them stand there with you. 17 Then I will come down and speak with you there. I will take some of the Spirit who is on you and put the Spirit on them. They will help you bear the burden of the people, so that you do not have to bear it by yourself. 18 "Tell the people: Consecrate yourselves in readiness for tomorrow, and you will eat meat because you wept in the LORD's hearing, 'Who will feed us meat? We were better off in Egypt.' The LORD will give you meat and you will eat. 19 You will eat, not for one day, or two days, or five days, or ten days, or twenty days, 20 but for a whole month—until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes nauseating to you—because you have rejected the LORD who is among you, and wept before him, 'Why did we ever leave Egypt?'" 21 But Moses replied, "I'm in the middle of a people with six hundred thousand foot soldiers, yet you say, 'I will give them meat, and they will eat for a month.' 22 If flocks and herds were slaughtered for them, would they have enough? Or if all the fish in the sea were caught for them, would they have enough?" 23 The LORD answered Moses, "Is the LORD's arm weak? Now you will see whether or not what I have promised will happen to you."

# BEFORE YOU TEACH

## MAIN POINT.

Leaders: Thank you for preparing to teach God's Word. As you do, may you thirst for more of the living God (Ps. 42:1).

**Ingratitude** leads us to long for something other than God's provision.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

### COMPLAINING REVEALS OUR HEART

#### NUMBERS 11:4-6

"Given the harsh conditions under which Israel had labored in Egypt, their food there was hardly 'free.' And Israel hadn't complained of irregular provisions threatening starvation, but of having no appetite for God's regular provision. They were complaining that their dietary staple, their 'daily bread,' was all too reliable (11:6; Matt. 6:11; Luke 11:3). . . . Loathing manna meant turning up their nose at God's provision, and longing for Egypt meant abandoning God's deliverance. They were effectively repudiating the very basis of their covenant relation with God."<sup>1</sup>

#### NUMBERS 11:4-6

"The second rebellion was instigated by an assembly of those who had departed from Egypt along with the Israelites, and the discontent spread rapidly through the camp of the children of Israel. . . . They had become nostalgic over their former food supply while forgetting the bondage and oppression from which the Lord had so dramatically delivered them."<sup>2</sup>

### GOD'S PROVISION IS BETTER

#### NUMBERS 11:16-23

"The contrast between the true source of blessing is heightened further when the people ascribe 'goodness' to their situation in Egypt. When the people were preparing to leave Sinai, Moses told Hobab that God had promised good things to Israel. God was Israel's true source of goodness, but now they claimed things were better for them in Egypt (lit., 'For goodness is for us in Egypt'). To attribute goodness to the land of bondage, oppression, and despair was blasphemous, evidence of their brazen rebellion against God; they had rejected his goodness."<sup>3</sup>

#### NUMBERS 11:21-22

"An overabundance of meat for a month for twenty thousand would have been an unbelievably miraculous phenomenon in the midst of the Sinai desert, where occasional quail runs may number ten thousand or more in a season. For over two million such a surfeit of poultry would have been an even greater incomprehensible and astronomical quantity."<sup>4</sup>



## CONTEXT

**Background:** Numbers, named after two military censuses (chaps. 1; 26), is also attributed to Moses. The Hebrew title for Numbers, Bemidbar, means “in the wilderness,” and the book is primarily a narrative of the Israelites’ time in the wilderness, spanning about thirty-nine years. It continues where Exodus left off, roughly one month later, which was about one year after they left Egypt.

The term *riffraff* (Num. 11:4) likely refers to non-Israelites who left Egypt during the plagues. In other words, they were outsiders who joined the Israelite camp after seeing Yahweh’s power. They were deeply immersed in Egyptian culture, making it difficult to leave Egypt behind.

## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

### God is merciful

Mercy refers to **God’s compassion** and is often expressed in **God’s withholding something, such as punishment for sin** (Eph. 2:4-5; Titus 3:5). Both mercy and grace are undeserved, meaning humanity can do nothing to earn God’s mercy and grace. If we could, then it would no longer be the free gift of mercy or grace.

## LEADERS’ PRAYER

LORD, HELP US DIRECT OUR DESIRES TOWARD  
YOU. HELP US TO MODEL WALKING IN  
ABUNDANT LIFE ONLY FOUND IN CHRIST.



## KICK STARTER

### *DID YOU KNOW?*

We typically crave foods that are nutritionally poor. Consuming sugar and heavily processed foods triggers the same area of our brains as drugs. They release dopamine, which makes us feel good and keeps us “going back for more.”<sup>5</sup>

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

# 1

## STRONG CRAVING

### **SUPPLIES LIST: NONE**

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHAT FOOD DO YOU CRAVE THE MOST?**
- **WHEN DO YOU MOST OFTEN CRAVE IT? AROUND HOLIDAYS? WHEN YOU'RE STRESSED OUT?**
- **WHY DO YOU THINK WE HAVE CRAVINGS? WHAT ARE OUR BODIES OR MINDS TRYING TO TELL US?**

Around the holidays, many of us crave certain foods because we associate them with that particular event. Stress, or even happiness, can also trigger a craving for certain foods. But what's interesting is that we don't normally crave what's good for us. Instead, we crave the foods that do us more harm than good. And in today's lesson, we'll see that this is often the case for us in a spiritual sense as well.

# 2

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

Have you ever wondered why you're drawn to sin? Why do we desire anything besides God? Paul struggled with this concept. He admitted that he didn't always do the good he wanted to do but often did the things he knew he shouldn't do (Rom. 7:15-20). Many of us feel the same way. Sin appeals to us because we are products of a fallen world; we're born into sin. Sin masquerades as fun. Sin wouldn't be so tempting if it didn't do so. Our flesh desires to sin because our flesh desires what's worldly. So, even though we know sin is wrong and that it harms our relationship with God, we choose it because it feels good in the moment. It satisfies a craving but only temporarily. And then we're met with the choice to continue that sin or repent of it and turn toward God. The good news is that we have victory over sin through Jesus. We don't have to choose it because we have His Spirit living within us! Our flesh doesn't have to rule us any longer!

# DISCUSSION

## MAIN POINT.

**Ingratitude** leads us to long for something other than God's provision.

## COMPLAINING REVEALS OUR HEART

### READ NUMBERS 11:4-6

#### WHAT DID THE RIFFRAFF'S COMPLAINING DO TO THE ENTIRE GROUP? WHAT DOES THIS SHOW US ABOUT COMPLAINING?

Share context about the riffraff. The riffraff's complaints quickly spread to the entire camp. The Israelites also began to look back at Egypt and long for the food there. **Our complaints can often act like a poison, spreading to the people around us.** Complaining disoriented the people to the truth: the food in Egypt was never "free." Complaining does the same to us: it distorts truth and casts everything in a negative light.

#### WHY DO WE SOMETIMES WANT MORE THAN WHAT GOD PROVIDES?

There's a saying that applies here: "Comparison is the thief of joy." **We often become discontent with what God has given us because we stop looking at Him; instead, we look to our right and our left at what God is doing for other people.** We stack our talents, our blessings, and our lives against others' and inevitably, ours feel smaller. Or, like the Israelites, we constantly compare our present to our past. When we do these things, we prevent ourselves from appreciating God's provision now.

#### IN WHAT WAYS ARE WE OFTEN LIKE THE COMPLAINING PEOPLE IN THIS PASSAGE?

We are often like the Israelites who longed to return to Egypt. We grow tired of God's provision and wish to return to what we thought filled us in the past. But it never did, and that past—before we trusted Jesus—was slavery to sin, which would only lead to death. **Our hunger pains and thirst tempt us to seek other things above seeking the Lord.** We fear that the Lord won't give us what we need, so we look for comfort and belonging and security in things that will fail us—in things like popularity, partying, or addiction. Here's what is so beautiful: over and over throughout the Old Testament, God reminded His people of who He is. He told them repeatedly, "Remember when I brought you out of Egypt. Remember when I saved you from oppression. Remember when I freed you. Remember when I parted the Red Sea for you. Remember how I led you in the wilderness and gave you good land." **When we remember God's goodness, we actively fight the temptation to complain.**

## GOD'S PROVISION IS BETTER

### READ NUMBERS 11:16-23

#### ACCORDING TO VERSE 20, WHAT SEEMED TO BOTHER GOD THE MOST ABOUT THE PEOPLE'S COMPLAINT?

God is most bothered by Israel rejecting Him by longing for Egypt. When they complained and looked back to Egypt, they were basically stating that God's work on their behalf wasn't good enough. They were rejecting His deliverance. **God's explanation gives us a glimpse into His heart: God feels deeply for us and experiences hurt and righteous anger when we reject Him.**



#### GOD DECIDED TO SEND AN ABUNDANCE OF QUAIL. HOW DOES THIS FORM OF PUNISHMENT SHOW GOD'S MERCY AND CARE?

God gave the people what they wanted, but in doing so, He also punished them. He even sent a plague, and the people who craved meat perished (11:33-34). **Sometimes, consequences are a form of mercy.** The people would have all the meat they could eat—so much that it would make them sick. **God provided for them, but He also aimed to show them that trusting Him would've been better.** This is a lesson they'd need to let sink in if they were going to faithfully follow Him in the wilderness.



#### WHAT IS OUR DEEPEST NEED? HOW DOES JESUS MEET THIS NEED?

Our physical needs are important. **God cares about our hunger and thirst because He is a good Father. He cares about our emotional needs as well and desires for us to feel peace and joy, which can only be experienced through Him.** God works for our good and takes care of us in ways we can't always see. But our deepest need is a spiritual one—salvation from sin. **We can rest knowing that our deepest need has already been met through Jesus surrendering His life on the cross.**

## WRAP-UP

### WHAT CRAVING FOR OTHER THINGS PULLS YOU AWAY FROM GOD? HOW CAN YOU DIRECT YOUR CRAVING TOWARD GOD THIS WEEK?

Cravings can be really strong, but we're not just talking about a strong desire for ice cream and pizza. We're talking about the cravings of our flesh. **Most cravings come from desires put in our hearts by God to point us to Him. But in our flesh, we allow those desires to turn sinful.** And we do this by attempting to satisfy those desires with something from this world. We desire belonging and community, but in our sin, we crave popularity, more likes on social media, and recognition. We desire love, but in our sin, we turn to sexual acts or pornography. We desire to make someone proud, but in our sin, we become consumed with people-pleasing instead of pleasing God. These "other foods" can't fill us. **We can't meet a God-given desire with things of this world.**

# FROM EGYPT UNTIL NOW

## MAIN POINT.

**Forgetting** God's provision causes us to **distrust** Him when we're in need.



## CHRIST CONNECTION

Joshua and Caleb trusted in what God had spoken and were eventually allowed to enter the promised land, but the people who did not believe would die in the wilderness. If we believe the words God has spoken about Jesus and place our faith in Him, we will be saved from our sin and will enter the new heaven and new earth.







## LEADS TO REBELLION

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Numbers 13

Numbers 14

### GOD WANTS US TO TRUST HIM

#### NUMBERS 14:11-19

11 The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people despise me? How long will they not trust in me despite all the signs I have performed among them? 12 I will strike them with a plague and destroy them. Then I will make you into a greater and mightier nation than they are." 13 But Moses replied to the LORD, "The Egyptians will hear about it, for by your strength you brought up this people from them. 14 They will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, LORD, are among these people, how you, LORD, are seen face to face, how your cloud stands over them, and how you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. 15 If you kill this people with a single blow, the nations that have heard of your fame will declare, 16 'Since the LORD wasn't able to bring this people into the land he swore to give them, he has slaughtered them in the wilderness.' 17 "So now, may my Lord's power be magnified just as you have spoken: 18 The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in faithful love, forgiving iniquity and rebellion. But he will not leave the guilty unpunished, bringing the consequences of the fathers' iniquity on the children to the third and fourth generation. 19 Please pardon the iniquity of this people, in keeping with the greatness of your faithful love, just as you have forgiven them from Egypt until now."

### DISTRUST LEADS TO CONSEQUENCES

#### NUMBERS 14:20-24

20 The LORD responded, "I have pardoned them as you requested. 21 Yet as I live and as the whole earth is filled with the LORD's glory, 22 none of the men who have seen my glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tested me these ten times and did not obey me, 23 will ever see the land I swore to give their ancestors. None of those who have despised me will see it. 24 But since my servant Caleb has a different spirit and has remained loyal to me, I will bring him into the land where he has gone, and his descendants will inherit it.

# BEFORE YOU TEACH

## MAIN POINT.

Leaders: Thank you for preparing to teach God's Word. As you do, may you thirst for more of the living God (Ps. 42:1).

**Forgetting** God's provision causes us to **distrust** Him when we're in need.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

### GOD WANTS US TO TRUST HIM

#### NUMBERS 14:13-19

"Moses appealed to the compassion of God and to reason as he prayed that the Lord would adopt another course of action. He also appealed to God's glory. If the Egyptians heard about God's destruction of the Israelites, they would exploit it and draw untruthful conclusions that they would proclaim to the surrounding nations. Indeed, the whole world would hear of it and conclude that God was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them. It would become a contest of gods, and the stakes were high."<sup>6</sup>

"The very people who had seen first hand the marvelous and miraculous demonstration of God's omnipotence against one of the most powerful nations of the second millennium B.C. now longed to return to a world of bondage rather than believe a word of blessing. The sinful human tendency, even among Christians, to lapse back into the addictive ways of sin and despair after having seen the outward demonstration of God's working on their behalf was evidenced in this setting. Often in a state of rebellion against God, one loses the benefit of spiritual mooring, whereby wisdom and discernment become elusive and proper decision making is made extremely difficult. Worry and fear dominate one's thought patterns."<sup>7</sup>

### DISTRUST LEADS TO CONSEQUENCES

#### NUMBERS 14:20-24

"The divine pardon does not mean Israel will escape all punishment for their sin, only that they will not suffer the total annihilation they deserve. A similar understanding of forgiveness is found in many sacrificial texts. After the worshipper has performed the full ritual involving very often the heavy expense of killing an animal, it is stated 'he shall be forgiven' (Lev. 4:20,26,31; 5:6, etc.). In other words, the man is restored to fellowship with God, but he has still paid for his offence by offering a sacrifice. Similarly here, though forgiven the people may still not enter the promised land. The very next day they must turn and head toward the Red Sea (25)."<sup>8</sup>



## CONTEXT

The Israelite nation was nearing Canaan—close enough to send out twelve men to scout the land. Among those men were Caleb and Joshua, the only men who gave a good report based on trust in God. The other ten men focused on the inhabitants of the land, and they gave a report based on fear of man. They purposely gave a negative report, making it seem hopeless for Israel to enter Canaan. When the people heard this report, they returned to their habit of distrust and grumbling. They not only wanted to enlist a leader to take them back to Egypt, but they also threatened to stone Moses and Aaron (Num. 14:4,10). This brings us to Moses’s desperate prayer in Numbers 14, when he begged for God’s help and forgiveness.

## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

### sin as rebellion

Because the Bible portrays people as responsible beings called to respond in faith and obedience to God’s revelation, the Bible often portrays sin in terms of **defiance and rebellion** toward God the King. Isaiah 1:2 is one of many passages that describes sin in terms of rebellion against God: “I have raised children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me.” Seen in this light, **sin is personal and willful disobedience**, the raising of a clenched fist toward the One who made us.

### LEADERS’ PRAYER

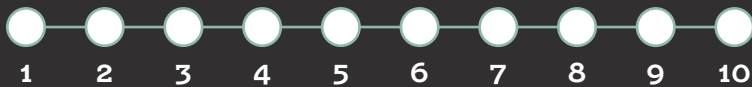
GOD, WE KNOW YOU’RE COMPLETELY WORTHY  
OF OUR TRUST. WE REPENT OF THE TIMES WE  
ACT OUT OF FEAR INSTEAD OF FAITH.



## KICK STARTER

### RATE IT!

On a scale of 1-10 (1=not easily, 10=very easily), how easily are you frightened?



These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

# 1

## REAL FEAR

### **SUPPLIES LIST: NONE**

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHEN HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED REAL FEAR ABOUT SOMETHING YOU HAD TO DO (BEFORE RIDING A ROLLER COASTER, MOVING SCHOOLS, ETC.)?**
- **DID YOU PUSH THROUGH IT ANYWAY? HOW?**
- **WHAT WOULD'VE BEEN DIFFERENT IF YOU HADN'T PUSHED THROUGH IT?**

Fear is a real response in our minds and bodies to a situation which seems harmful or unsafe. Sometimes fear keeps us from doing something dangerous, but fear can also prevent us from following God. When we lean into fear, we begin to distrust God, and this often leads us to rebel against Him. Today, we'll look at how the Israelites struggled with trusting God and instead listened to their fears.

# 2

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

Today we'll see God hand out some pretty heavy consequences to His people—severe but warranted because of their rebellion. Their consequences acted as a form of discipline. Now, some of us hear the word discipline and associate it with unloving or harsh discipline we've experienced here. Some of us have grown up in homes where our parents or guardians didn't act out of love. But God's discipline is always done out of great love for us. We have to be careful not to make too many comparisons between our earthly fathers and God the Father. Our parents, guardians, and authority figures here on earth are imperfect sinners. Even the best ones will still make mistakes in the way they lead us. But God is not like us. His ways are good and for our good—even in discipline. When God allows us to experience consequences for our sin as a form of discipline, He does so out of great love for us because sin separates us from Him.

# DISCUSSION

## MAIN POINT.

### GOD WANTS US TO TRUST HIM READ NUMBERS 14:11-19

**Forgetting** God's provision causes us to **distrust** Him when we're in need.

#### IS IT DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO TRUST GOD WITH HARD SITUATIONS? WHY OR WHY NOT?

Share context on the background. Although God had been faithful to the Israelites in every way, they struggled to trust Him when they were finally close to Canaan. Many of us struggle to trust God in tough situations too. Maybe someone we love received a serious diagnosis; our parents divorced; a sibling we love struggles with addiction. We can't see how He'll work things out. Fear and distrust are our default reactions, not faith, and this almost always leads to disobedience and going our own way.

#### WHAT EMOTIONS DO YOU DETECT IN GOD'S QUESTIONS (V. 11)?

Despised. This is how God described His people's attitude toward Him; in other words, they rejected Him. In God's questions, we can learn something: God feels deeply, yet He is still without sin. **We can detect God's feelings of anger and hurt because His people still don't trust Him and would rather return to slavery than follow through in their covenant relationship with Him.** When they threatened to go back to Egypt, they were effectively breaking their promise to God, similar to breaking a marriage vow.

#### WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN SO WRONG WITH THE ISRAELITES GOING BACK TO EGYPT? WHAT WOULD BE SO BAD ABOUT US RETURNING TO OUR "EGYPT"?

When we play this out, it isn't good. Think about it: God traveled with the people as they traveled in the wilderness. The cloud by day protected them and the pillar of fire by night gave them light, warmth, and protection. God led them in victory against war-like people groups. He provided manna and water for them. He parted the Red Sea for them to safely escape the Egyptian army. Let's not mention the plagues God rained down on Egypt. Did the people expect for Egypt to welcome them back after all of the death and destruction? **Leaving would be a choice to depart from God—His promise, His love, and His protection—and return to slavery.** While this is a physical slavery, we face similar situations. Many of us have, in a sense, left "Egypt." There will be moments in our relationship with God when things get difficult. But going back, if we play it out in our minds, will never lead us to freedom. **Going back only leads to being enslaved to the sin which used to bind us (Gal. 4:9).**

## DISTRUST LEADS TO CONSEQUENCES

READ NUMBERS 14:20-24



### READ NUMBERS 13:26-33. WHAT DOES THIS ACCOUNT SHOW YOU ABOUT THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF DISTRUST AND REBELLION IN YOUR OWN LIFE?

When the spies returned to give a report about Canaan, it only took one negative report to spread like a wildfire through the camp. It quickly evolved into a plan to rebel and turn back to Egypt; it quickly evolved into sin. Our own rebellion and distrust of God has the same effect. **When we choose to believe lies about God, we influence those around us and potentially cause them to sin.**



### GOD FORGAVE THE ISRAELITES (V. 20), SO WHY DID THEY STILL HAVE CONSEQUENCES? WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US?

We sometimes have a skewed view of what it means to be forgiven. Forgiveness means that we're still accepted by God even when we mess up; we're still his sons and daughters. **It means God spares us the ultimate consequence for our sin—total separation from Him for all eternity—because of Christ's sacrifice.** But our sin results in consequences here on earth which act as a form of discipline. The Israelites had attempted to turn back several times already. They had worshiped idols and complained about God's provisions. God dealt patiently with them, but here, God gave them consequences. The people who would enter Canaan would be their children and those who had wholeheartedly trusted Him. Those who didn't would perish in the wilderness, which is what they begged for; now, the people would wander until that happened. Even in the consequences, God was merciful. He didn't strike them down; He allowed them to live out the rest of their lives. Because of Christ, we never receive what we truly deserve. **God disciplines us to correct us because we've been forgiven. The consequences we face for our sin actually reflect the fact that we've been forgiven (Heb. 12:7).**

## WRAP-UP

### IF YOU'RE FEELING FEAR OR DISTRUST, WHAT SHOULD YOU DO WITH IT?

We're going to experience fear. There will be times when our initial response to something God asks us to do is distrust or hesitancy. Like the Israelites, we so quickly forget God's faithful character. **Feeling fear or feeling hesitant isn't itself sinful, but what we decide to do with it could be.** We can take those feelings straight to God. Rather than allowing them to grow or spread to others, we can confess them to Him. **We're God's children, and we can approach Him as the good Father He is. We can ask Him to remind us of all the ways He has been faithful to us so far.** The main thing we can do is pause and not make decisions in the moment we're feeling the fear or distrust. Pause, pray, and talk to a godly mentor before acting. **God is faithful to give us courage to follow Him even when it feels scary to do so.** He has been faithful from "Egypt" until now, and He'll continue to be faithful.

# WE HAVE SINNED

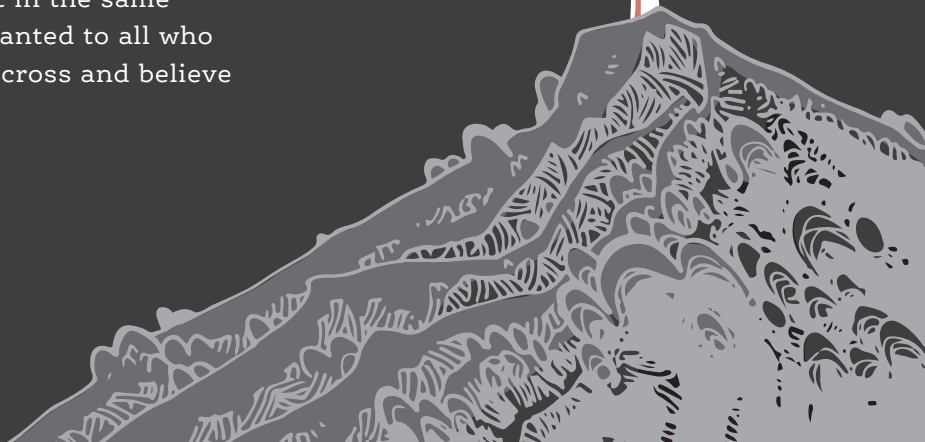
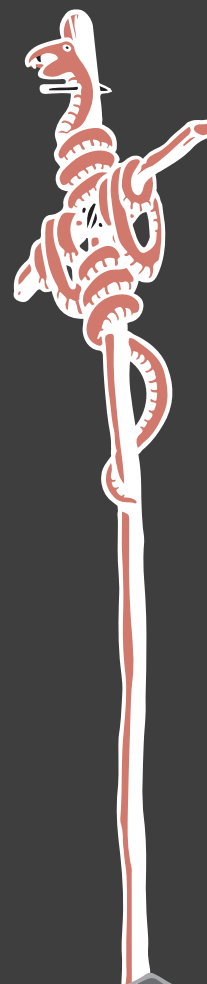
## MAIN POINT.

God **heals** us when we **repent** of our sin.



## CHRIST CONNECTION

God's people, who were suffering under judgment, confessed their sin, and God brought them physical healing when they looked at the image of a bronze snake lifted up on a pole. Jesus said that in the same way, eternal life would be granted to all who look to Him lifted up on the cross and believe in Him ([John 3:14-15](#)).





# REPENTANCE BRINGS HEALING

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Numbers 16

Numbers 21

## FOCUSING ON TOUGH CIRCUMSTANCES HARMS US

### NUMBERS 21:1-6

1 When the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming on the Atharim road, he fought against Israel and captured some prisoners. 2 Then Israel made a vow to the LORD, "If you will hand this people over to us, we will completely destroy their cities." 3 The LORD listened to Israel's request and handed the Canaanites over to them, and Israel completely destroyed them and their cities. So they named the place Hormah. 4 Then they set out from Mount Hor by way of the Red Sea to bypass the land of Edom, but the people became impatient because of the journey. 5 The people spoke against God and Moses: "Why have you led us up from Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread or water, and we detest this wretched food!" 6 Then the LORD sent poisonous snakes among the people, and they bit them so that many Israelites died.

## REPENTING OF OUR SIN HEALS US

### NUMBERS 21:7-9

7 The people then came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you. Intercede with the LORD so that he will take the snakes away from us." And Moses interceded for the people. 8 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake image and mount it on a pole. When anyone who is bitten looks at it, he will recover." 9 So Moses made a bronze snake and mounted it on a pole. Whenever someone was bitten, and he looked at the bronze snake, he recovered.

# BEFORE YOU TEACH

## MAIN POINT.

Leaders: Thank you for preparing to teach God’s Word. As you do, may you thirst for more of the living God (Ps. 42:1).

God **heals** us when we **repent** of our sin.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

### FOCUSING ON TOUGH CIRCUMSTANCES HARMS US

#### NUMBERS 21:3-4

“Israel at this time would show that property was completely given to God by destroying it—thus making it unusable to anyone else. It was an expensive and whole-hearted way to give things to the Lord.”<sup>9</sup>

#### NUMBERS 21:4-5

“They described their food supply as ‘miserable,’ thereby deploring and degrading that which God had so graciously given to them for some forty years. When a person’s heart is intent on rebellion and beset by discontent, even the best of gifts from the Lord can lose their savor; nothing will fully satisfy until the heart is made right.”<sup>10</sup>

### REPENTING OF OUR SIN HEALS US

#### NUMBERS 21:8-9

“A person was in mortal danger if he neglected to look with faith upon the mounted serpent, literally standing between life and death at the point of decision to follow what might on the surface seem like a simple magic ritual. . . . In the New Testament, Jesus used the imagery of the copper serpent to demonstrate that he must be lifted up on the cross in order to accomplish the salvation of humanity. Just as the people in the wilderness looked with faith upon an uplifted serpent so that they might live, so through the paradox of faith in the efficacy of the death and resurrection of Jesus, those who believe in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:14–16; 12:32–33).”<sup>11</sup>

“If this is the right way to interpret the story of the copper [bronze] snake, it is clear how our Lord could use it as an apt picture of his own saving ministry. Men dying in sin are saved by the dead body of a man suspended on the cross. Just as physical contact was impossible between those bitten by snakes and the copper snake, so sinners are unable to touch the life-giving body of Christ. Yet in both situations the sufferers must appropriate God’s healing power themselves: by looking at the copper snake or ‘believing in the Son of man’ (John 3:15).”<sup>12</sup>



## CONTEXT

The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for almost forty years, and during that time, their cycle of complaint and rebellion continued. In every case—at Kadesh, Marah, Massah and Meribah—Moses responded to Israel’s cries with crying out to God, much like a desperate or grieving parent—except for one episode that radically altered the outcome of his journey. During the last year of wandering, in the Wilderness of Zin, Moses disobeyed God’s instruction for providing water by speaking to a rock by instead striking the rock two times with his staff. While Moses’s anger may have been reasonable, it was inexcusable. This decision came with a consequence: Moses would never enter Canaan (Num. 20:1-13). This would set the stage for a new leader, Joshua, to guide Israel to her new home.

## THEOLOGY CONNECTION



### salvation

**Repentance and faith are inseparable** experiences of God’s grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior. When we repent of our sin and confess our faith in Jesus Christ, we are saved from eternal separation from God.

## LEADERS' PRAYER

LORD, HELP US MODEL WHAT TRUE  
REPENTANCE LOOKS LIKE SO OUR STUDENTS  
KNOW HOW TO REPENT OF THEIR OWN SIN.



## KICK STARTER

### ♥ HEART CHECK

Where were you tempted to **turn back** last week? How can you keep moving toward God instead of turning back to the things you've left behind?

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

# 1

## SAYING SORRY

### **SUPPLIES LIST: NONE**

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **HOW DIFFICULT IS IT FOR YOU TO APOLOGIZE WHEN YOU'RE WRONG?**
- **WHEN HAVE YOU APOLOGIZED OR ADMITTED FAULT EVEN THOUGH YOU REALLY DIDN'T WANT TO?**
- **WHY IS APOLOGIZING OR ADMITTING FAULT SO DIFFICULT FOR US?**

Many of us struggle to admit when we're wrong. Because of our pride, we hold in the words. And this bleeds into our walk with the Lord too. We sin—and we know we've sinned—yet we struggle to apologize and walk away from the sin. We struggle to repent even though it's required to be in right relationship with God.

# 2

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

What does repentance mean? How do we do it? It's more than just feeling guilty or being upset for getting caught; it's an action. It involves confessing our sin to God—and quite possibly to others who are affected—and asking for forgiveness. It also involves us actively walking away from the sin itself. Repentance is movement toward God and away from sin. For instance, if you've struggled with the sin of pornography, repentance may look like this: confessing it to God; confessing it to a trusted person for accountability; and putting boundaries in place, like parental controls and placing your phone in your parents' bedroom at night. When we sin, the Holy Spirit will convict us of our sin and draw us to repentance.

# DISCUSSION

## MAIN POINT.

God **heals** us when we **repent** of our sin.

## FOCUSING ON TOUGH CIRCUMSTANCES HARMS US

READ NUMBERS 21:1-6

### SHOULD OUR CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE HOW WE VIEW GOD? WHY OR WHY NOT?

While God never changes, our circumstances do. Our lives are sort of like roller coasters in that we go through highs and lows. What often happens is that we allow both the highs and the lows to determine our view of God. If life is good, then God is good. If life hurts, then God must not be good. The Israelites clearly struggled with this mentality as well. **But God isn't defined by our circumstances. And praise Him for that! He is good even when life isn't.**

### WHAT WAS THE EFFECT OF THE ISRAELITES LOOKING AT THEIR DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES INSTEAD OF AT THE LORD?

It's easy to take our eyes off of who God is when we're in a tough season. The next generation of Israelites was so close to entering rest in Canaan. But all they could focus on was how much they despised manna, the heat, and thirst. The effect was sinfully speaking against God for the first time and facing consequences (v. 5). **When we walk through difficult times, we must keep our eyes focused on who God is to avoid sin.**

### THE ISRAELITES HAD TO TURN AWAY FROM CANAAN AND BACK TOWARD THE WILDERNESS TO SAFELY GO AROUND EDOM (V. 20). HOW DOES THIS HELP US UNDERSTAND THEIR *DISCOURAGEMENT*?

The previous generation of Israelites—the ones who left Egypt—were dying off as God promised they would (Num. 14:29-30). A new generation of Israelites was almost ready to enter Canaan, and after wandering for so long, they had to turn around and move in the opposite direction. They were hot, tired, and thirsty. And all they could see was another detour. **It's understandable that they felt discouraged, but instead of voicing this to God and asking Him to strengthen them, they spoke against God. The detour was actually for their good—for their safety. But they couldn't see this in the moment.** Sometimes, neither can we. Instead, we allow discouragement to take root in our hearts, and we forget how faithful God has been to us.

## REPENTING OF OUR SIN HEALS US

### READ NUMBERS 21:7-9

#### WHAT DOES VERSE 7 SHOW THAT THE ISRAELITES WERE BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT GOD?

The new generation of God's people, though they spoke against God in their complaints, seemed to understand something more readily than their ancestors: to repent quickly. **They seemed to understand that confessing their sin immediately was the right way. And they also seemed to understand that God would be faithful to forgive them and heal them.**



#### THE ISRAELITES' WANDERING IN THE WILDERNESS WAS MARKED BY A CYCLE OF SIN AND REPENTANCE. HOW DO WE FOLLOW THIS PATTERN TODAY?

It's amazing how much we resemble the Israelites. **When we read about their cycle of failure, we can sometimes scoff at how slow they were to understand God's way was best. But we're prone to the same cycle.** We may even pick up this pattern of sin from generations before us—our parents or grandparents. We choose sin, even though we know it's harmful, and inevitably face some type of consequence. But this cycle is broken when we repent of our sin and pivot toward God. We aren't confined to the cycle of sin we've witnessed in our families.



#### WHAT CONNECTION DO YOU SEE BETWEEN THE BRONZE SNAKE AND JESUS?

Looking at a bronze snake doesn't seem like it would lead to healing—especially since snakes were associated with sin and Satan. **It took faith for the people to believe doing so would heal them.** Jesus pointed to this passage as a way to call people to faith in Him for healing from sin (John 3:14-15). **Jesus would be lifted up on a cross, and all who look to Him for salvation through confession and repentance are healed forever.**

## WRAP-UP

### WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES ARE CLOUDING YOUR VIEW OF WHO GOD IS RIGHT NOW? HOW CAN YOU FOCUS ON JESUS INSTEAD?

You may be walking through a really dark season or facing unimaginable pain. And while we should fix our eyes on the Lord even when life is incredibly painful, this doesn't mean our pain doesn't matter. It matters. It also doesn't mean God doesn't care about what we're going through. In fact, He cares more than anyone. **When we say we should fix our eyes on Jesus, this means we ask Him to be near to us in our pain—to be with us.** We ask to feel His presence, and we position ourselves to do so instead of pulling away—through prayer, worship, and Scripture reading. **Rather than dwelling on the pain, we dwell on who we know God to be: faithful, abounding in love, compassionate, and kind.**

# FROM A DISTANCE

## MAIN POINT.

**Believing** God's Word and **obeying** Him leads to **life**.



## CHRIST CONNECTION

Moses recorded his song and the law so God's people could always remember God's faithfulness to them, despite their frequent unfaithfulness. These were meaningful words of life for their faith and obedience. Yet the law was intended to point to Jesus, the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets (**Matt. 5:17**). He is the Word of life in whom we believe and whom we obey (**1 John 1:1-3**).





## REMEMBER TO FOLLOW

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Deuteronomy 31

Deuteronomy 34

### LOOKING BACK HELPS US RECALL GOD'S GOODNESS

#### DEUTERONOMY 32:7-12

7 Remember the days of old; consider the years of past generations. Ask your father, and he will tell you, your elders, and they will teach you. 8 When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance and divided the human race, he set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the people of Israel. 9 But the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob, his own inheritance. 10 He found him in a desolate land, in a barren, howling wilderness; he surrounded him, cared for him, and protected him as the pupil of his eye. 11 He watches over his nest like an eagle and hovers over his young; he spreads his wings, catches him, and carries him on his feathers. 12 The LORD alone led him, with no help from a foreign god.

### LOOKING BACK HELPS US WALK IN TRUTH

#### DEUTERONOMY 32:44-52

44 Moses came with Joshua son of Nun and recited all the words of this song in the presence of the people. 45 After Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, 46 he said to them, "Take to heart all these words I am giving as a warning to you today, so that you may command your children to follow all the words of this law carefully. 47 For they are not meaningless words to you but they are your life, and by them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess." 48 On that same day the LORD spoke to Moses, 49 "Go up Mount Nebo in the Abarim range in the land of Moab, across from Jericho, and view the land of Canaan I am giving the Israelites as a possession. 50 Then you will die on the mountain that you go up, and you will be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people. 51 For both of you broke faith with me among the Israelites at the Waters of Meribath-kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin by failing to treat me as holy in their presence. 52 Although from a distance you will view the land that I am giving the Israelites, you will not go there."

# BEFORE YOU TEACH

## MAIN POINT.

Leaders: Thank you for preparing to teach God's Word. As you do, may you thirst for more of the living God (Ps. 42:1).

**Believing God's Word and obeying Him leads to life.**

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

### LOOKING BACK HELPS US RECALL GOD'S GOODNESS

#### DEUTERONOMY 32:7-12

"In terms of literary genre the song of witness opens with what is commonly described as a 'rib-pattern,' that is, a formulaic presentation at home in a court of law (Huffmon 1959:288–289). The setting here has features of such an environment such as invocation of witnesses (32:1–4), the leveling of charges of wrongdoing (32:5–18), and the threat of judgment in historical times or (as in this case) in the eschaton (32:19–43). Ordinarily, of course, witnesses in such trials would be human beings, but in Old Testament covenant contexts (and even in ancient Near Eastern treaty texts) the witnesses are from another realm."<sup>13</sup>

### LOOKING BACK HELPS US WALK IN TRUTH

#### DEUTERONOMY 32:44-52

"'Take to heart all the words,' he said to them (32:46). The appeal is reminiscent of the command Moses gave the people to let the words of the Shema be upon their hearts—that is, to be part and parcel of who they were (6:6). . . . The purpose in each case is to elicit obedience to the full body of covenant requirements (4:9). The reason for such intense commitment to both song and Shema is that they are not mere empty shells into which one may pour whatever content he wishes. To the contrary, their divinely originated messages are life itself! That is, they are the channel through which Yahweh reveals the secret of successful life and prosperity."<sup>14</sup>

#### DEUTERONOMY 32:46

"Over and over again the people of Israel were reminded that the faith and commitment of any one generation were not sufficient for all the generations to come. Each must have its own time of covenant renewal (Deut. 4:9–10; 5:29; 6:2, 7; 11:19, 21; 12:25, 28; 30:19)."<sup>15</sup>



## CONTEXT

**Background:** Moses composed Deuteronomy, the final book of the Pentateuch, at the end of the wilderness journey on the borders of Canaan (Deut. 1:5). The name means “second law” or “repetition of the law.” Many scholars describe Deuteronomy as Moses’s farewell and as a covenant document—a constitution for the people. Moses wrote to those who would enter Canaan, the new generation of Israelites. He offered a summary of their time in the wilderness and reviewed the laws and guidelines Israel should follow as God’s covenant people. A key theme in Deuteronomy is the idea of remembering God’s faithfulness. Moses urged the people to remember the covenant with Yahweh and to carry it forward so that future generations would be blessed; likewise, Moses warned the people what would happen if they broke the covenant with God. Deuteronomy also contains the Shema (Deut. 6:4-9), the most important prayer in Judaism.

## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

### the Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men, but **divinely inspired**, and is **God’s revelation of Himself to man**. It is a perfect **treasure** of divine instruction. It has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally **true and trustworthy**.

## LEADERS’ PRAYER

GOD, THANK YOU FOR YOUR DIVINE WORD.  
GUIDE US AS WE LIVE OUT ITS TRUTH SO  
FUTURE GENERATIONS CAN FOLLOW US.



## KICK STARTER

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### *DID YOU KNOW?*

People typically think 12,000 to 60,000 thoughts a day! And 95% of those thoughts are repeated from the day before.<sup>16</sup>

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

# 1

## DON'T FORGET

### SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WOULD OTHER PEOPLE DESCRIBE YOU AS FORGETFUL OR GOOD AT REMEMBERING THINGS?**
- **WHAT ARE SOME STRATEGIES YOU USE TO HELP YOU REMEMBER IMPORTANT THINGS?**
- **WHY DO YOU THINK SO MANY PEOPLE STRUGGLE WITH BEING FORGETFUL?**

Many of us forget important dates, anniversaries, tests, or where we put our phone. Our minds and our schedules are so full that we often let important things slip through. Remembering is a very important action in our walk with the Lord. Today, we'll read about how Moses urged Israel to remember God's faithfulness and His commands.

# 2

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

How often do you make excuses for not doing what you should do? Maybe you didn't study and failed a test. Do you make an excuse rather than taking responsibility? This attitude overflows into our relationship with God too. If God feels distant or we're making sinful decisions, we make excuses like these: we've been busy; the Bible is hard to understand; someone in the church hurt us; we see hypocrisy in the church. Here's the truth: we are as close to God as we want to be. God lovingly went to great lengths to make a way for us to be near Him. He sent Jesus to die on our behalf and the Holy Spirit to guide us. God didn't just "meet us halfway." He came here. He came all the way. Instead of making excuses, we can take action to know Him more deeply. We can choose to remember God each day. One of the first things we can do is confess responsibility for not drawing close to God. He's faithful to forgive you and wants a relationship with you.

# DISCUSSION

## MAIN POINT.

**Believing** God's Word and **obeying** Him leads to **life**.

## LOOKING BACK HELPS US RECALL GOD'S GOODNESS

### READ DEUTERONOMY 32:7-12

#### WHAT WAS MOSES ENCOURAGING THE PEOPLE TO LOOK BACK AND CONSIDER? WHY?

God instructed Moses to write this song as a witness against the people's unfaithfulness to God by highlighting God's goodness. The people were to memorize Moses's song, which would one day serve as a reminder of God's love and care when they strayed away from Him (Deut. 31:20-22). Moses urged the people to recall how God had saved them and set them apart. By recalling Israel's unfaithfulness, Moses was highlighting God's faithfulness. **Similarly, we more clearly see God's faithfulness next to our sin.**

#### WHAT DID MOSES WANT THE PEOPLE TO KNOW ABOUT GOD (VV. 10-12)? HOW HAVE YOU SEEN THIS TO BE TRUE IN YOUR LIFE?

Prompt students to share how God has personally been good to them. God has always been for us—really for us. His nature is kind and loving, and He protects us like a father protects his children. **Even in our own wilderness of sin—and even when we wander—God finds us and draws us to Himself.** God sent His Son, Jesus, to save us from our sin. As believers, the Holy Spirit lives within us—guiding us, protecting us, and giving us wisdom and comfort.

#### ISRAEL WOULD ENCOUNTER OTHER CULTURES' FALSE GODS IN CANAAN. HOW COULD REMEMBERING *GOD'S GOODNESS* HELP THEM? HOW CAN IT HELP YOU WHEN YOU FACE SIMILAR SITUATIONS?

The Israelites would soon enter Canaan, but they'd face physical battles against the land's inhabitants. Israel would also encounter spiritual battles. They would be introduced to false gods and idols, and given their history with idolatry, they'd need to remember the truth: there is no God but Yahweh. We will all face physical and spiritual battles as well. We'll experience losing loved ones, sickness, and loneliness. We'll face the temptation to put something else before God—to allow popularity, success, relationships, or hobbies to become idols. **But when we stop and remember what God has done for us—how He delivered us through the death of His Son—we're reminded of His great love for us. We're reminded that we can endure hardship because we have real hope of eternity with God (Rom. 5:1-5). And we're reminded that our idols can never save us.** Recalling God's goodness helps us keep going.

## LOOKING BACK HELPS US WALK IN TRUTH

### READ DEUTERONOMY 32:44-52

#### WHAT CAUSES US TO GROW DISTANT FROM GOD OR TO FORGET HIM IN OUR DAILY LIVES?

We grow in relationship with others by spending time together, and this applies to our relationship with the Lord. We're immersed in a culture that mostly encourages us to live for ourselves and to chase what makes us feel good. It's easy for us to get distracted by the things we do each day. **Many times, the things that distract us aren't inherently sinful, but we allow them to become our focus and our purpose.** Over time, our relationship with God becomes stale. **God feels distant because we neglect our relationship with Him.** But if we'll draw near to Him, He'll draw near to us (James 4:8).



#### READ VERSE 47. DO WE TREAT GOD'S WORD THIS WAY? WHY OR WHY NOT?

God's words lead to life because they help us know Him. These words helped Israel to live as set apart among all the other nations. Passing on God's words helps future generations to know God and follow Him too. **Tragically, we often accept Satan's lie that reading and knowing God's Word is optional. We settle for a vague understanding of it, but God wants us to deeply study His Word so that we can intimately know Him and help others know Him.**



#### READ JOHN 1:1-5. WHAT CONNECTIONS DO YOU SEE BETWEEN JOHN'S AND MOSES'S WORDS?

It's no coincidence that John, under God's inspiration, described Jesus as "the Word" because Jesus was the living, breathing embodiment of the Word. He fulfilled the law and showed us what it looks like to live out God's commands. **Moses reminded the people that the words of God lead to life; in Jesus, the Word, we have eternal life (John 14:6)!**

## WRAP-UP

### HAVE YOU STRUGGLED WITH COMPLACENCY IN YOUR WALK WITH GOD? WHAT CAN YOU DO TO COMBAT IT?

Complacency in our walk with God means that we become lazy, apathetic, or unconcerned. And whether many people admit it or not, most of us experience this at some point, due in part to not remembering God's goodness. **Complacency leads to other issues, like falling into sin and idolatry.** We must keep in mind that our relationship with the Lord isn't rooted in emotion. We often associate emotional highs with being close to God. We come home from camp feeling excited about knowing God, but that emotional excitement usually wears off. **This is why much of our relationship with God is a discipline.** Incorporating spiritual disciplines—like reading Scripture, praying, worshiping, and serving—even when we don't *feel* like it keeps us from falling away when we struggle with complacency or apathy.

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