

life group study guide

April 23, 2017

Series Title: The Exodus

Week 1: The Journey of Trust

Series Description: Life is full of unwanted transitions. Illness. Unemployment. Foreclosure. Family Crisis. We can find ourselves in a place of uncertainty, where life is not as it once was and the future is in question. In this series, we are looking at the Israelites' transition through the desert and recognizing it as our own. This is our story. Through life's most difficult transitions, it is our response that will determine whether our journey through the desert will result in deep, lasting growth or prove destructive to the soul.

This week's Big Idea: It's usually not the circumstances that change, but your perspective of them.

Read Exodus 16: 1-3

Question: What is the hungriest you've ever been? How did it affect the way you interacted with those around you?

The jubilation of the exodus quickly faded in the desert heat. All the people can think about is survival, so they do what comes naturally – they complain bitterly and romanticize the past. Every time they complain, God provides abundantly. (In chapter 15, they complained about not having drinkable water, so Moses throws a stick in the water and it turns sweet. Then God leads them to an oasis with 12 springs and 70 palm trees.) Now they complain about not having enough to eat.

Read verses 4 and 5.

Question: What was the purpose of the particular features of the giving of the manna? How does obedience in smaller things train us for larger things?

Read verses 6 through 32.

Questions:

In what ways are we like the Israelites who complained, even though God provided them with all they needed? What is the solution for this very human condition?

What internal and external enemies do the Israelites face in this chapter? Which do you think is the most dangerous or difficult to overcome? Why?

life group study guide

God provides food, water and safety for His children. Why do you think He continues to provide for them, even though they continue to doubt Him? What does this teach us about God's commitment to His people?

In His provision, God allows the Israelites to play a role in their own deliverance. Give examples from the text that illustrate this partnership.

Look closely at verses 20 and 27. Why did they – and why do we – do these kinds of things? Notice that, while the Sabbath day is a commandment, we are also told that God has “given” it to us (verse 29). What does that mean to you?

How does lack of a physical or spiritual need tempt YOU to grumble? What spiritual discipline or attribute of God is an effective antidote for grumbling? How has God met your physical or spiritual needs through a combination of divine grace and personal effort?

Read verses 33 through 36.

Questions:

In verse 33, the Israelites were told to put aside a jar of manna as a keepsake so that future generations would see the Lord's provision. What was the point of doing this? Why is memory important to our faith?

Is there anything you have that could serve as a symbol of the Lord's provision and be passed down from generation to generation?

Bread serves as a thread that runs through the Bible to remind us that God does provide, even in ways we do not understand or recognize. The narrator of Exodus tells us that God provided manna for the Israelites for 40 years in the desert. It was their constant companion, to the point where they forgot its origin. We must strive to look around us and recognize the manna from heaven that God continues to provide: the check that comes when we need it most, the phone call from a friend at a critical moment, a passage of Scripture that feeds our soul when we are spiritually hungry.

Read John 6: 47-51.

Question: Meditate on Jesus' words in this passage. Do these words take on new meaning for you after reading Exodus 16? What is the “bread of life”?

In closing, picture your life as a desert. Identify the manna that God provides you every day. Have you ever seen the Lord provide for your family when it seemed like you had nothing or when circumstances seemed hopeless? How could God use your family to help others through giving of your time, talent and possessions?

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