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Discover Your Bible Series

Revised
Edition

Discover
EXODUS
LIFE LESSONS

LEADER GUIDE



Part Two of a Two-Part Study

LEADER GUIDE

Discover
EXODUS
LIFE LESSONS




**FAITH
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Christian Resources

Grand Rapids, Michigan

*And God spoke all these words:
“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt,
out of the land of slavery. . . .”* —Exodus 20:1-2

*The glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. . . .
The cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day,
and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the
Israelites during their travels.* —Exodus 40:34, 38

We thank Carol Veldman Rudie for writing the original lesson material (1998) on which this revised study of Exodus is based. This edition incorporates suggestions by readers and small group leaders.

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To the Leader

Prepare the Lesson

This leader guide is meant to assist you as a small group leader but not to substitute for your own work. As you prepare to lead each lesson, work first through the questions in the study guide. Then use the leader material to enrich your understanding of the passage. Prepare thoroughly before leading each group session so that you can lead without frequent references to notes. This approach will free you to concentrate on leadership responsibilities, keep eye contact with group members, and listen carefully.

Get Ready to Lead

Learn to think in terms of questions. As you prepare to lead a lesson, ask yourself questions and try to discover the answers yourself. This will prepare you to anticipate group members' questions and thus help others discover truths from God's Word.

Lead with Questions

Use questions to direct the group discussion. Draw out positive contributions by asking questions. Break down difficult or unclear questions into smaller, concise ones. Also use questions to respond to wrong or problematic answers. If you learn to lead others to truth by questions, you will be a good Bible discovery leader. The questions in this study are designed to be used with the New International Version of the Bible, but other translations can also be used.

Help to Apply

Gently help group members discover the meaning of God's message for their own lives. Be careful not to be judgmental of persons who may not yet seem to be applying the truths you encounter together. It's the Spirit's work to apply God's Word to people's hearts. Tactfully let the group know how the Spirit is applying the Word in your own heart and life. Pray faithfully for the Spirit's work in others.

While giving people the time and space to apply biblical truths as the Spirit leads them, simply try to help group members see that there is a relationship between the Bible and life. Questions for reflection at the end of each session invite everyone to take time for personal reflection and optional sharing. Try to offer at least a few minutes for reflection time toward the end of each lesson, and encourage group members to do follow-up reflection at home.

Leadership Training

If more than one group in your setting is using this Bible study, we strongly encourage leaders to meet regularly for discussion of the lesson material, for prayer, and for mutual support.

If this study is being used in a Coffee Break Small Groups program, each leader should have a copy of the *Coffee Break Evangelism Manual with Director's Handbook*, a basic "how-to" guide for establishing and leading a Bible discovery group. Reread the book or portions of it periodically and review it at the beginning of each season.

Leaders will also find it helpful to attend a leadership training workshop in connection with small group ministry.

For more information,

- call toll-free 1-888-644-0814, e-mail smallgroups@crcna.org, or visit www.smallgroupministries.org
- call toll-free 1-800-333-8300 or visit www.FaithAliveResources.org (to order materials)

Egypt and Sinai in Moses' Day



Introduction

Part One of this study focused on Exodus 1-15, which reveals how God delivered his people from slavery—to show Egypt and all nations that the God of Israel is the one Lord over heaven and earth. The remaining chapters of Exodus (featured in Part Two) describe how God makes his people into a nation unlike any other—not for the purpose of being different, but ultimately to show God’s love to the world. In these chapters we see how Israel learns to trust in God, to believe that he will always take care of them and be with them. God has shown his faithfulness and great power in the ten plagues and in the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex. 7-14), and God will continue to provide for his people. But as the Israelites begin to learn important life lessons, God also begins to ask, “Will you now be faithful to me?”

The full narrative of Exodus mirrors the redemptive plan of God for his children, even today. It gives us a fascinating picture of God’s purpose throughout history—to provide a divine mediator, Jesus Christ, who came to free us from our slavery to sin and lead us into faith-filled, full life with God forever (John 8:34-36; 10:10).

Glossary of Terms

Abraham—father of the Israelite nation, called by God to leave his homeland and begin a family of people who would be faithful to the Lord and live in the land of Canaan. Abraham is renowned for his faith in God’s promises (Gen. 12:1-7; 15:6, 13-16; Heb. 11:8-16). He is also called “the father of all who believe” in Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:11).

acacia—a type of tree in the Sinai region that grew to a height of about twenty feet. Its wood was hard, durable, and close-grained.

Amalekites—a nomadic people who lived in the Sinai peninsula and were often a threat to the Israelites wandering through the desert. Descendants of Amalek, a grandson of Esau (see Gen. 36:12), they were distant cousins of the Israelites.

angel (of the Lord)—a special agent from God who represents, brings a message from, and is sometimes identified with God.

anointing—an application of oil or ointment (by pouring or sprinkling) for consecration to God. People were anointed to a special task or office, such as the priesthood (Ex. 29:7), and objects were anointed for special use in the worship of God (29:21, 36).

ark of the covenant—a wooden chest overlaid with gold and placed in the innermost room (Most Holy Place) of the tabernacle. It

symbolized the presence of God among his people, wherever they traveled, because it rested in the place where God would meet with them (see Ex. 25:10-22; 40:36-38).

Asherah poles—wooden poles used by Canaanites in their worship of Asherah, a goddess of fertility (see Ex. 34:13; Deut. 7:5).

atonement—from the Hebrew word meaning “to cover over”; implies a sacrifice that made amends for wrongdoing. In the Lord’s covenant with Israel, an animal sacrifice served as atonement for sin (see Ex. 29:36). After Jesus came as “the Lamb of God” (John 1:29) and sacrificed his own perfect life to cover human sin, no other sacrifice for sin was necessary (Heb. 9-10).

Canaanites—the inhabitants of Canaan (see map), the land the Lord promised to give to Abraham and his descendants.

cherubim—angel-like creatures usually represented as winged figures. God instructed Moses to make cherubim statues that faced each other on the atonement cover of the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:17-22). Cherubim are most commonly associated with God’s throne, as guardians and as throne-bearers (see Ps. 18:10; 80:1; Ezek. 1:4-24; 10:1-22; 28:14).

consecrate—to set apart for holy purposes; to dedicate to God.

covenant—a mutually binding agreement between two parties; usually both parties agree to accept certain responsibilities.

cubit—distance of about 18 inches (46 cm) from the tips of an average man’s fingers to his elbow.

Desert of Sin—a wild area of sparse grassland in the Sinai peninsula (Ex. 16:1); the word “Sin” here probably derives from “Sinai.”

ephod—a garment to be worn by the high priest for service to the Lord in the tabernacle. The details about its construction and design are not precisely clear (see Ex. 28:6-14). The *NIV Study Bible* notes that an ephod is “sometimes a holy garment associated with the priesthood (Ex. 28:6-30; 39:2-26; Lev. 8:7) and at other times a pagan object associated with idols” (see Judg. 8:27; 17:5; 18:14-17). Archaeologists have uncovered statues of gods clothed in a rigid sheath-like garment that appears similar to the ephod prescribed for use in the Lord’s tabernacle.

exodus—exit, departure, literally “the road out” (from Greek, *ex* + *hodos*).

fear of God—To fear God means to respect and honor God with awe and humble devotion (see Ex. 1:17; 14:31).

Feast of Unleavened Bread—celebrated by the Israelites to remember their deliverance by the Lord from slavery in Egypt (see Ex. 12:17-20).

Hebrew—a general term for the descendants of Abraham, a descendant of Eber. The *NIV Study Bible* states that *Eber* “is the origin of the Hebrew word for ‘Hebrew’” (see Gen. 10:21, 25; 11:10-12:9) and that Egyptian and Canaanite correspondence from around 1375 B.C. (about 75 years after the exodus) refer to an ominous fear of people called “Habiru” (or “Apiru”), a word probably referring to the Hebrews.

high priest—The high priest represents God to the people and the people to God, serving as a mediator. All who served in the Lord’s tabernacle were priests, and they were led by the high priest. It was the high priest’s role to make the offering for all the sins of the people once each year on the Day of Atonement. That role pointed to the work of Jesus Christ, the ultimate High Priest (and mediator), who made an offering of himself for human sin “once for all” so that “sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary” (see Lev. 16; Heb. 9:6-7, 11-14; 10:1-18).

holy—to be set apart for special service to God (see Ex. 16:23; 19:6, 23; Lev. 20:26).

Holy Spirit—the Spirit of God (see Ex. 31:3). The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, who comes to live in believers’ hearts today to guarantee that they will receive all of God’s promises and to empower them to live holy lives (see Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, 38; 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 3:17-18; Heb. 9:8).

Isaac—Abraham and Sarah’s son, who inherited all the promises God made with Abraham.

Israel—another name for Jacob (Ex. 1:1). Later the name is used to refer to the nation of Israel that descended from Jacob’s twelve sons.

Jacob—Isaac’s son whom God renamed Israel (Gen. 32:28). The descendants of Jacob’s twelve sons became the twelve tribes of the people of Israel.

Jethro—Moses’ father-in-law and priest of Midian; also known as Reuel (Ex. 2:16-18; 4:18; 18:1).

Joshua—a military leader in Israel, first mentioned in Exodus 17:9; he was Moses’ aide (Ex. 24:13; 33:11) and became the leader of God’s people after Moses (see Josh. 1:1-9). Moses gave this name to him; Joshua was formerly known as Hoshea (see Num. 13:16). The name *Joshua* means “the LORD saves,” and the Greek version of this Hebrew name is *Jesus* (see Matt. 1:21 and its footnote).

Midian—desert region east of Egypt and south of Canaan, inhabited by nomadic shepherds (see map). The Midianites were descendants of Abraham through his wife Keturah (Gen. 25:1-4), whom he married after Sarah died (Gen. 23).

Moses—the man chosen by God to lead his people out of Egypt and as they lived in the wilderness before entering the promised land of Canaan. Moses received from God and taught Israel the laws that would govern them as God’s chosen people.

Passover—annual festival celebrated by the Israelites to commemorate their deliverance from slavery in Egypt (Ex. 12).

Pharaoh—the title used by kings of Egypt. The Egyptians believed their kings were sons of their gods.

priests—officials who served in the Lord’s tabernacle and belonged to the tribe of Levi. See also **high priest**.

redeem—to buy back; to deliver or set free through a ransom payment or other provision. The firstborn sons of the Israelites were redeemed from the plague of death in Egypt by the blood of the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:1-13, 21-23; 13:12-16). The Passover pointed to redemption from spiritual death, paid by the blood of Jesus Christ through his death on the cross for all who believe in him as Savior, the one who delivers us from our slavery to sin (John 8:34-36; Heb. 9:27-28; 10:10).

Sabbath—a day of rest at the end of each week, designated as a special gift to the people of Israel (see Ex. 16:23-30; 20:8-11; 31:12-18; 35:2-3).

sanctuary—a holy place set aside for God and his worship.

shekel—a unit of weight in gold or silver used in the barter economy of the ancient world.

Spirit of God—see **Holy Spirit**.

tabernacle—the large, decorated tent built at the Lord’s direction as the place where he would live among his people and meet with them (Ex. 25-31).

Urim and Thummim—marked stones worn in a pouch over the high priest’s heart and used as sacred lots to discern God’s will (Ex. 28:30; Num. 27:21).

Lesson 1

Exodus 16

The Journey Continues

Introductory Notes

The dramatic story of the Israelites' release from slavery, covered in the first fifteen chapters of Exodus, leaves an unorganized group of former slaves at the edge of a barren wilderness. As we will see in the remaining chapters of Exodus, these people will be gradually transformed into a recognizable nation whose unity is rooted in trusting in the continuing presence of the Lord. The people experience great hardships as they travel through the desert, and when problems arise, they often become fearful and anxious. But in each case the Lord resolves the problem and leads his people to deeper trust in him—at least for a while.

If your group has studied *Discover Exodus: Special Delivery* (Part One of this study), take a few minutes to review the key points of that study together. Otherwise, give a brief overview of Exodus 1-15, noting the people's struggle as slaves in Egypt, the call of Moses to lead them out of slavery, and the Lord's mighty works that compelled Pharaoh to let the people go. Be sure to adequately set the stage for this lesson.

Optional Share Question

Describe a time when you had to be rescued—or at least helped out of jam. Do you think God was involved in helping you? Explain.

1. Exodus 16:1-5

a. *How do the people respond to their situation?*

- **Where are the people of Israel at this point?**

At the end of Exodus 15, where Part One of this study concluded, the people of Israel were resting at Elim, a desert oasis (see map). Apparently they rested in God's care there for several weeks, for Exodus 16:1 tells us they "set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin . . . on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt." (The name *Sin* here probably derives from *Sinai*.)

Before long, though, the people begin grumbling against their leaders (Ex. 16:2), as they did “when they came to Marah,” where the water was bitter—until God made it drinkable for them (15:23-25).

- **What is the Israelites’ complaint? How does this situation and their response compare to those at Marah?**

The people’s need seems less dire than at Marah. Previously they were without fresh water for three days, but there is no evidence of that now. Here the complaint is about not having enough food, but the Israelites overstate their previous lifestyle as slaves in Egypt, where they probably did not enjoy all the food they wanted (16:3). The exaggeration here borders on humor.

Ultimately, as the people complain about Moses and Aaron’s leadership, they challenge the Lord’s ability to keep his promises. Yet the Lord has kept all of his promises and has delivered them at every turn (see Ex. 12-15). God is committed to preserving his chosen people and to making them prosper, but the Israelites are slow to learn.

b. *What does the Lord promise?*

c. *What is God’s purpose in testing the people?*

- **In what way is the gathering of “bread from heaven” a test for the people? What must they do to show their faith in the Lord? What might the Lord be trying to teach the people?**

The Lord promises to “rain down bread from heaven” (16:4). Again God will provide abundantly for his people, and he tests them to see if they will follow his instructions. God wants the people to obey, as a sign of their trust in him.

Some group members may note a connection here to Jesus’ petition for “daily bread” as he taught his disciples to pray (Matt. 6:11). (See also Jesus’ teaching about his being “the bread of life” in John 6:25-59.)

- **What must the people do on the sixth day? Why might this be required? What does that suggest about the seventh day?**

The Lord commands that the people gather enough bread on the sixth day to last for two days (see 16:22-23). This preparation will free them from having to collect provisions on the seventh day, which we learn later is to be “a day of sabbath rest, a holy sabbath to the Lord” (16:23). (Don’t mention that at this point; let group members discover it for themselves.) Earlier statements about a special seventh day

are found in Genesis 2:2-3 and Exodus 13:6. Be alert for references to Sabbath-keeping in upcoming chapters (see 20:8-11).

2. *Exodus 16:6-12*

- a. *Against whom do Moses and Aaron say the people are grumbling?*
- b. *How does the Lord reveal himself to the people, and why does he promise to help them?*

Moses and Aaron identify the real target of the people's complaint. By griping that Moses and Aaron are not providing food, the people show that they lack faith in the Lord.

- **In what way is the complaint actually directed against the Lord? Does Moses believe the complaints are justified? Explain.**
- **How does Moses and Aaron's faith in the Lord differ from that of the people?**

Moses and Aaron confidently announce that every day the Lord will give them fresh evidence of his care for their needs.

- **How does Moses view himself and Aaron?**

Moses understands that the Lord, not a human leader such as himself or Pharaoh, is the source of their care.

- **How does the Lord reveal his presence to the people? Where does his glory appear?**

As the people look toward the desert, the glory of the Lord appears in the cloud, as in the journey out of Egypt (see Ex. 13:21-22). In this way God makes clear that he is present with his people. The Lord then promises again, through Moses, to provide food, saying the people will have meat in the evening and bread in the morning (16:8, 11).

- **Why does the Lord respond to Israel's complaint? What is the Lord's attitude toward the people? What is God trying to teach them?**

The Lord uses each complaint as an opportunity to strengthen the people's faith and to encourage them to trust him more fully. Through his provisions and care they will know he is the Lord who brought them

out of Egypt (16:6, 12). The daily delivery of food will provide not only nourishment and strength but will reinforce their confidence in him each day.

3. *Exodus 16:13-20*

- a. *What does the Lord provide for food?*
- b. *What requirements are associated with the provisions of food?*

God provides quail in the evening and “thin flakes like frost on the ground” in the morning (16:14). Apparently the quail is a one-time gift, and the frost-like flakes, which Moses calls “bread” (16:15; see 16:4), come six days a week (16:5).

Some scholars have suggested that the flaky substance was actually sap secreted from bushes or the excretion of desert insects. But whatever naturalistic explanations might be offered, “no naturally occurring substance fits all the data of the text,” explains the *NIV Study Bible*. From several factors in the biblical story (for example, twice the daily amount on the sixth day and none on the seventh) we can see this was the Lord’s special provision for his people in the wilderness (see also Ps. 78:23-25; 105:40).

- **How much bread are the people to collect each day? What happens to people who disobey?**

The Lord’s requirement is simple: collect one omer of bread per person in each household. An omer, about two quarts (2.3 liters) dry measure, weighing about three pounds (1.4 kg), is enough for one person to eat in a day. The people go out and gather their allotted amounts, and everyone gets as much as they need (16:18).

Another simple requirement is that none of the food is to be kept over for the next day (except on the sixth day—16:5, 22-23). Some people disobey this command at first, and they find their bread filled with maggots the next morning.

- **What might this requirement teach the people about the Lord and his promises? How might this strengthen their faith?**

4. *Exodus 16:21-30*

- a. *What is different about the seventh day? Why?*
- **What does the Lord command about gathering the bread on the sixth day? What happens to bread that is left over for the seventh day? Why does it not spoil?**

The leaders report that the people gather twice as much on the sixth day, and this gives Moses an opportunity to repeat and reinforce the Lord's command about Sabbath rest (16:23-26).

- b. *What pattern of disobedience is repeated on the seventh day?*
- c. *How does the Lord respond to this?*

Again, some of the people fail the Lord's test of obedience.

- **How do the Lord's words reinforce the importance of resting on the Sabbath day?**

Although the Lord speaks directly to Moses, he includes the whole community in his indictment (16:28-29). Again the Lord emphasizes the gift of the Sabbath: the Lord gives his people rest so that they can truly experience freedom from slavery (see 16:6, 32).

- **What should the people know about their Lord by now?**

5. *Exodus 16:31-36*

- a. *What do the people call the bread, and how is it described?*
- b. *What does the Lord command the people to do with a sample of the manna? Why?*

The people had never before seen these thin flakes that were called "bread from heaven" (16:4). So they asked, "What is it?" (16:15). In Hebrew this question sounds like "manna," so the daily food from God came to be known as *manna*. In verse 31 the writer describes its physical appearance and taste. Later we learn that the Israelites will eat manna for forty years till they enter the promised land of Canaan (16:35).

Some members of your group may have questions about what they read in this section. They may notice a shift in chronology. For example, the "tablets of the covenant law" (16:34) haven't been made yet (see 31:18), and the fact that the Israelites would enter Canaan forty years later is not yet known (see Num. 11:33-34; Deut. 2:7; Josh. 5:12). Answer questions that may arise about these details, but don't get sidetracked from the main points of this section. In verses 34-36 the narrator is simply inserting editorial comments that explain later-known facts about the manna.

- **Why is the manna to be kept for future generations? Why would such a reminder be necessary? What would this reminder do for the faith of future generations?**

The Lord has shown himself to be an abundant provider for the people. God has provided water, meat, and bread for their physical nourishment, and he has provided a weekly Sabbath rest to nourish them spiritually. This is important not only for the Israelites living at that time, but also for future generations. They must be able to see for themselves that the Lord is good, that he keeps his promises, and that he is faithful to his people in all generations.

Questions for Reflection

What kind of leader does Moses prove to be?

What do the people learn about the Lord that they might not have known before?

As you reflect on the material for this lesson, be sure to focus on its main theme: the Lord's abundant provision. Throughout this chapter, the Lord has cared for his people and they can confidently trust that he will provide for their needs as they journey on. As the people test the Lord's reliability and the Lord tests their faith in him, we see his gracious patience.

The Lord reveals himself to his people in many ways: from the spectacular revelation of his glory on the desert horizon to the miraculous provision of food. With each revelation, the Lord expects the people to respond in greater faith. Look for this pattern of interaction between the Lord and his people, with Moses as mediator, in upcoming chapters of Exodus.

Discover Your Bible Series

Bible Studies for Small Groups

In Part Two of this study of Exodus, the people of Israel receive God's law for their nation, and they learn how to honor, worship, and live for their Lord. Through Moses they receive the Ten Commandments and a system of sacrifices, and they learn to make beautiful furnishings for worship. Despite the people's rebellion at times, God constantly guides and provides for them along their way to the promised land.

As in Part One of this study, all these things reveal God's powerful work and faithfulness among his people so that they can be a blessing to all nations. In this way God continues working out his plan to deliver people of all nations from their slavery in sin to enjoy new life, through Jesus Christ, his one and only Son.

Discover Exodus: Life Lessons is the second part of a two-part study of the book of Exodus. Part One, titled *Discover Exodus: Special Delivery*, features 12 lessons covering Exodus 1-15, and Part Two features 12 lessons covering Exodus 16-40. This material is intended for small group Bible study, but it can also be used profitably for personal study. Guides for leaders and students are available.

The approach to Bible study in this series emphasizes discovery (the reader discovers what the Bible has to say by asking questions and seeking answers from the passage studied). This is an effective and enjoyable way to study God's Word.

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