

January 13/14, 2024

From God or With God?
Exodus: The God Who is With Series
Exodus 15:22-16:36
Pastor Jeff Petersen

If you could have anything from God, anything you want, what would it be? Riches, power, fame, love? Or maybe for you, it would be something different. Maybe you want God to change something, something about you, or about your circumstances, or your relationships, or maybe even our world. What do you want from God? Well, what if I told you that God has something better for us than all of these things?

If you have your Bible with you this morning, let's turn together to Exodus, Chapter 15. Today, and this week in our Life Groups, we resume our study of Exodus, and throughout the fall, we learned, along with the Hebrews, about the **God Who Delivers**. And before the holidays, we wrapped up part one of our study with the celebration of the crossing of the Red Sea, and the liberation of Israel from bondage in Egypt. And now, as we resume the story, we're going to have the chance this winter to learn that God is not only the God who delivers His people, but God is also the **God Who is With** his people. Exodus 15, and we pick it up today in verse 22:

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore it was named Marah. So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" (*NASB, Exodus 15:22-24)

So imagine the scene: they've now set out from the Red Sea. They've gone three days into the wilderness, and with each passing day, concern is rising in the camp. Day one: no water. Day two: no water. Day three: no water. The need is real, and so is the fear. And then imagine the scene when they come to Marah. Finally they have found water, but one little taste reveals it's bitter and cannot be drunk by the people.

You know, sometimes in life when we face difficult situations, we have a tendency to look at our lot in life, and to determine that it is bitter.

I think about another character in Scripture who shows us this. It was the woman Naomi in the beautiful story of Ruth. She went away to Moab during the famine, and some very hard things happened in her life. As she comes back to her home in Bethlehem, the people begin to greet her saying, "It's Naomi. It's Naomi!" But she says, "Do not call me Naomi, call me Marah." And then she goes on to list the ways that God has made her life bitter. But here's the thing. The book of Ruth is a beautiful, redemptive story, and what she says there in chapter one is said, not realizing that God has not yet finished writing her story.

And God is not yet finished right here in Exodus 15. But we have a tendency as people, when things don't go well, to do a few things. First of all, we tend to globalize. We look at whatever our current difficult situation is, and we extrapolate that to being everything about our lives. We also have a propensity to catastrophize. “Oh, this is happening, or this might happen, which could lead to this...to this...to this...and we run in our hearts and minds to the worst possible scenario. And when we do that, we forget God.

Verse 24, again: **So the people grumbled at Moses saying, “What shall we drink?”**

Then he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree; and he threw *it* into the waters, and the waters became sweet. (V. 25a)

Bitter to sweet......but oh how quickly they forgot the One who was with them. The Hebrews have forgotten God's power. It has only been three days since they set out from the sea where they were just celebrating God's miraculous deliverance. And it's probably been about 10 days since the Passover, when they were celebrating God's protection, how He protected and spared them, not because of anything that they had done to deserve it, but because God had chosen them to be His people. And so here, the wilderness becomes the place for them to learn what it means to know, to walk with, to depend upon, to trust in, and to obey God as His people. Back to verse 25:

There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them. And He said, “If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer.” (V. 25b-26)

Verse 25 speaks of a test, **a statute and a regulation**. But what comes to your mind when you think of a test? I think for most of us something negative comes to mind, maybe because of those memories when we panicked over some tests that we had to take in school. But what is the actual purpose of tests? It is to help us see what we have learned, and to see what we still need to learn. Over the years, I have heard Bryan speak a number of times about the *Wilderness School of Leadership*, and it is often in the wilderness times in life—in the difficult times in life—when we are tested.

And right here in Exodus 15, class is in session, and the first test has been given, and the Israelites have failed! And what should happen after you fail a test? Instruction! We still have something to learn. So God tested Israel we're told in verse 25, and then in verse 26, he gives a lesson in what it looks like to live in covenant relationship with God as His people.

And there are two parts to this plan. He says, **“Give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God.”** In other words, “Listen *to* and listen *for* God.” And second, **“Do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes.”** That's the plan.

And then he gives motivation at the end of the verse. Basically, he's saying that life is better in step with God and His plan, because God does not want to bring plagues and diseases. He doesn't want us to experience those things. He wants to bring life, for as the end of verse 26 says, **“For I, the LORD, am your healer.”** I, the LORD God, Yahweh, am the One who heals.

And think about Jesus. When He came and proclaimed the good news of the kingdom—God's plan—He brought with Him life. He brought with Him healing and hope and goodness everywhere He went. And that is what Yahweh is trying to teach the Hebrews in this first lesson in the *Wilderness School*. He said it, and now He's going to show it. Verse 27:

Then they came to Elim where there were twelve springs of water and seventy date palms, and they camped there beside the waters. (Vs. 27)

The first test and lesson are now complete, and it is spring break at the resorts. **Twelve springs of refreshing water**—abundant, refreshing water—and **seventy date palms**—abundant fruit—and here they feast and rest in the goodness of God.

So what do you think that Israel should have learned through this first wilderness lesson? What are the takeaways? What is it that God is trying to teach them that they might apply it going forward? Well, keep that in mind as we move into the next chapter.

And maybe also, ask yourself, “What are some of the lessons that God has been trying to teach you, maybe in even some of the wilderness times of life? And how are we doing at retaining and applying the lessons that God has been teaching us through those tests in life?” On to Exodus 16, verse 1:

Then they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt.

So they leave Elim; they set out into the wilderness, and they are on their way to Sinai. It's now been about a month into their exodus journey. Verse 2:

The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The sons of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the LORD’S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” (Vs. 2-3)

Same song, second verse. Verse 2, they **grumbled against Moses and Aaron**. Why? Verse 3 tells us. In the first test, it was an issue of thirst. In the second test, it is hunger, and it is really interesting to note that these issues strike right at the core of our legitimate needs. We need water; we need food. We cannot survive without them. But these tests also reveal the patterns of how people tend to respond when they don't get the things that they think they need, the things they hunger and thirst for, be it literally or figuratively.

And here, just as at Marah, there is a perceived, unmet need...and an angry people and leaders under fire. The statements and accusations made, they are strong! What did we say in chapter 15? There is a human proclivity in times of trial—particularly when we are under stress, or we think that we are in danger—to globalize and to catastrophize. Notice it here again, in chapter 16. Their response is not just about the situation and the current problem that they're facing, their response is holistic.

Verse 3: **“Would that we had died by the LORD’S hand in Egypt.”** This recalls the suffering and the death of the Egyptians...and now God's own people are saying they would have been better off if they had been them. Wow! Their response is holistic. It is also exaggerated. **“Back in Egypt,”** they say, **“we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full.”** (Probably hyperbole for a group of former slaves.) The response is not only holistic, it's not only exaggerated, but their response also claims ill intent. It moves beyond the situation, claiming even evil intent on the part of others. They literally say at the end of verse 3 to Moses and Aaron, **“You have brought us here to kill us with hunger.”** Wow! What a situation! So, what does God do now? Verse 4:

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.” So Moses and Aaron said to all the sons of Israel, “At evening you will know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt; and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, for He hears your grumblings against the LORD; and what are we, that you grumble against us?”

Moses said, “This will happen when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning; (Vs. 4-8a)

Meat in the evening, bread to the full in the morning. In verse 3, they claim to have had bread to the full in Egypt. The Hebrew word used in verse 3 comes from the word that is used in verse 8, and we'll see it again in verse 12, where it is God who is promising to actually give food to the full for His people. And notice the wording in verse 4, **Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain bread from heaven for you.”** When he uses that word **rain**, what an image that brings, because rain covers everyone; it covers everything. And what will He rain? **He will rain bread...**but what kind of bread? It will literally be **bread from heaven.**

And so we see these are pictures of abundance and blessing. God's instruction in verse 4 is, **“Gather a day’s portion every day.”** Then in verse 5, he says, **“a double portion on the sixth day.”** We'll come back to that but notice what else the Lord says at the end of verse 4. He says, **“...that I may test them.”** Wilderness test number two, and the wording here is so important: **“...that I may test them whether or not they will walk in my instruction.**

Here we begin to see God's heart for His relationship with His covenant people...to walk with them day by day...Him as shepherd, leader, provider, and healer, and them as a faithful, trusting, worshiping, God-revealing community. And the result will be for God's glory and their good!

Verse 6, we read, **“At evening you will know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt.”** God will come and, once again, powerfully reveal Himself so that they may know that He is God, and that they may know that He is good. And then in verse 7: **“...and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD.”**

Can I ask you a question? What is one of the leading causes that prevents God's people, including you and me, from seeing His glory, and knowing His goodness? What do you think? I would contend it is a *grumbling heart*. Turn back again for a minute to chapter 15. What was the problem here in Exodus 15? Many of us would say, “No water, that was the problem.” But the text is saying to us, “Really?” And it is trying to get us to reconsider that. Was that place, Marah, a place of bitterness and no good water? No, not after God showed them, yet again, that He was with them, and He was for them. That water became sweet because of the goodness and the glory of God.

But what is it that kept them from seeing or even looking to that good and glorious God? Chapter 15, verse 24: **So the people grumbled at Moses saying, “What shall we drink?”** Now here in chapter 16, what is the problem? Well, the Hebrews, and likely most of us, if we were in their shoes, would say the problem is no food. And it's true if all they have is what they see. And if they only have Aaron and Moses to trust in, they are probably right. They are in deep trouble. But is that all they have? Are Moses and Aaron the only ones they can trust in? Absolutely not! Verse 4: **And the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain bread from heaven.”** Wow!

So again, why didn't they see or even look to that good and glorious God? Verse 2: **The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.** Now let's pick it up again with verse 7:

“...and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, for He hears your grumbings against the LORD; and what are we, that you grumble against us?”

Moses said, “*This will happen* when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning; for the LORD hears your grumbings which you grumble against Him. And what are we? Your grumbings are not against us but against the LORD.”

Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, ‘Come near before the LORD, for He has heard your grumbings.’” It came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “I have heard the grumbings of the sons of Israel; speak to them, saying, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’” (Vs. 7-12)

Grumbings and grumbings over and over again and notice a really interesting and important aspect of this grumbling. In 15:24, they grumbled *at* Moses. In 16:2, the whole congregation grumbled *against* Moses and Aaron. And here is an important lesson for us. When we grumble, our grumbling almost always has two features. First, it is external; someone else is to blame. We don't like our circumstances, and we quickly look for a target. Who is at fault for our misery? They quickly become the object of our wrath. And second, our grumbling is horizontal. Where are our eyes when we grumble? They are fixed on our undesirable circumstances, and then they look across to find the source, the one who is worthy of the blame for our misery.

But here is what we most often fail to do. We don't look *in* to consider how the state of our heart and our mind might be exacerbating an already difficult situation. And we don't look *up* to the One who can actually help us in it. That's true of Israel. In Exodus 15:24 and 16:2, they are being what I call *practical atheists*, which is a believer who lives—in any given moment—as though God does not exist or is not all powerful or is not good. They are not looking *in* to see the ugly state of their own hearts, and they are not looking *up*. They are not bringing the reality of the presence of an all-powerful and truly good God into their genuinely difficult circumstances.

And Moses points it out. In verse 8, he says, “***The LORD hears your grumbling which you are grumbling against Him.***” He calls them out and says, “Hey, the problem is not with us. Your problem is with God. He is the One who called you out of Egypt to become His people. And He is the One who brought you out into this wilderness and is testing you. You don't like what He is doing, so take it up with Him.”

So, are we supposed to just grumble to God, then? Not exactly. 1 Peter 5:7 says, “***Cast your cares upon Him, because He cares for you.***” We are to bring our prayers, our petitions, and our needs to Him. But there is a huge difference between grumbling and complaining, even to God, and casting our cares upon God. And what is the difference? Unbelief! The heart of grumbling is unbelief. It is failing to recognize that God is God, and that God is good. It is choosing to believe that I am a victim of chance and circumstance and the actions of others. I am being, in that moment, a practical atheist.

Belief, on the other hand, is to acknowledge the genuine difficulty of our sometimes very hard circumstances. But it is also to simultaneously believe and acknowledge that God is with us, and that God is for us, and that God is able to help us to walk in our circumstances, no matter what we face. Grumbling seeds and feeds unbelief. Faith releases the spirit and sets us free to trust in the One who is with us, even in horrible circumstances.

Now, here are the Hebrews grumbling against their leaders. But, in reality, they are grumbling against God because right now they don't like or want His plan. So what does God do about it? He shows them Himself. He reminds them, “I am right here.” First through Moses, He promises provision—manna in the morning, quail in the evening—that they may know that the Lord is leading them, and that they may see His glory. Verse 6 and verse 12.

And second, He responds by manifesting Himself. Look again at verse 10. **It came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.** The pillar of cloud has been with them. But somehow God now manifests His glory more powerfully within the cloud. It harkens forward to what he will do on the mountain on Sinai and to what He will do in the tabernacle. And it raises the question, “Why? Why does God do this in the pillar of cloud?” I believe it's because God is trying to teach His people that He is with them. “Hey, y'all, I AM here...the eternally-existent, all-sufficient I AM is here with you, even in your most difficult struggle.”

What is the point of testing? It is learning. And what lesson are they and we to be learning? It's that God is with and for His people, and that changes everything. Verse 12: **“At twilight, you shall eat meat. In the morning you shall be filled with bread, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God.”**

Even in the midst of deserts, even in the midst of true need, even in the midst of suffering and struggle, God *is*. And He is able to enable us to even have joy in the midst of life's most difficult circumstances, if we will look to and trust in Him. And He wants to continually remind His people of this, that they might permanently learn these lessons. So, God brings to them the provision of bread, and He also brings the rhythm of rest. Verse 13:

So it came about at evening that the quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew evaporated, behold, on the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground. When the sons of Israel saw *it*, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat. This is what the LORD has commanded, ‘Gather of it every man as much as he should eat; you shall take an omer apiece according to the number of persons each of you has in his tent.’” The sons of Israel did so, and *some* gathered much and *some* little. When they measured it with an omer, he who had gathered much had no excess, and he who had gathered little had no lack; every man gathered as much as he should eat. Moses said to them, “Let no man leave any of it until morning.” But they did not listen to Moses, and some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul; and Moses was angry with them. They gathered it morning by morning, every man as much as he should eat; but when the sun grew hot, it would melt. (Vs. 13-21)

God was faithful, and He did, in fact, rain down the bread of heaven upon them. Psalm 78 calls it ***the bread of angels***, and it was unlike anything they had ever seen before. And notice, too, in verse 18 **...he who gathered much had no excess, and he who gathered little had no lack.** God gave them exactly what they needed, and it was His miraculous provision as evidence of His abiding care for them. So verse 21 emphasizes once again, **They gathered it morning by morning.** But before that, there was another test, another learning opportunity. God said to *gather it each morning*. In verse 19 Moses says, **“Let no man leave any of it until morning.”** But in verse 20,

we are told **they did not listen**. Some of them tried to hoard it and store it, and they woke up to jars of maggots in their tents.

What lesson is there for us in this? Well, when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, do you remember what He said that they should ask for? Matthew 6:11 says, ***“Give us this day our daily bread.”*** In other words, “Lord, provide what we need for today.” He never said, “Give us this life, that we will always have everything we need, want, and more.” And to be honest, our American prosperity creates for us a great danger to being able to walk with God. For God was seeking to teach the Hebrews in the wilderness, and Jesus was seeking to teach the disciples in Galilee, that our God wants a daily, dependent, abiding relationship with Him. That is the lesson of the manna. It was to teach them, again, that God was with them, and God was for them, and He would take care of their needs each and every day. And not only did God bring the provision of bread for His people, He also created the rhythm of rest. Verse 22:

Now on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, then he said to them, “This is what the LORD meant: Tomorrow is a sabbath observance, a holy sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning.” So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered, and it did not become foul nor was there any worm in it. Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, *the sabbath*, there will be none.” (Vs. 22-26)

Incredible! If on Tuesday you gather twice as much, and you try to store it for Wednesday, you ended up with a stinky tent full of maggots. But if on Friday you gather twice as much and you store it for Saturday, hey, then all is good. Amazing! How? Why? Again, God is teaching His people what it means to be His people and to live not only dependent upon Him, but also in rhythm with Him.

In verse 23, we find the first occurrence of the word **sabbath** in Scripture. This will be more fully defined for Israel in the coming months, but here Moses shares God's plan for the six-on, one-off rhythm. It is actually not all that new. God first introduced this concept in Genesis 2:2-3, in His own creation of the world, when God Himself rested on the seventh day and sanctified that day and set it apart. And so God provides enough food the day before the Sabbath to last for two days, and in so doing, He provides a rest as a gift to his people. But here, too, the lesson must be learned. Verse 27:

It came about on the seventh day that some of the people went out to gather, but they found none.

And so this, too, becomes another test and another opportunity to teach the Hebrews, and us, what they and we need to learn about how we can trust in Him. Verse 28:

Then the LORD said to Moses, “How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My instructions? See, the LORD has given you the sabbath; therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.” So the people rested on the seventh day.

(Vs. 28-30)

And our chapter closes with a call to remember what God has done, that we might remember the lessons that He was seeking to teach Israel. Verse 31:

The house of Israel named it manna, and it was like coriander seed, white, and its taste was like wafers with honey. Then Moses said, “This is what the LORD has commanded, ‘Let an omerful of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread that I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.’” Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar and put an omerful of manna in it, and place it before the LORD to be kept throughout your generations.” As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the Testimony, to be kept. The sons of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan. (Now an omer is a tenth of an ephah.) (Vs. 31-36)

An omer is about two quarts. For forty years, six days a week, God provided the bread of heaven for His people. And just as incredibly as it came, so it went. In Joshua 5, right after they begin to eat the produce of the lands, now God was providing something even better for them—the land which He had promised to them. And so the Lord calls them to put some of the manna in a jar and keep it before the presence of the Lord, which will eventually be in the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle. Why? Because they are to remember...and we are to remember.

You see, true tests in life are not for getting grades by cramming information that will quickly be forgotten. They are for learning that we might grow and change and experience the better life that God has called us into. He took them out of Egypt to give them something better. But that something better will not, it cannot be experienced if they don't learn the lessons of the *Wilderness School of Learning*. And the most important lesson is that God Himself is the greatest treasure we could ever have.

And in Deuteronomy, 8:3, Moses says it well, ***“He humbled you, and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know. Nor did your fathers know that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone. But man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.”***

At the beginning of the message, I asked you what you want most from God, if you can have anything you want? Well, I have come to learn something that was true of me, as a young Christian, sometimes still is, but I don't think I even understood it back then. What I think I really wanted was a God who would make me and my life such that I no longer needed God.

Back in the early 90s, I used to like to watch Star Trek. And one of the most repeated phrases on that show was, “Beam me up.” And on the ship, the officer would energize, and a person could go instantaneously from the planet below, up to the ship above, and soar high away above everything. And I remember so many times, saying, in essence to God, “Beam me up! You want me to be a different kind of person; I want to be a different kind of person, Well, energize! Why not just make me instantaneously terrific?” And the answer is because if He did, I would have never learned to live life with God.

We are all so prone toward independence, and the temptation is to self-directed and self-empowered lives under our own rule and reign. But God wants to progressively teach us to learn that He is with us, and He is for us, and we never have to go it alone. We literally have the God of the universe to look to, to trust in, and to depend on, 24/7, 365. The problem is that far too often we are focused more on a life *from* God than a life *with* God. Sometimes we’d just rather use God as a genie in the sky to make all of our problems go away and to meet all of our needs. But He wants so much more. He wants us. He wants relationship with us...life with us. And if we will learn the lessons of the *Wilderness School*, then we will begin to find an entirely different kind of life, experiencing His provision and living according to His rhythm. And the results can be such greater joy, hope, peace and rest, no matter what storms are blowing outside. **From God or With God?** Which one do you want?

Jesus, thank You that You want us. Thank You that You're not just a genie that we occasionally get wishes from to solve problems or meet needs. Thank You that You are an ever-present help in every time of trouble. Thank You that You promise to never leave us and to never forsake us. Thank You that You are so good. Thank You that we can know You; we can depend upon You; we can enjoy You both now and forevermore. Teach us the lessons You were trying to teach Israel in the wilderness, that we might learn to trust You and abide with You. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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WINTER 2024 // WEEK 1

Life Group Questions

Exodus – The God Who is With // January 13/14, 2024

From God or With God? // Exodus 15:22-16:36

Introduction

Before our Christmas break, we left the children of Israel as they celebrated God's deliverance from oppression in Egypt. Though delivered safely through the Red Sea, their new life on the other side has its own challenges. How they learn to trust that the God who delivers is also a God who provides reveals a pattern for us to follow as well.

To think through the main ideas in the sermon and prepare for your discussion together, we invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group. Due to preferences over a wide range of groups, we do not expect you will cover every question each week.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

For Life Groups that are meeting for the first time:

- 1) Go around the circle and ask everyone to answer these "F" questions.

First Name – Introduce yourself.

Family – Describe your family.

Faith – What is your faith background?

Fun – What do you like to do for fun?

Food – What is a favorite food of yours?

- 2) What is a word or phrase you'd like to focus on in 2024?

For Life Groups that are reconnecting:

If you have a couple of new members in your group you might want to have everyone answer the questions above before continuing with the questions below.

- 1) Share with the group about a new experience you had over the holidays OR reflect about a tradition you kept again this year. What made it memorable for you?
- 2) What is a word or phrase that you'd like to focus on in 2024?

Getting Started

Transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
 - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
 - b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
 - c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
 - 2) Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group.
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Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) What is something you heard or experienced in the worship service this week that has really stuck with you?

- 2) Immediately after celebrating God's great deliverance through the Sea, the Israelites grumble against Him for a lack of care. Though they have legitimate need for food and water, **what does their attitude reveal about their faith in God? (Ex 15:22-16:3)**

Think about a time recently when you grumbled (to others, or just to yourself) about God's care or concern for your needs. **If you are willing, share how your attitude is a reflection of your level of trust that God will provide what you truly need.**

- 3) Twice in [Exodus 16:6-8](#), Moses reminds the people that their grumbling is against God and not against him. **What did Pastor Jeff say this shows about the perspective of the Israelites?**

Why is it important for the Israelites to look up to God rather than just follow Moses? (vs 19-20)

What are some examples of how we can live with a horizontal view rather than focusing vertically to God for provision and support?

How can you support one another in your group to become more God-focused when challenges come?

- 4) In [Exodus 16:16–26](#), God gives the Israelites specific instructions: They are to gather just enough manna for each day’s need, and enough on the sixth day for two days’ of meals. Later, Moses explains this in Deuteronomy 8:2-3. According to that passage, **how did God mean for the manna to teach His people about His character and His ways?**

In Matthew 6:9-11, Jesus draws them back to the provision of “daily bread” in the Lord’s Prayer.

What is the “daily bread” that your soul truly needs to feed on?

Ultimately, our journey of faith is meant to lead us toward a heart at rest in God as our Provider.

When have you looked to God first, resting in His provision rather relying on yourself or leaning on other people? What was the outcome?

When have you tried to satisfy your needs outside of God’s provision? How has that worked for you?

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts. **Next week in Life Group, take a few moments to share how the Lord may have used this exercise in your life.**

Prayer Focus: In our passage this week, the Israelites were reminded 4 times that “Yahweh hears” (Exodus 16:7, 8, 9, 12). Just as it was important for them to know that God was intimate and personal in hearing and responding to their needs, we need to remember this as well.

1. Pray with confidence that God hears you when you cry out to Him.
2. Pray with gratitude for the daily bread of God’s Word.
3. Pray to be open and ready to share about God’s goodness in your life when others need a word of hope.

Scripture Focus: Begin and end each day reading Matthew 6:25-33. In this passage Jesus speaks practically and tenderly about how God provides for us. At the end of the week, reflect on your own heart. How were you led toward a heart at rest in the God as your Provider by making time for this simple practice?

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

A significant part of “coming together” is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say “Amen” aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?