

February 24/25, 2024

Rooted in the Past, Sure of the Future, Faithful in the Present

Exodus: The God Who is With Series

Exodus 23:20-24:18

Pastor Jeff Petersen

Have you ever made a commitment to someone and then failed to keep it? I have, many times, failed to keep commitments to people and commitments to God. In the mid-1990s, I found myself struggling to keep the commitments that I had made to God. You see, I'd been a Christian at that point for about ten years, and in ministry for about five, and I had committed to God to live a life of total surrender to Him in every area, every day. But I found myself often failing to be the person that I wanted to be, to be the person I believed that He wanted me to be. I was living more often for my own glory than for the glory of God, for what I wanted, than for the good of others. And I longed for that to change. I vividly remember purposely, uniquely, intently seeking God, in order to fix what was broken in me once and for all. And there was a song during that period that became my anthem. It's, "*I Will Never Be the Same Again*," and it called on God to sweep away the darkness, burn away the chaff and let a flame burn to glorify Your name...so I will never be the same again. I sang it over and over to God, as I sought God. But here's the thing. I was the same again, many times, and I continued to struggle with the chaos in my soul, and the unbelief in my life. And I wondered: How do we walk with this great God? How do I live faithfully committed to the covenant relationship that I had entered with Him?

Well, maybe we can learn something from what He was seeking to teach His chosen people in our study of Exodus. So, if you have your Bible with you this morning, would you turn with me to Exodus, Chapter 23? Now, if you've been paying attention, some in the room might be saying, "Chapter 23"? After all, what chapter were we in last week? Chapter 20! Well, in the back half of Exodus, God is going to get very specific about some instruction to Israel in the old covenant. So we thought it would be better for us, as the people who live in the new covenant, to focus on the big picture of some of the significant lessons that we can learn and apply. So in the coming weeks, we won't go through every verse and chapter in detail. Rather, we're going to zoom out and look at the pivotal moments that mark the plot of the book. So, in chapters 20 through 23, we find the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, which we've been talking about. And then also there are three chapters of further instruction for Israel, which are often called together the book of the covenant. And then beginning in Exodus 23:20, there is an epilogue to the book of the covenant, which is forward facing.

But before we get into that, let's take just a moment to remember how God introduced all of this instruction—the entire book of the covenant. Do you remember? Chapter 20 and verse 1:

Then God spoke all these words, saying, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (*NASB, Exodus 20:1)

These words were not random instruction for random people. These were God's very own people. As He said in chapter 19, verses 5 and 6, He called them *His treasured possession, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation*. And so these are the instructions for His treasured people that they were to live in, according to the covenant relationship they had entered into with Him, experiencing flourishing with each other as they lived in accordance with the wisdom of God. And Israel, at this point, has every reason to trust God and to embrace His covenant instruction, for He has shown Himself and His goodness to them, now so in so many ways, so many times. In so many places, they have seen His power; they have experienced His protection; they have enjoyed even miraculous provision. They have every reason to trust Him. And thus this calling into the covenant is rooted in the past, in who God is, in who He has already shown Himself to be, and what He has done for Israel, time and time again. Remember that as we walk through our text today. So rooted in the past, having been given the instruction of the book of the covenant, God now points Israel toward the future. Chapter 23, beginning of verse 20,

“Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.”

Now we've had similar terminology related to this angel back in Exodus 3:2 at the burning bush. And you will remember we said then not to think of an angel as we would picture one today, but rather this is some sort of a manifestation of the presence of God Himself. The language in this text will also affirm that. So notice what he will do. *“I will go before you. I will guard you along the way and bring you to the place which I have prepared.”* Do you remember what we've called this place they're in right now in the wilderness? We said this is a liminal space...an in-between place. All fall we studied the *God who delivers*, as we looked at God leading Israel out and from Egypt. And now we are studying the *God who is with*, as He is meeting His people right here in the wilderness. But God's plan all along has been to take them to the place that He has prepared, the land promised to Israel, a good land—a land flowing with milk and honey.

So here at Sinai, God tells them again of His commitment to His people. He will lead them, and He will bring them there, and God even promises to guard them all along the way. But Israel will have an important part to play in order to experience God's promise to them. Verse 21:

“Be on your guard before him and obey his voice; do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since My name is in him.”

In verse 20, God says He will *guard them along the way*, but in verse 21, He says they must guard themselves, and pay attention to His instruction. And if they do not, they will not receive what God has promised, entering this good land.

Over the years, I have taken so many people and teams on mission trips overseas. And whenever we do, I seek to do everything I can to prepare those people who are going. But, ultimately, every person who goes must guard themselves by paying attention to the instruction. On one trip, which was actually led by someone else, there was a high school gal who didn't guard herself by paying attention. And when they got to the destination country, they were standing in line at those little immigration booths, and she got up there for her turn and she realized she didn't have her passport. They later realized that she had left it in the pocket in the seat on the plane, but the immigration

authorities in that country did not care one bit. So what they did is, they said, “You’ll sit right here,” and they put her on the next plane back to the United States, and she never got to experience the destination for which she had been planning to go.

And if Israel will disdain and disregard God’s angel who bears God’s name before them, God will not say, “Oh, whatever, no big deal.” He is warning them that they will miss out on His plan if they do not guard themselves and pay attention to heed His instruction. But, in contrast, verse 22:

“But if you truly obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.”

God promises again His divine protection against all who would seek to harm or oppose them. And then in the rest of chapter 23, He further describes this protection and His plan to provide for Israel and to keep them from the destructive idolatry of other nations. Verse 23,

“For My angel will go before you and bring you into *the land* of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will completely destroy them. You shall not worship their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their deeds; but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their *sacred* pillars in pieces. But you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water; and I will remove sickness from your midst. There will be no one miscarrying or barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. I will send My terror ahead of you, and throw into confusion all the people among whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn *their* backs to you. And I will send hornets ahead of you so they will drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites before you. I will not drive them out before you in a single year, that the land may not become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. I will drive them out before you little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land. I will fix your boundary from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the river *Euphrates*; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you will drive them out before you. You shall make no covenant with them or with their gods. They shall not live in your land, because they will make you sin against Me; for *if* you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.” (Vs. 23-33)

Several things here. Number one: Why is God going to drive out and displace these other nations which are currently living in that land? Well, first we need to understand there is a larger story that is taking place. All the way back in Genesis 15, God hints at how He will bring together, in His perfect timing, a plan to both create and bless a people, and to simultaneously bring judgment on wickedness. In the promise to Abraham, God says He will bring Abraham’s descendants back to that land where Abraham was generations later. Why? Because the sin of the people currently living there, God said had not yet reached its full measure. And in Deuteronomy 9, the LORD warns Israel not to think that God is giving them this land because they are somehow deserving of it. Rather, it is because of their wickedness that God is determined to drive them out. In fact, in Leviticus 18, the LORD describes the land as being defiled by these people and their wickedness, and it speaks of the land actually vomiting them out. But God warns Israel at that time, if they

follow in the footsteps of their wickedness, the exact same thing will happen to them. And sad to say, that is eventually what will happen.

And so in this chapter, we read over and over again that God will drive out these other nations. And God also foreshadows how that will happen. In verses 29 and 30, He says He won't drive them out all at once in one year, rather little by little. He will grow and strengthen Israel and drive out the other nations until they take full possession of the land that He is giving to them. This, too, is predictive of what will actually happen, partly because of God's original plan here, and partly also because of Israel's unfaithfulness to the covenant with God. It will not be until the time of David and Solomon that Israel finally, and only briefly, fully possesses the land of promise.

Number two, notice that God promises to bless Israel. Look at verses 25 and 26. Now, the first reader would not have understood these verses to be some sort of a guarantee of a perfect life. Rather, this is a picture of blessing. God would protect them, provide for them, bless them and grow them. But again, that's if they will be faithful to keep His covenant.

Finally, notice the admonitions of verses 32 and 33. God says, **you shall make no covenant with them or with their gods.** Why? Well, in verse 33, He says, again, they can't live in the land, because if they do, they will make you sin against Me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you. What is the first and the foremost requirement in this covenant relationship with this awesome God? **You shall have no other gods before Me.** You shall make no idol; you shall bow down to no other idol. Fidelity to Yahweh alone, as Israel's God, has primacy over all other things in this covenant relationship. So, God is simultaneously accomplishing His larger plan of bringing judgment on wickedness, while bringing provision and protection to the people that He has chosen to be His people, who will be called, in turn, to be a light to all peoples. That is how the book of the covenant comes to a close.

Then in chapter 24, Israel is invited to affirm this covenant. Verse 1:

Then He said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel, and you shall worship at a distance. Moses alone, however, shall come near to the LORD, but they shall not come near, nor shall the people come up with him." Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the Lord and all of the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!" Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. He sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and they sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD. Moses took half of the blood and put *it* in basins, and the *other* half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant, and read *it* in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken, we will do, and we will be obedient!" So Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

(Exodus 24:1-8)

There are so many things happening here, but let's try and keep it simple. The people are called to assemble and receive and respond to God's covenant with them. And there are two primary elements here: the reading and the response to the book of the covenant, and the sealing of the covenant through the blood sacrifice.

Do you remember how it was that God protected Israel on the night of the tenth strike against Egypt? It was through the shedding of the blood of the Passover lamb. We talked about this blood on the doorframe, which would actually foreshadow the One who would become the ultimate Lamb of God, the One who could actually take away the sin of the world: Jesus. So Israel remembers the role of blood sacrifice in God's plan. And in the coming chapters, Moses will return up the mountain to receive very detailed instruction—seven chapters to be precise—regarding the construction of the tabernacle, and the institution of the practices of worship, sacrifice, and atonement for this covenant community. But here, God has Moses build a simple altar with twelve pillars, one representing each of the twelve tribes of Israel. And two kinds of offerings are presented: burnt offerings and peace or fellowship offerings, and the blood from the sacrifice is sprinkled two places: on the altar first, and later on the people after the reading of the book of the covenant and the commitment of the people to the covenant.

And notice two times the text reports the response of the people to the covenant that Yahweh is making with them. Verse 3: **All the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the Lord has spoken, we will do!"** Verse 7: And they said, **"All that the Lord has spoken, we will do, and we will be obedient."** And then in verse 8, Moses sprinkles the blood on the people saying, **"Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."**

God has made a covenant with the people He has chosen. They have responded, agreeing to the terms of the covenant, and with a commitment to be obedient to the covenant and all of God's instruction contained therein. And then verse 9:

Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, and they ate and drank.

(Vs. 9-11)

Incredible! What a scene! This is now the covenant feast—the fellowship meal—in the process of affirming the covenants. They come before the presence of God, and the text says, **they saw God**. Now they didn't see God's face. Even Moses wouldn't see God's face; we'll read that later. But somehow, they saw some aspect of a manifestation of God, maybe just His feet, as they refer to this jeweled surface of sapphire, or perhaps better translated lapis lazuli that they saw, which was so beautiful at the feet of God. And that imagery of that jeweled lapis lazuli is what will be referred to regarding the throne of God in the book of Ezekiel. It's an incredible scene! They ate and drank in the presence of God. And we're not just talking about Moses and Aaron and two of his sons. We are talking about **seventy of the elders of Israel**. Can you imagine getting to be a part of a moment like that? It would be a moment you would never forget, right? And it would be a moment that would change you forever, right? Hmm. Verse 12:

Now the LORD said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction.” So Moses arose with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. (Vs. 12, 13)

So, Moses is called back up the mountain to receive the law and the commandments which God had written, and for further instruction. As I mentioned, the next seven chapters will record the very specific plan of God regarding the tabernacle and the practice of worship for Israel. But in the meantime, while Moses is on the mountain getting all of this instruction, what are the people to do? Verse 14:

But to the elders he said, “Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a legal matter, let him approach them.”

They are to wait at the bottom of the mountain for Moses and Joshua to return. Now they aren't told exactly how long Moses is going to be gone. But the very fact that Moses clarifies the leadership struggle for handling disputes indicates they may have known it was going to be a while. And I want you to pay particular attention to who Moses addresses in verse 14. Who was it? **But to the elders**—all seventy elders—he said, **“Wait here for us until we return to you.”** He is calling the elders to affirm the interim leadership of Aaron and Hur, and to lead the people in waiting...waiting well...until they return. So, should there be any problems, what were they to do? Well, if they are following the pattern which was instituted in Exodus 18, then we know that the elders were entrusted with solving the small problems. But if a problem grew too big, they were to bring it to Aaron and Hur, and as leaders, they were, together, to settle and solve the problems, keeping peace in the community, assuring the people, and leading the people, because Israel was to wait, and they were to wait well. Think about that this week as we wait for what we're going to hear about next week. Verse 15:

Then Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day, He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the mountain top. Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights. (Vs. 15-18)

Forty days...forty nights! It's a long time when you're waiting; it's nearly six weeks. Israel watches Moses ascend and disappear under the cloud of the awesome presence of God, which appeared to them from below as a consuming fire on the top of the mountain. Hmm...it would be easy to start to wonder, wouldn't it? To wonder what or who might be burned up in that consuming fire? It might be easy to even begin to become a little nervous...and then actually downright afraid. After all, what if...well, what will happen to us then?

But before we run ahead, I want us to sit right here in this moment, for a minute. What has happened thus far? God has revealed Himself time and time again. They have seen His power. They have experienced His protection. They have enjoyed His provision. He has declared Himself to be their God, and He has called them His treasured possession. So, the basis for their trust can

be rooted in the past. And God has promised to bring them to a wonderful future. He has declared His purpose for them as *a kingdom of priests*, and He has promised to lead them and guard them and *give them a land flowing with milk and honey*. They have every reason to be sure of the future. But what about right now? God just met with them in worship and fellowship, as they have affirmed the covenant with Him. And seventy plus of their leaders have actually seen God, or at least some glimpse of His glory. They have entered into His presence and seen His beauty and they have eaten, and they have drunk and celebrated the covenant with Him in His presence. So they have every reason to be faithful in the present. Will they be? Will they be full of faith, and thus faithful to what they just committed in this covenant? We'll have to wait and see.

But what about us? How does all of this apply to us in the new covenant? Well, there is some parallelism. First, our God is good and has been good to us and, therefore, our trust can and should be rooted in the past. That is seen most clearly when we regularly, daily, read and reflect on His written Word. Oh, how renewing our minds on His truth—who He is and what He has done—helps to deepen our roots. If you don't know where to start with that, during this season of Lent leading up to Easter, I would encourage you to dwell in Matthew 26 through 28. In those chapters, we find a crystal-clear picture of who He is, and what He has done for each one of us. But we can also take space to quietly reflect, remember, perhaps journal, and think about, “What has God done for you? How has God met you? How has He shown you His power? How has God protected you? How has God provided for you?” When I think about how God has personally cared for me, how He has personally loved me, my roots grow deeper into Him. And if we want to be the kind of people who will learn to be faithful to Him, and to enjoy the full extent of the new covenant life and the relationship He invites us into with Him, we must trust Him, and that trust can be rooted in the past.

But what about the future? What about our future? That's where the news gets even better. For Jesus has promised us something far greater than a good land on earth. He has promised that we can be with Him, in His presence, in glory, for all eternity! He literally said, “***I am going to prepare a place for us.***” And we need to realize that the glory of the lapis lazuli that was seen by the elders of Israel, that is just a speck of dust of the glory and the beauty and the goodness of our God. And if you are one who has entrusted yourself to the finished work of Jesus Christ and Him alone, then I can tell you two things without a doubt. Your future is certain, and your future will be glorious! Those are promises from God, so we can actually grow in being sure of the future.

But what about now? Well now, by the finished work of Jesus, we have access to the presence of God anytime...anywhere. In this new covenant, we can always worship Him, experiencing His presence, His power, His strength, His goodness, His joy, His hope, His peace. We can turn to Him; we can talk to Him; we can look to Him in any moment, any day, in any situation, which means we can wait well! We are not home yet. This is not even the world that God ultimately has for us, but we will one day experience it, being with Him.

One day, He will make all things new, He will wipe every tear from our eyes. And there will be no more war, hostility, division, strife, sin, disease, death: all of these things, no more! Even the lion will lie down with the lamb. He will bring us into the fullness of His glorious presence and thus we can be faithful in His presence. And if we will choose to seek His presence, we can even become people who are full of faith in the present.

You know, I'm amazed at the people of Israel and, specifically, the elders of Israel. Those guys, they saw God; they just got to glimpse His glory! Surely they will never forget that, right? And then I think, "What about me? How many times have I seen the goodness and even glimpses of the glory of God, and how quick am I to forget?" You know, it's been nearly thirty years since I wrestled with some of those struggles that I was facing in the mid-90s, and I can confidently tell you one thing, "I still have not arrived." I still struggle, sometimes with some of the same things, some of the same discouragement, some of the same selfishness, some of the same doubt and fear. I still have not arrived, but I am learning. I am growing, and I have changed! And perhaps the most important thing that I have learned is that God is the faithful covenant keeper. He is the One who initiates and sustains a covenant relationship with His people. I'm still not here because I've figured it all out and I've got it all together. I am here because Jesus is forever committed to me, and I am so, so thankful! And He is equally committed to you!

You know, I no longer believe there will be a moment in this life that will ensure that I will never be the same again. But I do believe that if I will choose to partner with God, to partner well with Him in the power of the Holy Spirit, by engaging in the practices that we just discussed, then He will help me to increasingly become the kind of person who really does trust in God, and who is increasingly faithful to my covenant relationship with Him. And I pray that we will all continue to grow and become the kind of people who are rooted in the past, who are sure of the future, and who are therefore faithful in the present, as we walk in faithful covenant relationship with the One who was and is and forevermore will be faithful to us!

Jesus, thank You that You are the covenant-keeping God. Thank You, Father, that You initiate relationship, You sustain relationship, but You draw us to Yourself, and You call us to trust You, and You call us to become more like You. Teach us, God, to be the kind of people who grow our roots down because of who You are and what You've done. Help us to not forget what You've done for each and every one of us. Help us also, God, to look ahead, not just to this present world in its brokenness, but to Your promises in Scripture, to know that our future is certain, and our future is glorious. So help us, God, to be faithful to You today, right in the present, as we live in this fallen and broken world. Help us to seek You, to seek Your presence, that we might have from You what we need to walk well, to wait well, and to love well in a lost and dying world. In Your name we pray, Amen.

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WINTER 2024 // WEEK 7

Life Group Questions

Exodus – The God Who Is With // February 24/25, 2024

Rooted in the Past, Sure of the Future, Faithful in the Present // Exodus 23:20-24:18

Introduction

This week we move forward in the Exodus narrative to find the Israelites pledging wholehearted allegiance to Yahweh. With God visibly present among them, elders appointed to lead them, and covenant agreement to bind them they watch Moses ascend the mountain. But are they prepared to wait well for him to return with the tablets?

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)*

- 1) In 5 words or less, how would you describe your favorite vacation spot?

- 2) Name a difficult lesson you've learned or an unintended skill you've acquired in life that you wouldn't trade for anything now.

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 did you learn about the nature and actions of God in the sermon this week?
- 2) In Exodus 23:20-23, we learn that God had a plan to continue to guide His people through the wilderness. **Who are we to understand the Angel to be in this passage?**

What important needs does the Angel meet for God's people?

Just as God prepared a place for His people here in Exodus, Jesus tells us in John 14:1-6 that He is preparing a place for those who follow Him. **What do both passages tell you about God's character?**

We are learning how the Exodus narrative depicts a life of walking with God's Spirit. **How has that been shown in this passage?**

If you'd like, share about a time when you experienced God preparing a way for you to follow that led you closer to Him.

- 3) The people of God repeat an important phrase in Exodus 24, verses 3 and 7, Write it down here:

If you could stand with them in this scene, would you genuinely agree with what they are saying?

Reflect on your own heart for a moment. **How often do you wholeheartedly agree to doing or being something for God in an emotional moment? In general, how long does an emotional commitment last?**

Read Philippians 4:8-9 and Colossians 3:1-4. **What do these passages give us as a better guide than merely our emotions when we make a commitment to the Lord?**

- 4) Exodus 24:8-14 tells us that elders would be responsible leaders while Moses went up the mountain. **What was life in the camp supposed to look like for the Israelites during this time?**

Pastor Jeff talked about what it means to “wait well.” **How would you describe a person who waits well?**

What can you do this week to help each other be the kind of people who wait well in all kinds of situations?

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: Set a timer for 10 minutes. Sit upright but comfortably in a chair with your palms open and upward on your lap. Focus on a word or short phrase about the character of God the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. When your thoughts wander to the things on your to-do list or

other people's needs, redirect them back to the character of God. When the 10 minutes is up, close in a short prayer of gratitude.

Scripture Focus: Humility is an important quality in leaders and followers alike. Read Psalm 131 to point you toward humility throughout the week. Here it is in the ESV with a blank space for you to insert your own name in verse 3.

O LORD, my heart is not lifted up;
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvelous for me.
But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child is my soul within me.
O _____, hope in the LORD
from this time forth and forevermore.

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 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?