FACE TO FACE

GROUP GUIDE

Message Title: *Trapped in the Wilderness*
Message Date: November 9, 2025

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

We were created not only by an infinite, all-powerful God—the One who *measures the waters in the palm of His hand* (Isaiah 40:12) and *holds the endless number of stars in the sky* (Isaiah 40:26)—but by a God who is closer to us than the air we breathe. From Genesis to Revelation God has pursued us with His love, that we might have a personal, intimate relationship with Him.

The Bible is full of stories of people who encountered this powerful and personal God. People who suffered, people who lost their way, people who longed for hope and redemption. Moses was one of these people. During this series, we'll look at several stories in the life of Moses that give us a picture of these divine, intimate encounters with God. May we learn from Moses what it looks like to walk with God, face to face.

SERIES THEME VERSES

The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.
Exodus 33:11a (NIV)

Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face…
Deuteronomy 34:10 (NIV)

CONNECT

Which of these best describe where you are right now?

1. **FLOURISHING** (like you're in the Promised Land: thriving, inspired, free at last!)
2. **DOWN** (in Egypt: sad, low, depressed, discouraged, hopeless, burned out)
3. **SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE** (wilderness: just getting by, resigned, stuck, lost heart, empty)

How long have you felt this way?

What caused you to be in this place?

PRAY

A simple centering prayer: Dear Lord, You are the giver of Life.[1] You have redeemed me.[2] Your love cannot be measured or stolen.[3] With joy You have drawn water from the wells of salvation.[4] Because I have Jesus, I have life.[5]

Lord, we lay down the burdens and responsibilities of the day and turn our eyes toward You. Help us be present with You. Help us be here and nowhere else. Quiet our minds and restore our union with You. [This would be a good time to take a few deep breaths.]

We pray You'd put thoughts in our minds and stir our hearts in ways that draw each of us closer to You. Help us hear Your voice and experience more of who You really are. Amen.

Add to this your own words of prayer.

[1] Job 33:4; Acts 17:25 [2] Isaiah 43:1; Hebrews 9:12 [3] Jeremiah 31:3; Romans 8:38-39; [4] Isaiah 12:3; [5] 1 John 5:11-12.

WATCH THE VIDEO

As you watch the video, listen for a statement or idea that's significant to you.
Then discuss together.

BACKGROUND OF THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Exodus 15:23-16:12 describes a pivotal transition in Israel's journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. Occurring about a month after the exodus, this passage recounts three key moments: the bitter waters at Marah made sweet, the rest at Elim, and the people's hunger in the Wilderness of Sin. The Israelites had just witnessed God's mighty deliverance at the Red Sea, but now question His power and goodness as they quickly face scarcity and uncertainty. This begins the pattern that repeats throughout the Israelite's wilderness journey: crisis, complaint, intercession, and God's provision – not only for their physical needs, but in reshaping their identity from one of bondage to one of trustful reliance.

> *When God wanted to raise Moses as a leader, He didn't give him a platform – He gave him the wilderness. Loneliness. Uncertainty. Silence. It's in the quiet where leaders are formed.*
>
> Kelly Minter, *@usa.biblestudy*

STUDY AND DISCUSSION

EXODUS 15:23-27 (NIV)

[23] When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) [24] So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?"

[25] Then Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink.

There the LORD issued a ruling and instruction for them and put them to the test. [26] He said, "If you listen carefully to the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."

[27] Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water.

1. What was life like for the Israelites, and how did their response impact their relationship with Moses and with God?

2. They had just witnessed the awesome power of God (parting of the sea), but quickly forgot about who He was and what He did. Can you think of a time you doubted God's goodness? Explain.

3. Describe a time God did something powerful in your life. What does it feel like as you stop to remember what happened?

4. Describe a time you didn't get what you wanted but still felt God was taking care of you. What evidence can you point to that showed He cared?

5. What was the point of Moses throwing the piece of wood into the water?

6. What kind of relationship did God want to have with the Israelites? Can you put words to it?

7. Why is the way of trust both so difficult and so appealing? How is this way different from the way you've lived your life?

8. How does this passage speak to your journey?

EXODUS 16:1-11 (NIV)

[1] The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. [2] In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. [3] The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD'S hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

[4] Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. [5] On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days."

[6] So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, [7] and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?" [8] Moses also said, "You will know that it was the LORD when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD."

[9] Then Moses told Aaron, "Say to the entire Israelite community, 'Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.'"

[10] While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud.

[11] The LORD said to Moses, [12] "I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.'"

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9. Not only did God rescue the Israelites from Egypt, He then gave them a beautiful campground with plenty of water and a stunning display of trees! When have you found it difficult to receive God's blessings?
10. We're more like the Israelites than we'd like to admit. How can you relate with them?
11. Why do some people have deep trust in God, while others take the role of a victim?
12. What are ways people can move from self-pity to a settled reliance on God?
13. How do you think this whole situation was affecting Moses?
14. Why does God keep testing the Israelites? How was He trying to shape them?
15. Have you ever felt like God was testing you? Explain.
16. What do you think it would've been like if you were one of the Israelites in the wilderness?

GOSPEL FOCUS

1. How is Moses like Jesus in this story?
2. Go back through the passages we've been looking at, and make a list of all God did for His people. How do these things point to Jesus?

*** Pause and think of someone you know who's in a wilderness season (stuck, acting like a victim, complaining, misunderstanding God, etc.). Who comes to mind? Pray God would soften their heart and renew their trust in Him.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

Close your time with a minute or two of silence, quietly allowing your heart and mind to settle. Ask God what He wants you to know or do from this week's study and discussion. Write down what you sense He's saying to you. Share this with the group and pray for each other.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. **Deuteronomy 8:10 (NIV)**

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Here are some great resources as you continue your study of the life of Moses and the foundational beliefs of the Christian Faith. These are available in the Brookwood Bookstore.

EXODUS AND MOSES

Moses: In the Footprints of the Reluctant Prophet, Adam Hamilton
Leaving Egypt, Chuck DeGroat
The Paradise King, Blaine Eldredge

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Basic Christianity, John Stott
I Believe: A Concise Guide to the Essentials of the Christian Faith, Thom S. Rainer
Blood Work: How the Blood of Christ Accomplishes Our Salvation, Anthony J. Carter
In Christ Alone: Living the Gospel-Centered Life, Sinclair B. Ferguson