

# Journey INTO THE Bible

## EXODUS LEADER'S GUIDE

## LESSON SIX EXODUS 32—34

# A Covenant Broken and Renewed

### Introduction

**Suggestion:** While people are gathering, ask them to take a seat at any table and introduce themselves if they are sitting with participants other than those last week. Again, use the Bible Sleuth exercise to allow the group to work on the task before the session begins.

When you are ready to begin the Bible study, start with an Opening Prayer. Psalm 51 is an appropriate choice because it is a penitential psalm that explores the mystery and devastation of our choice to rebel against God's covenant. The psalm is arranged for alternate recital as in Lesson Three. If possible, print enough copies of the Psalm, which can be found at the end of this Leader's Guide.

### Opening Prayer: Psalm 51

**Suggestion:** Thank everyone for coming each week to this Bible study. Offer any final announcements and/or instructions. Read out loud "Setting the Stage." Once again, you can introduce it as a brief word from the author of this Bible study to set the context for this lesson.

### Setting the Stage

As this final Bible study lesson on Exodus pointed out: the story of sin is as old as Adam and Eve. But when we take a closer look at these chapters in Exodus, something else becomes clear as well. Humans have desired, no—*required*, the assurance of God's presence in their lives. The story of humanity is a story of extraordinary development and an increased capacity to deal with the world we know. But at every stage in that development we have hungered to know we are not alone, that we have a future, that God is not just "out there somewhere" but also very near.

There is an interesting exchange between Moses and God in Exodus 33. God tells Moses to take the people to the land of Canaan. God will send an angel to drive out the peoples living there, but God will not go with them. It is a stunning statement. Moses cajoles and finally gets God to relent and agree to accompany them: "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (33:14). Indeed, the rest of the Book of Exodus (chapters 35—50) describes in detail how the Israelites build a moveable shrine so that the mysterious presence of God can be seen in their midst.

The mystery of sin that breaks the covenant with God is tragic beyond belief. But perhaps these chapters also tell us something we tend to forget. We need reassurance of God's presence in our lives or we get lost. We need sacraments to remind us that God is here: Emmanuel. Christian communities, whether Church groups, families, or friends, can lose sight of this important dimension. Do we make God visible to others, not in words, but in genuine actions rooted in truth and directed in love? Studying the Bible, in a serious and sustained way, as you have

been doing these past several weeks, is another important reminder of God's surprising presence in ways we might not have seen. I hope you will continue your pursuit of God's living word.

### Discussion

#### **Text One: Exodus 32:1–24**

**Suggestion:** Invite four people to read this passage to the group. Let them know ahead of time so that they can prepare. Break the reading into the four sections mentioned in the lesson: vv. 1–6, vv. 7–14, vv. 15–20, and vv. 21–24. Invite participants to read along in their own Bibles. Then invite the group to begin discussing the passage using the Think and Talk questions on page 3 of this handout. Allow fifteen to twenty minutes for discussion. If the group has finished the discussion early, you might suggest one or more of the additional questions for further discussion.

#### **Additional Questions for Text One**

1. What are some of the things our society uses as a substitute for the abiding presence of God?
2. Does it surprise you that God has a change of heart after Moses intercedes for the people? Can human beings really change God's plans?

#### **Text Two: Exodus 34:1–10**

**Suggestion:** Read this text out loud or have someone in the group do the reading and invite people to read along in their own Bibles. Then invite the group to begin discussing this passage using the Think and Talk questions on page 4 of this handout. Allow fifteen to twenty minutes for discussion. If the group has finished the discussion early, you might suggest one or more of the questions below for their further discussion.

#### **Additional Questions for Text Two**

1. From all the various lessons in this Bible study, how would you summarize the character of Moses? What characteristic most appeals to you?
2. Is there one lesson to the Book of Exodus that strikes you as most important?

### Wrapping Up

**Suggestion:** Since this is the final session of the Bible study, it might also be helpful to allow people to express the things they liked about this study and the things they felt were missing. This feedback could be valuable for future Bible study programs. Prepare a few questions beforehand to start the reflection process, just in case people are hesitant at first to speak.

### Closing Prayer

*If the group has been comfortable enough with each other over the past six weeks, you might try closing this session with a "Prayer of the Faithful"-type experience, but instead of voicing petitions to pray for, ask the group to express one thing they are grateful for from this shared time together.*

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### **Alternative Opening Prayer**

Psalm 51 is one of the penitential psalms of the Church. It is also one of the few that is linked to a regrettable event in King David's life. The incident is described in 2 Samuel 12:1–15. It is a prayer of one who is deeply aware of their sin and guilt and it asks for God's forgiveness.

As an alternative opening prayer, all the participants in this Bible study, or an individual working on this Bible study at home, can join this ancient meditation and joyful proclamation of God's powerful love, then and now.

### **Psalm 51:1–5, 10–12**

**Leader:** Have mercy upon me, O God, have mercy.

#### **Side One**

Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity  
and cleanse me from my sin.

#### **Side Two**

For I know my transgression,  
And my sin is ever before me.  
Against you, you alone, I have sinned,  
And done what is evil in your sight.  
So that you are justified in your sentence  
and blameless when you pass judgment.  
Indeed, I was born guilty,  
a sinner, when my mother conceived me.

#### **Side One**

Create in me a clean heart, O God  
and put a new and right spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.

#### **Side Two**

Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

#### **Side One**

Glory to the Father,  
and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit.

#### **Side Two**

As it was in the beginning, is now,  
and will be forever.  
Amen.

**Leader:** Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy.

### Bible Sleuth

Without looking at previous Exodus Bible study lessons, can you identify various locations on the map below? In pencil or pen, mark the spot and write the name of the places listed here:

- Land of Midian
- Mount Sinai
- Path of Exodus from Egypt to Mount Sinai
- Wilderness of Shur
- Amalekites

