



# Geography of Salvation

*Preaching the Map*

By Stan Key

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# LESSON 1. DOING THE WALK

## I. Metaphors of Salvation.

The Bible uses multiple images (metaphors) to describe the richness of salvation provided for us in Christ Jesus. To grasp only one or two of the images is to have a **partial** and perhaps even **distorted** view of the purposes God had in mind for us in redemption. It is as we see all of the metaphors working together that we begin to comprehend the length, breadth, height and depth of what Christ has done for us (Eph. 3:14–21). Though many metaphors could be mentioned, the Scriptures seem to emphasize the following four:

	<b>COURTROOM</b>	<b>FATHER &amp; CHILDREN</b>	<b>MARRIAGE</b>	<b>A JOURNEY</b>
Who Is God?	Judge	Father	Bridegroom Husband	<u>Lord</u> <u>King</u>
Who Is Jesus?	Our advocate, lawyer	Our brother	Our Bridegroom Husband	<u>Guide</u> <u>Fellow Traveler</u> <u>“The Way”</u>
Who Am I?	Guilty sinner Condemned	Newborn child Adopted child	Fiancée Wife	<u>Pilgrim</u>
What Is the Problem?	Sin, guilt I’ve broken God’s law	We are dead, unborn Children of devil	Other lovers Adultery	<u>I’m lost</u> <u>I’m headed in</u> <u>wrong direction</u>
What Is the Solution?	Forgiveness Pardon Justification	New birth Adoption	Marriage Covenant Renew vows	<u>Repent</u> <u>(turn around)</u> <u>“Follow Me”</u>
How Do I Become a Christian?	Confess Repent Believe	You must be born again	Enter a covenant Turn from other lovers	<u>Make a decision</u> <u>to follow Jesus</u>
How Do I Know I’m a Christian?	<i>There is now no condemnation...</i> (Rom. 8:1)	<i>...the Spirit of adoption...Abba!..</i> (Romans 8: 15)	<i>My beloved is mine and I am his...</i> (Song of Sol. 2:16)	<u>All who are led by the Spirit are sons</u> <u>(Rom. 8:14)</u>
How Should We then Live?	<i>If anyone sins, we have an advocate...</i> (I John 2:1–2)	<i>As obedient children...be holy</i> (I Peter 1:14–15)	Keep yourself pure (II Cor. 11:2)	<u>Walk worthy</u> <u>of your calling</u> <u>(Eph. 4:1)</u>

## II. Doing the Walk.

### A. The Journey of Life.

Many writers, both Christian and secular, have used the metaphor of “the journey” as the framework for presenting their vision of the meaning of life:

- *The Odyssey* by Homer.
- *The Wizard of Oz* by Frank Baum.
- *The Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien.
- *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* by C. S. Lewis.
- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain.
- *The Way of the Pilgrim* by an unknown Russian Orthodox monk.
- *Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan.

The opening lines of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* capture well the drama of life's journey:

*Midway along the journey of our life  
I woke to find myself in a dark wood,  
for I had wandered off the straight path....*

Few have spoken with more poetic elegance than Robert Frost in his famous poem, *The Road Not Taken*:

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth....  
...Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*

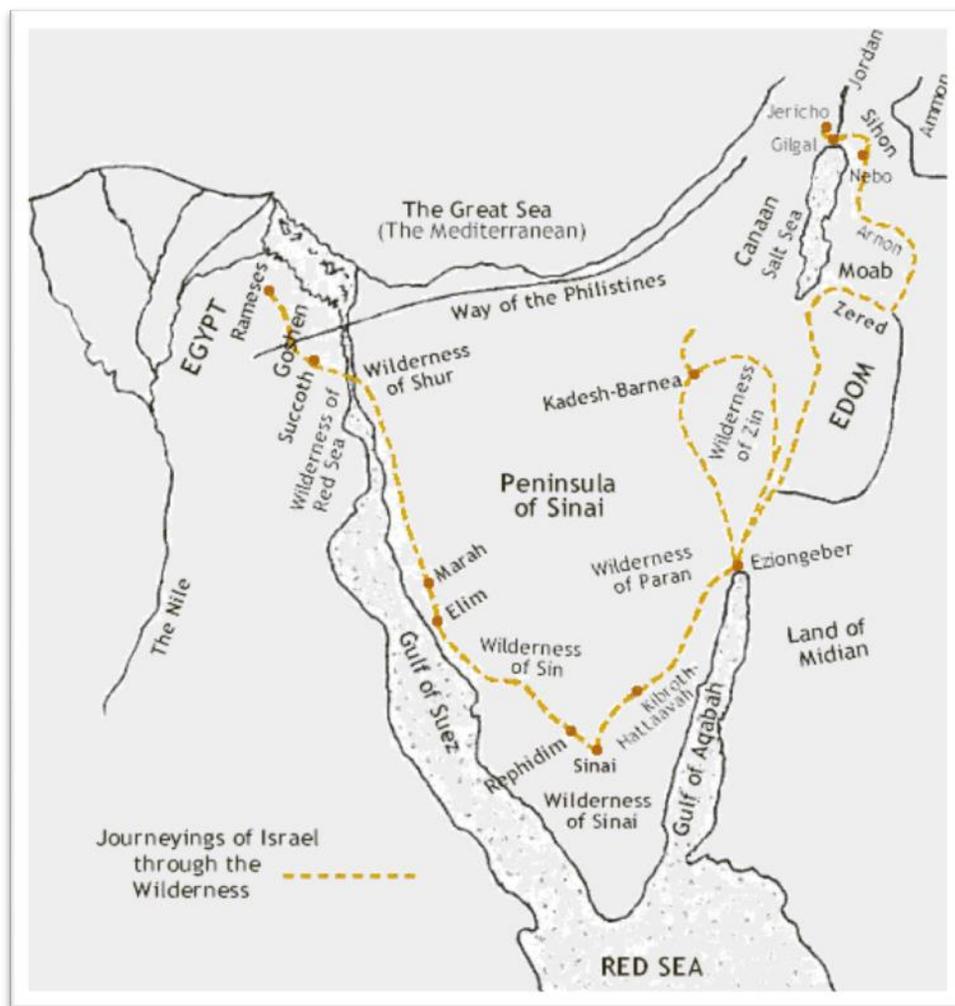
- B. Salvation viewed as a journey is underscored by the recurring emphasis, beginning in the Garden of Eden, on **walking** with God:
- 1) Adam and Eve walked with God in the Garden (Gen. 3:8).
  - 2) Enoch walked with God (Gen. 5:22–24).
  - 3) Noah walked with God (Gen. 6:9).
  - 4) Abraham walked with God (Gen. 17:1).
  - 5) *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked* (Psalm 1:1).
  - 6) *And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it."* (Isaiah 30:21).
  - 7) Do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).
  - 8) Jesus called his first disciples by simply saying, "*Follow me*" (Matt. 4:19).
  - 9) Paul often exhorted believers to do the walk (Rom. 13:13; 14:15; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 4:1, 17; 5:2, 15; Col. 1:10; 2:6; I Thess. 2:12).
  - 10) *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin* (I John 1:7).
  - 11) Even in heaven this walk with God will continue forever (Rev. 3:4).

### III. Preaching the Map—I Corinthians 10:1–13.

A. Of all the churches in the New Testament, Corinth was undoubtedly the most **immature** and **carnal**. The church in this pagan city had problems with:

- Divisions (ch. 1–4).
- Sexual immorality (ch. 5).
- Lawsuits among believers (ch. 6).
- Understanding marriage, divorce, remarriage (ch. 7).
- Ethical dilemmas (food offered to idols) (ch. 8).
- Disorder in worship services (ch. 11, 14).
- Charismania (ch. 12–14).
- False doctrines (ch. 15).

As the founding pastor of the church, Paul knew that he must address these issues that were threatening the very foundation of the church. One of his primary pastoral tools in this endeavor was to introduce these immature believers to **the geography of salvation** (I Cor. 10:1–13). The map of the exodus was his text! Paul loved to preach the map!



Some basic observations:

- Egypt represents **bondage**.
- The Red Sea represents **redemption**.
- Mount Sinai represents **the covenant / marriage** and what God expects of his people (the Law). Note: The giving of the law comes after redemption.
- Canaan represents **Kingdom living / the victorious Christian life**.
- The Jordan River represents **entering in** to the victorious life.

Notice:

- Egypt is not **contiguous** with Canaan.
- Not everyone who had enough faith to **get out** of Egypt had enough faith to **get in** to Canaan.
- Passing **through** the desert is inevitable, a good thing, but remaining **in** the desert forever is not.
- Salvation is a **journey**.

SUMMARY: He **brought us out** from there (Egypt) that he might **bring us in** (to Canaan) and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers (Deut. 6:23).

B. The Map Sermon (I Corinthians 10:1–13).

The map is not just **their** story (the Jews long ago). It is about **my** spiritual journey today!

- Now these things took place as *examples* (Greek, *tupos*) for us... (v. 6).
- Now these things happened to them as an *example* (*tupos*), but they were written down for our instruction... (v. 10).

Four applications... or we could say “mapplications:”

1) Salvation is a journey... be **informed**.

Jesus said, “Follow me.” How can you call yourself a Christ-follower if you are not following Christ? *What does the Lord require of you? Do justice, love mercy, and **walk humbly** with your God* (Micah 6:8).

2) Not all who start the journey finish.... be **wise** (vv. 1–5).

Spiritual blessings do not guarantee spiritual success or maturity. *Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven but only he who **does the will of my Father**....* (Matt. 7:21–23).

3) There are certain dangers that all pilgrims face... be **alert** (vv. 6–12).

Paul does not mention every temptation that the Hebrews faced during the exodus but he seems to focus on these four because he knows how often followers of Christ trip up at these very points:

- Idolatry (v. 7)—the golden calf (Ex. 32).
- Sexual immorality (v. 8)—the Moabite women (Num. 25).
- Putting the Lord to the test (v. 9)—many examples.
- Grumbling (v. 10)—many examples.

*Therefore, let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed **lest he fall** (v. 12). Thinking we are immune from moral failure is perhaps the surest way to allow it to happen (cf. I Cor. 9:24–27). “Those who don’t know history are destined to repeat it” (Edmund Burke).*

4) God is faithful... be **encouraged** (v. 13).

This wonderful verse tells me that if I am struggling with temptations and trials in my spiritual journey:

- I am **normal**. *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man....*
- God is **faithful**. *God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability....*
- Victory is **promised**. *...but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*

## TABLE TALK

1. What did you learn from our discussion of the metaphors of salvation? Which metaphor (courtroom, child, marriage, journey) best describes the Gospel of your salvation experience?
2. When you think of salvation as a journey (doing the walk), describe how this impacts the way you think about: the purpose of salvation... assurance... conversion... perseverance... evangelism....
3. How does “preaching the map” address the issue of spiritual immaturity and carnality?
4. What has this lesson taught you about the place of “the desert” in our spiritual journey?
5. Do you know Christians who have enough faith to get out of Egypt but not enough faith to get in to Canaan? Explain. What happens to people like this when they die?
6. Where are you on the map?



## LESSON 2. EGYPT—EXODUS 1–3

Before anyone starts on a journey there must first be **a reason** to begin. If we are content where we are, why go? Unless the reasons for leaving are greater than the reasons for staying we will never even begin the journey.

### I. Egypt: My Native Land?

#### A. Not such a bad place.

Egypt gets a lot of bad press in the biblical story. The tendency is to think of Egypt as a Nazi concentration camp. But actually it was a **very nice place** to live... even for a slave!

- They lived in the fertile region of Goshen (Nile delta).
- Egypt was prosperous and stable, the superpower of the day.
- Egypt was famous for art, culture, and education.
- Life was good (secure, predictable, comfortable).

#### B. To leave or not to leave... that is the question.

The Hebrews were apparently content in Egypt for most of the 400 years they were there. But they had forgotten three fundamental facts that were underscored to Abraham on the first day of his call:

*The Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to **the land** that I will show you. And I will make of you a great **nation**, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ...and in you **all the families of the earth** shall be blessed (Genesis 12:1–3).*

- 1) Their true **identity**. Though they ate, talked, dressed, and smelled like Egyptians ... they were not Egyptians! They were Jews!
- 2) Their true **home**. God had prepared a home for them somewhere else. Ever since Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden, homesickness has been the most characteristic disease of the human condition.
- 3) Their **mission**. God had assigned them the task of blessing the nations, not being absorbed by and becoming like all the others.

#### C. Egypt is a picture of “**this world**.” Love it or leave it!

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever (I John 2:15–17).*

*You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God (James 4:4).*

If you are in love with “this world” then you have no reason to respond when Jesus says, “**Follow me.**”

## II. Why leave? Skim Exodus 1–3 (1:8–14; 2:23–25; 3:1–14).

The early chapters of Exodus describe how God orchestrated events so that the people actually *wanted* to leave where they had lived for 400 years. He used four realities to cause his people to think differently about “**home.**”

### A. **Pain** (Hebrews 12:11).

- 1) God permitted circumstances in Egypt to become painful: a “new king,” cruel taskmasters, babies killed, bricks without straw, etc. No one starts on this journey until the pain of **staying** where we are becomes greater than the pain of moving to where God wants us to be!
- 2) Dr. Paul Brand: “*If I could choose one gift for my leprosy patients it would be the gift of pain...Silencing pain without considering its message is like disconnecting a ringing fire alarm to avoid receiving bad news.*” Brand calls pain “**the gift nobody wants.**”
- 3) Moses addressed the pain by taking matters into his own hands. He murdered an Egyptian (2:11–15). This only made matters worse! We cannot save ourselves! We cannot heal our own pain.
- 4) “*God heard their groaning... God saw... and God knew.*” (2:24).

### B. A confused **identity.**

- 1) The people lived in Egypt and acted like Egyptians. And yet they were not Egyptians. Moses had a birth mother who was Hebrew and a foster mother who was Egyptian. In Midian Moses had a son and named him Gershom, which means “alien” (2:22). No wonder Moses cried out, “**Who am I?**” (3:11).

No one begins a journey with God unless they are in quest of their true identity. But no one finds himself by looking for himself! We find ourselves only when we **find God** and the mission he has for us to do (ch. 3).

- 2) Story of the eagle who was raised by turkeys.

### C. **Desire.**

- 1) The Bible is a **food-driven** book. Sin entered the world by food (forbidden fruit) and so did salvation (I am the bread of life). It is all about appetite.
- 2) God spoke of a land of “milk and honey” (3:8) to people who lived in a land of “leeks, onions and garlic” (Num. 11:4–6). The Big Question is this: which

appetite will be stronger? God does not want to destroy our appetites and lusts, he wants to **purify** them! No one starts this journey who is not ravenously hungry for what only God can provide.

- 3) *If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world (C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*).*

D. The **call**.

- 1) First the call came to Moses at the burning bush (ch. 3–4) but then the call came to all the people through Moses and the other events of the exodus (Moses' teaching, ten plagues, Passover, pillar of fire, etc.).
- 2) Understanding the call of God:
  - a. Initiated by **God** (John 15:16).
  - b. To a **journey** as much as to a destination.
  - c. To a **relationship** more than to a task.
  - d. To a team, **community** (Gen. 2:18).
  - e. Will cost you **everything**. Salvation is free, but not cheap.

## TABLE TALK

1. What did you learn today about “the world”? About pain? About identity? About appetite? About the Call?
2. In what way was suffering and pain a “gift” to the Hebrews in Egypt? Has pain ever been a “gift” in your life? Describe.
3. How does one get to the place where the appetite for “milk and honey” becomes stronger than the appetite for “leeks and onions”?
4. What did Moses learn about God at the burning bush (Who are you)? What did he learn about himself (Who am I)? How are these two questions related?
5. Is there a “call” on your life? Describe how the call came. Do you understand the call today as you did at first? How does your call compare to Moses' call?
6. This lesson states: *Unless the reasons for leaving are greater than the reasons for staying we will never even begin the journey.* Do you agree or disagree? Discuss.



## LESSON 3. THE RED SEA (EXODUS 5–14)

Finally, the Hebrews are ready. They've had enough of Egypt and want to step out in faith following God to the land he has prepared for them. They **believed** the promise of God and surrendered their hearts in worship (Ex. 4:31). Let's go! But wait. Not so fast. Things are going to **get worse** before they get better... a lot worse.

I. This is harder than I thought (Exodus 5:1–7:13).

A. Was this a mistake? (Ex. 5:1–23).

- 1) Moses confronts Pharaoh (5:1–2). Thus says the LORD (Yahweh), "Let my people go." Pharaoh replies: Who is the LORD that I should obey his voice? I **do not know** the LORD and I will not let Israel go. (In Hebrew, "to know" someone means more than to know about. It speaks of intimacy (cf. Gen. 4:1).)
- 2) The stage is now set! Pharaoh (chief priest over all the gods of Egypt and himself a god) doesn't know the true God (Yahweh). "Who's Yahweh?" he wants to know. The rest of the book is Yahweh's reply: "You want to know me? Let me introduce myself!" (7:17; 8:8–10; 8:22; 9:14; 14:4).
- 3) In anger, Pharaoh makes life **more miserable** for the Hebrews (vv. 4–21):

*O LORD, **why** have you done evil to this people? **Why** did you ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all (5:22–23).*

B. No, everything is under Yahweh's control (Ex. 6:1–7:13).

- 1) *Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh...* (Ex. 6:1).
- 2) *I am the LORD* (Ex. 6:2–8). Abraham knew me as *El Shaddai*. But *YOU* know my name, *YAHWEH* (v. 7). Salvation is not just about getting out of Egypt. It is about **knowing God**. God is saying to Moses, "I know that Pharaoh does not know me... but Moses, do you?"
- 3) The people would not listen to Moses *because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery* (Ex. 6:9).
- 4) Moses is ready **to quit** (Ex. 6:10–13, 30). *The people of Israel won't listen to me; how then will Pharaoh listen to me?*
- 5) The greatest battle we will ever face on the journey of salvation is this: will we believe the promises of God in spite of adverse circumstances? *This is the victory that overcomes the world, even **our faith*** (I John 5:4).

## II. The battle of the gods (Exodus 7:14–12:51).

- A. The **ten plagues** should not be viewed as God having a temper tantrum! No, they are a systematic dismantling of the entire Egyptian pantheon (12:12; 15:11; 18:11). Pharaoh had said he did not know Yahweh. The plagues are how Yahweh introduces himself to Pharaoh ...and to the world! *For this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth* (9:16).
- B. The battle of the gods (aka “the ten plagues”):
- 1) Water turned to blood (7:14–25). The Nile was source of life in Egypt (Hopi).
  - 2) Frogs (8:1–15). “You like frogs? I’ll give you frogs...” (Heqt).
  - 3) Gnats (8:16–19). The magicians can’t duplicate. “This is the finger of God.”
  - 4) Flies (8:20–32). Everywhere except Goshen.
  - 5) Livestock die (9:1–7). Apis, the bull god of Egypt.
  - 6) Boils (9:8–12). The magicians have them, too!
  - 7) Hail (9:13–35). Not in Goshen. Moses urges Egyptians to find shelter...
  - 8) Locusts (10:1–20). Osiris is the vegetation god.
  - 9) Darkness (10:21–29). Ra was the sun god. It is light in Goshen.
  - 10) Death of the first born (chapters 11–12). The heir to the throne is a deity.

## III. The real hero of the exodus (Exodus 12–13).

- A. The real hero of redemption is not Moses... but **a lamb!**
- B. The Passover is a perpetual reminder to all those on the journey of salvation:
- 1) The lamb **shows me my need**. Neither Israelites nor Egyptians had a clue that a sentence of death was hanging over every house. The lamb teaches us our need for protection, substitution, and spiritual nourishment for the journey ahead.
  - 2) The lamb **dies in my place**. The choice in every household is simple: either find a suitable substitute or death will come to this family. The Good News is that God will accept a substitute (Isa. 53:4–6). He himself will provide a lamb (Gen. 22).
  - 3) The lamb **bids me follow**. The whole point of the Passover meal was to receive sustenance for the journey ahead (12:11).

IV. Free at last, free at last (Exodus 13:17–14:31).

- A. Divine guidance (13:17–22). It's time to leave. The journey is about to begin. But **which way do I go?** God provides a divine GPS: *The LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud and by night in a pillar of fire* (13:21). Notice: God does not lead them the easy way. He leads them **into the desert** (13:18).
- B. Is this **a trap**? (14:1–12). The pillar of cloud leads them to where the sea is before them, steep mountains are on both sides, and the Egyptian army is behind them. The people panic and want to return to the good old days: *It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness* (14:12).
- C. What does it take to break us out of our bondage and get us started on the journey of salvation? This is what redemption looks like:
- 1) The **promise of God** is where it begins. He gives a solemn oath: I will bring you out and I will bring you in. *I promise...*(3:15–17).
  - 2) The **blood of the Lamb** is the foundation. Redemption is simply impossible without a lamb who dies in our place and who nourishes our soul.
  - 3) **Faith**. The promise and the blood are “worthless” without faith. True faith is not just an intellectual acknowledgment of the reality of God. The Hebrews tried that (4:31) and it didn't work. In the Bible, faith and **obedience** are virtually synonyms. Faith without works is dead (James 2:14–26). Only when we are confronted with an impossible situation do we really discover whether we are **believers** or not. In such situations God often gives three commands:
    - a. **Fear not**. Don't be afraid (14:13). This doesn't mean don't tremble. Rather, don't be controlled by your fears.
    - b. **Be still** (14:14). Wait on the Lord. Don't just do something; stand there!
    - c. **March forward** (14:15). The call to “be still” is not a call to passivity. Wait on the Lord and march forward. The key is timing. It was as they moved forward in faith that the waters began to part.
- D. The way out is the way **through** (14:13–31). The miracle at the Red Sea teaches us that often God does not deliver us **from** our difficulties but through them!

## TABLE TALK

1. Is it possible to really believe in the true God if your false gods haven't yet been exposed as frauds?
2. How does the miracle at the Red Sea help you to understand how faith and works go together? Is it possible to say you believe if you don't obey?
3. Has God's pillar of fire led you to a situation that feels impossible? What do you believe God is trying to teach you?
4. Think of a time in your life when God told you, *Don't just do something; stand there!* What did you learn?
5. Make it personal: Think of a challenge you are currently facing. Does God want to deliver you from it...or through it?

## LESSON 4. THE DESERT—EXODUS 15:22–18:27

### I. Chart of the Book of Exodus.

The Need for Redemption		The Accomplishment of Redemption				The Responsibilities of Redemption				
Egypt		The Desert				Mount Sinai				
1	12	13	18		19	40				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bondage in Egypt</li> <li>• Moses' call</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ten Plagues</li> <li>• Passover</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red Sea Crossing</li> <li>• Song of Moses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desert U.</li> <li>• Five tests</li> </ul>	The Covenant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation (19)</li> <li>• Stipulations/laws (20–23)</li> <li>• Ratification (24)</li> </ul>		The Tabernacle: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Plan (25–31)</li> <li>• Construction (35–40)</li> <li>• Golden Calf (32–34)</li> </ul>				
1	6	7	12	13	15	18	19	24	25	40

### II. Which way should we go? (Exodus 13:17–22)

- A. If God does **all the work** in redemption and all we have to do is **believe**, doesn't that mean that salvation is easy? ...*God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near.... But God led the people around by **the desert road** toward the Red Sea...* (Ex. 13:17–18).
- B. A **guide** is better than a map. God himself went before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Ex. 13:21–22). Other religious leaders said, "I will show you the way." Jesus alone said, "**I am the way**" (John 14:6).
- C. QUESTION: Why the desert?

ANSWER: Because they need **an education**. There are some lessons that can only be learned in the desert. Not in Egypt. Not in Canaan. If the people are going to be ready to fight the giants in Canaan, they first need to be prepared. So God sends his people to the **Desert University**.

- 1) All God's saints have degrees from the Desert University (David, Elijah, John the Baptist, Paul, Jesus).
- 2) The desert is that **in-between** place, uniquely situated between the promise of God and its fulfillment, between what I am and what God wants me to be.
- 3) The desert is not a geographical anomaly. It is a theological **necessity**.
- 4) Much of the contemporary church has no **theology of the desert**.

### III. The Curriculum at the Desert University (Exodus 15:22–18:27).

Between the Red Sea and Mount Sinai, God arranged a series of five “tests”<sup>1</sup> for those he had redeemed. God never “tempts” his children (James 1:13) but he often “tests” them. This is what the Desert University is all about. But why does a teacher test his students? These tests are specifically designed **to equip** (not to punish!) God’s people for what lies ahead. God wants us to realize that salvation involves more than getting us out of Egypt. More importantly, its aim is to get **Egypt out of us!**

#### A. The Bitter Water Test (Exodus 15:22–27).

- 1) **THE PROBLEM:** On the eastern shore of the Red Sea the people praised God in worship (vv. 20–21) only to discover that this was not the land of milk and honey! God had led them to **a bitter place**. This was a test! But rather than trusting God the people grumbled (v. 24). The bitterness on the outside moved to the inside.
- 2) **THE SOLUTION:** God showed Moses a “**tree**” (v.25) that turned the bitter water into sweet water. In the New Testament, the cross is sometimes called a tree.
- 3) **THE LESSON:** Grumbling is a serious sin! The real battles in life are not what happens to us but how **we respond** to what happens to us. God can take the bitter experiences of life and turn them into something sweet. Writing from prison, Paul said, *I have learned the secret of **being content** in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength* (Philippians 4:12–13).

#### B. The Hunger Test (Exodus 16:1–36).

- 1) **THE PROBLEM:** No food for two million people. Again, the people grumble and complain (v. 2, 8).
- 2) **THE SOLUTION:** Bread of heaven, manna. Six days a week.
- 3) **THE LESSON:** **Faith** is needed to get out of Egypt. And faith is needed every step of the way! *The just shall live by faith* (Rom. 1:17). *Give us this day our **daily** bread* (Matt. 6:11). The desert is the place where God removes everything that we have depended on so that we can learn that he alone is enough!

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<sup>1</sup> For the word “test” see Ex. 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2, 16; 13:3.

C. The Thirst Test (Exodus 17:1–7).

- 1) THE PROBLEM: This is a type of **re-test**. It should have been easy. But the people again grumble and even talk of killing Moses. Now, rather than God testing the people, the people are **testing God** (v. 2, 7).
- 2) THE SOLUTION: Strike the rock of Horeb with your staff and water will come out.
- 3) THE LESSON: When we fail a test like Israel did at Mara, sometimes God will give us a re-test. Though he is patient and slow to anger, we dare not test the One who is testing us! *My Spirit shall not strive with man forever* (Gen. 6:3).

D. The Enemy Attack Test (Exodus 17:8–16).

- 1) THE PROBLEM: The Amalekites! This is a new kind of test: enemy attack. In the food and water tests, God wanted to know if the people would trust him for provision. Here, he wants to know if they will trust him for **protection**.
- 2) THE SOLUTION: **Pray** and **fight**. Moses, Aaron and Hur go up on the mountain to pray while Joshua leads the Israelites into battle in the valley below.
- 3) THE LESSON: The people must learn how to fight the Lord's battles. *For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds* (II Cor. 10:3–4).

E. The Stress Test (administrative overload) (Exodus 18:1–27).

- 1) THE PROBLEM: There was one pastor for a church of 2 million members! Moses is on the point of **burnout** and the people are **frustrated** because their needs are not being met. Inability to organize our lives and delegate responsibilities can keep us doing laps in the desert forever!
- 2) THE SOLUTION: The Jethro Principle. **Choose** qualified men. **Train** them. **Empower** them. **Release** them.
- 3) THE LESSON: We will never make it to the Land of Promise unless everyone is using their God-given gifts. Everyone is needed. Leadership's job is to equip the members of the body of Christ for ministry. *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to **equip the saints** for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...* (Eph. 4:11–12).

IV. The Creed of Mara.

God **always** leads his redeemed people to the Desert University. When we are following God and find ourselves in a barren wasteland, the reason is not because we took a wrong turn or because God is punishing us. Rather he brought us here to

teach us lessons that we desperately need for the battles he wants us to fight when we reach our inheritance.

I have written what I call the *Creed of Mara* to help fellow pilgrims when they find themselves in a bitter place in their spiritual journey.

I believe God **led me** here. This is only a test.

I believe God will **provide for me** here.

I believe God will **lead me away** from here.

I believe God wants to **use this experience** in my life to be a blessing and encouragement to others.

## TABLE TALK

1. What did you learn today?
2. Talk about a time you found yourself in the Desert University. What lessons was God teaching you there? Did you pass the test?
3. This lesson states: *Much of the contemporary church has no theology of the desert.* Do you agree or disagree? Discuss what this statement means.
4. Have you ever considered stress and administrative overload as a “test” from God? What has this lesson taught you?
5. Do you see your “desert” differently as a result of this lesson? How?
6. Make it personal: Name one specific “test” that you are currently experiencing and share with the group how you want them to pray for you.

## LESSON 5. MOUNT SINAI (PART I)—EXODUS 19–31, 35–40

### I. The Mountain of God.

- A. It took about **3 months** to travel from the Red Sea to Mt. Sinai (19:1). The people camped at Sinai about **18–24 months**. The pillar of fire did not move.
- B. God had a **three-fold purpose** for bringing Israel out of Egypt and that purpose was revealed only at Sinai. Here at Mount Sinai, God:
- 1) Entered into a covenant with Israel: **Marriage**.
  - 2) Revealed his expectations and commands: **The Law**.
  - 3) Taught his people how to worship: **The Tabernacle**.

### II. The Marriage Covenant.

- A. We make a serious mistake when we think of Sinai only in terms of legalistic obligations. Fundamentally, Sinai is the place where God and Israel **got married!** God is the Mighty Prince who rescued a maiden from poverty and bondage. He brought her away into the desert to marry her and live with her forever.
- *You yourselves have seen how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my **treasured possession** among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (19:4–6).*
  - *Behold, the days are coming when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was **their husband**... (Jeremiah 31:31–32).*
  - *You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called Hephzibah (My Delight Is in Her) and your land Beulah (Married)... As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God **rejoice** over you (Isaiah 62:4–5).*
- B. Every marriage involves **wedding vows**. Though these are legally binding and express obligations for behavior, lovers don't regard them as a duty to be performed but rather a joy to be fulfilled. Our attitude toward **the law** is dramatically changed when we think of them as wedding vows.
- God makes vows to Israel: *I will be an enemy to your enemies... I will take sickness away from you... I will lead you to your inheritance... (23:20–33).*
  - Israel makes vows to God: *All that the Lord has spoken we will do (19:8; 24:3, 7).*

Notice how these wedding vows are:

- 1) **Exclusive.** “*Forsaking all others...*” God chose Israel from among all the peoples on the earth (19:5). Israel promises to have no other gods before Yahweh (20:2–3). To worship another god is **spiritual adultery**.
- 2) **Comprehensive.** These covenant promises cover every area of life, not just religious life but family, business, commerce, government, judicial, economic, relationships, societal, etc. In all we do, we are married to the Holy One!
- 3) **Irrevocable.** “*Till death do us part... As long as you both shall live...*” Though Moses later permitted divorce in extreme cases (Deut. 24:1–4), the intent of the covenant was to remain together forever. See Jeremiah 3:6–10.

C. Other indications that this is a wedding:

- 1) **Music.** Thunder, lightning, a thick cloud and a very loud trumpet (19:16, 19).
- 2) **A sign/symbol.** The Sabbath has the same function as a wedding ring. It is a symbol of the covenant. *Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations...* (31:12–17).
- 3) **A reception.** Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and 70 elders went up on the mountain and saw God *and ate and drank* (24:9–11).
- 4) No wedding is complete without **fear and trembling**. Such a holy occasion and such solemn commitments causes our knees to knock! This covenant is to be entered *reverently, discreetly, and in the fear of God* (20:18–21).

III. The Law (chapters 20–24).

- A. Marriage always has a **legal element** that stipulates what the partners can expect from one another. Breaking the covenant is a very serious offense. Therefore, **love** is the fulfillment of the law (Matt. 22:36–39; John 14:15; Rom. 13:10).
- B. Notice that the laws of Sinai are given **after** redemption not before. Mount Sinai is not in Egypt. This means that we don’t obey God’s law in order to be his bride but because we **already are!** The Pharisees were confused. They taught that you had to obey the law in order belong to God. No! Keeping the law is the **result** of salvation not the cause. Salvation has always been by grace alone!
- C. The whole point of redemption was not religion but **relationship**. The reason God redeemed his people was not so they could know *about* him, but so they could **know God** (Jer. 9:23–24; 31:33–34; John 17:3; Phil. 3:10).
- D. Chapters 20–24 set forth our covenant obligations as the bride of God. Though the New Covenant in Christ changed most of the ceremonial aspects of the law (sacrificial, dietary, etc.), the **moral law** remains in place. Jesus did not come

to abolish the law but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17–20). The Ten Commandments are an excellent summary of God’s expectations for his people (20:1–17).

- E. The law therefore is **good** (Rom. 7:12; I Tim. 1:8).
  - 1) It **reveals** God’s holy character.
  - 2) It **convicts** us of sin (Rom. 7:7–11).
  - 3) It **points** us to Christ (Gal. 3:24).
  - 4) It shows us **how to live** (Deut. 30:11–14; Jer. 31:31–33).
- F. Augustine said it well: *The law was given that grace might be sought. Grace was given that the law might be fulfilled.*

#### IV. The Tabernacle (Chapters 25–31, 34–40).

- A. Once the marriage covenant was ratified, God began to teach his bride how she could live with a **Holy Husband**. This meant learning how to worship.
- B. The Tabernacle was the divine object lesson to teach the redeemed people of God how to live with God.
  - 1) The **beauty**, expense, extravagance of the materials used.
  - 2) The **architecture** of the tent (one door, the veil, the Holy of Holies, etc.).
  - 3) The **furnishings** (the altar of burnt offerings, the basin for cleansing, the bread of the Presence, the lamp stand, the altar of incense, the ark of the covenant, etc.).
  - 4) The **priests** (unholy people need a mediator to live with a holy God).
  - 5) The **rituals** and ceremonies (blood, sacrifice, substitution, the lamb, etc.).
- C. The whole point of everything!

*Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the LORD **filled the tabernacle**.... Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out.... (40:34–38).*

## TABLE TALK

1. What did you learn today?
2. Is Sinai a place of comfort and joy? Or fear and terror? Or both? (Did you have these same emotions on your wedding day?)
3. Why do we so easily turn to religion when what God wants with us is a relationship?
4. What is the true nature of worship? Why is worship so important?
5. What is the difference between knowing about God and knowing Him?
6. The lesson states: *Keeping the law is the result of salvation not the cause.* Why do so many get so confused so often about this?

## LESSON 6. MOUNT SINAI (PART II)—EXODUS 32–34

### I. Trouble in the Camp! (Read 32:1–10, 15–30)

- A. Just 6 weeks after the wedding ceremony, the bride is in bed with another lover, committing **adultery**... with **a bull**. Ever since Sinai, it seems there has always been a lot of bull in the church! <sup>1</sup>
- B. The greatest examples of religious hypocrisy are found not “out there” among the pagans... but among God’s chosen people. If you struggle over hypocrites in the church, well come on in. There’s always **room for one more**.
- C. We will never get out of the desert and in to Canaan until we learn how to deal with **sin in the redeemed**. After experiencing the blood of the Passover Lamb, the waters of baptism (Red Sea) and the vows of the covenant, is there no cure for sin? Is this story of the golden calf a picture of the normal Christian life? Is Romans 7 the best we can expect? Where does Romans 8 fit in?
- D. Moses breaks the tablets (32:19). This is not a temper tantrum but a symbolic action warning that the covenant with God is in jeopardy of being broken too. Adultery is a “great sin” (32:10, 21, 30–31) and potentially **grounds for divorce**.
- E. What happened? Somehow the people began to have a false view of God, man, salvation, and worship. This meant they were putting their trust in a **false gospel**. And their spiritual leader (Aaron) went along with it! What we have here is **pastoral malpractice** of the worst kind.

### II. Three Characteristics of a False Gospel.

- A. It is the job of the clergy to **follow the people** rather than lead the people.

*The people came to Aaron and said, “Up, make us gods (elohim) who shall go before us...” So Aaron made a golden calf. And they said, “These are your gods (elohim), O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!”... And Aaron said, “Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD (Yahweh) (32:1–5).*

- 1) The people want **contemporary worship**. Egypt worships a bull (Apis) and so do the Canaanites (Baal). We want worship that is seeker sensitive, market driven and culturally appropriate.
- 2) Aaron thinks his job is to reflect public opinion rather than **shape** it, to give the people what they want rather than what they need. He is a thermometer when God called him to be a thermostat.

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<sup>1</sup> The English dictionary includes the following secondary definitions for the word “bull”: nonsense, absurdity, insanity, stupidity, baloney, hypocrisy, hogwash, balderdash, flap doodle... plus some words my mother taught me never to use!

- 3) Aaron tries to blame the people for what happened (see 32:22–24). He refused to take responsibility. But God holds him **fully responsible** for what happened (32:21).
  - 4) We will never get out of the desert of spiritual mediocrity until our spiritual leaders take responsibility and lead with integrity. Pastors must stop trying to **entertain the goats** and get back to the job of **feeding the sheep**.
- B. We make god **in our image** rather than allowing God to make us in His.
- 1) I used to think this was a violation of the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment (*You shall have no other gods besides me*). But now I am convinced it is a violation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> commandment (*You shall not make for yourself **a carved image***).
  - 2) Aaron and the people are not worshipping another god. They want to worship the God who brought them out of Egypt (v. 4) named Yahweh (v. 6). They just want to worship him **in their own way**.
  - 3) The word to describe this is **syncretism**... a mixture of true religion with false religion.
  - 4) “*If your concept of God is **wrong**, then the more religious you become, the more dangerous you become to yourself and to others*” (William Temple). There is a huge difference between worshipping God as he is...and worshipping **your concept** of God, God as you think he should be.
  - 5) If we ever hope to get out of the desert and into the Land of Promise, we are going to have to meet God **on his terms**... or not at all.
- C. The purpose of redemption is to make us **happy** rather than holy.
- 1) *And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up **to play*** (v. 6). The word “play” connotes a wild party, revelry, a drunken orgy.
  - 2) Bad theology always leads to **immorality**. *Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint* (Prov. 29:18).
  - 3) We become like what we worship. If you worship a bull you will soon **act like one!** But if you worship the Holy One, you will in fact become holy.
  - 4) The Gospel’s purpose is not to make us healthy, wealthy and happy but to make us **holy**. *As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”* (1 Pet. 1:15).
  - 5) Jesus came to save us **from** our sins... not in them (Matt. 1:21).

### III. How should godly leadership deal with a false gospel?

- A. **Intercession** must be made (32:7–14). Someone must stand in the gap between a holy God and a sinful people. While Aaron is down in the valley leading the people into sin, Moses is up on the mountain interceding with God.
- 1) The NATURE of intercession: **a wrestling match**. *The Lord said to Moses, “Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt have corrupted themselves... (v. 7, 10, 11).*
  - 2) The POWER of intercession: causing God to **change his mind** (?). But see Numbers 23:19. *“Turn from your burning anger and repent (v. 12b). And the Lord **repented**...” (v. 14).* But don’t try this unless you are a close friend of God (33:11)! Other occasions when God repents:
    - Genesis 6:6—*And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him at his heart (KJV).*
    - I Samuel 15:11, 29, 35—*It repenteth me that I have made Saul king (KJV).*
    - The book of Jonah—*God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do to them, and he did not do it (3:10. KJV).*
  - 3) The CONTENT of intercession:
    - Your **glory** is at stake in this. What will the Egyptians say? (v. 12).
    - Your **promises**: Remember Abraham, Isaac and Jacob... (v. 13).
  - 4) The COST of intercession: *If you will not forgive their sin, please **blot me out** of your book that you have written (v. 32).* See Romans 9:2–3.
  - 5) The RARITY of intercession: God is looking for **just one** who will stand in the gap. But so often, he finds none. *And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none (Ezekiel 22:30).*
- B. The idol must be **destroyed** (v. 20). There can be no compromise permitted when the integrity of the Gospel is at stake.
- C. **Atonement** must be made (v. 30). The sin must be named and confessed and forgiveness must be established so that reconciliation occurs.
- D. A **decision** must be called for (v. 26). *Who is on the Lord’s side?*

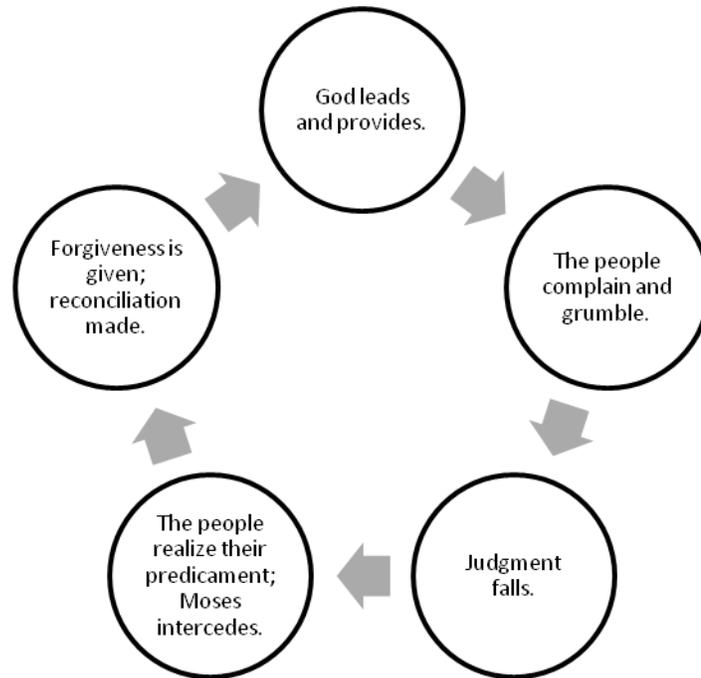
## TABLE TALK

1. How do you respond to the story of the golden calf? Does it fit your understanding of the journey of salvation or does it seem out of place?
2. Have you ever been in a church where there was clergy malpractice? Describe what it was like.
3. When does the desire to be “culturally relevant” and “seeker sensitive” cross the line and become syncretism?
4. How has this lesson impacted your understanding of intercessory prayer?
5. Are you aware of a church where a false gospel is being practiced? What does God want you to do about it?
6. Does God change his mind (repent)? If so, does this thought bring you comfort or does it disturb you? Explain.

## LESSON 7. KIBROTH-HATTA AVAH (GRAVES OF CRAVING)— NUMBERS 10–11

- I. Forward March! I am Bound for the Promised Land.
- A. Summary of the journey so far:
- 1) From bondage to **redemption** (Exodus 1–15). Ten plagues, Passover (blood), Red Sea (baptism).
  - 2) From the Red Sea to Sinai (Ex. 15–18). A three month journey. Enrolled in the **Desert University**.
  - 3) At **Mount Sinai** for 18–24 months. The covenant (marriage), the Law, the Tabernacle.
  - 4) The incident with the golden calf (Ex. 32–34). Sin and **restoration**.
  - 5) God comes to live among his people (Ex. 40:34–38). **Emmanuel**.
- B. All is ready. The journey continues in the book of Numbers.
- 1) Numbers 10:11–12. *In the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, **the cloud lifted**...and the people of Israel set out by stages from the wilderness of Sinai.*
  - 2) Numbers 9:15–23; 10:33–36. The excitement must have been great as the people began to march northward, toward Canaan. Though the distance across the Sinai desert was only about **150 kilometers**, it would have been slow travelling with this many people. When the cloud moved, they moved. Whenever the cloud stopped, they stopped: “Follow me.”
- C. But all is not well (Numbers 11:1–3).
- And the people **complained** in the hearing of the Lord about their misfortunes, and when the Lord heard it, his **anger** was kindled, and the fire of the Lord burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp. Then the people **cried out** to Moses, and Moses **prayed** to the Lord and the fire **died down**. So the name of that place was called Taberah (Hebrew for “burning”), because the fire of the Lord burned among them (Numbers 11:1–3).*

The incident at Taberah gives us a hint of what lies ahead. In this story we see the basic outline of the **cycle of sin** that so often characterizes the journey of salvation:



### I. Chart of the Book of Numbers.

At Sinai		In the desert		Plains of Moab	
Preparing to enter:		Rebellion and its bitter fruit:		Judgment, reorganization and preparing again to enter:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Census (1)</li> <li>• Camp arrangement (2)</li> <li>• Levites (3–4)</li> <li>• Camp purity (5)</li> <li>• Nazarites (6)</li> <li>• Offerings (7)</li> <li>• Passover (9)</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Craving meat (11)</li> <li>• Refusal to believe (13–14)</li> <li>• Korah’s rebellion (16–17)</li> <li>• Laws and duties (18–19)</li> <li>• Water from rock (20)</li> <li>• Serpents (21)</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balaam’s blessing (22–24)</li> <li>• Baal of Peor (25)</li> <li>• 2nd census (26)</li> <li>• Offerings &amp; feasts (28–29)</li> <li>• Transjordan (32)</li> <li>• Boundaries (34)</li> <li>• Cities of refuge (35)</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>	
1	10:10	10:11	21	22	36

## II. Kibroth-Hattaavah (Numbers 11:4–35). Living in the Land of In-between.

Kibroth-Hattaavah is that place in our spiritual journey where God is calling us to live **in-between**: Egypt–Canaan, Promise–Fulfillment, What I was–What I will be. This is not a pleasant place and the challenges here are many. But God led us here and his purposes are always good. Here he wants to break the cycle of sin forever. The soil here is very **fertile** but this means it is capable of producing two kinds of fruit. Either:

1. Spiritual **transformation** and maturity. Faith can flourish here. The place we most don't want to be may actually produce the fruit we most want to have!
2. Or a spirit of **grumbling / complaining / murmuring**. Faith can die here. In the Land of In-between we often suffer from “Destination Disease” (I will be happy **over there**). Grumbling is not in the list of the 7 Deadly Sins but in God's eyes it is very serious because it is so **toxic**. We have already seen this sin in Exodus (15:24; 16:2, 7–12; 17:3) but in Numbers 11–21, it reaches epidemic proportions.
  - Num. 11. Grumbling: cause, consequences, and cure.
  - Num. 12:1–2. Grumbling about Moses and his Cushite wife.
  - Num. 14:1–4. Grumbling about the “bad report” from the spying mission.
  - Num. 16:1–3. Korah, Dathan, Abiram and 250 chiefs are upset with Moses.
  - Num. 17:1–13. Aaron's staff sprouts buds of almonds *that you may make an end of their grumblings against me, lest they die* (v. 10).
  - Num. 20:2–13. Grumbling about no water. Moses angrily strikes the rock.
  - Num. 21:4–5. Grumbling about manna. God sends snakes.

### A. The CAUSE of grumbling (11:4–6).

- 1) **Misplaced appetites**. We get grumpy when we are **hungry**. God has given us all we need (manna) but if we do not hunger and thirst for righteousness, we will complain. The Land of In-between is the place where we discover whether our appetite for milk and honey is stronger than our appetite for onions and garlic! Our appetite determines our direction (James 1:8). No wonder this place was named Kibroth-Hattaavah (graves of craving).
- 2) **Arrogance**. The people begin to think, “I deserve better than this.” Really? After all God had done for them? What arrogance and presumption.
- 3) **Amnesia**. In the Land of In-between our memories play tricks on us. We begin to romanticize the good-old-days in Egypt when life was so good. And we forget all the blessings God has lavished upon us.
- 4) **Comparison**. Our struggle with grumbling often begins only when we compare our condition with that of others around us. Just look at how well off the Egyptians are, and the Canaanites... *Poor me. It's not fair.*

B. The CONSEQUENCES of grumbling.

- 1) For GOD (11:1–3). When the redeemed grumble and complain, God gets really **angry!** Every parent knows what this feels like.
- 2) For MOSES (11:10–15). When the redeemed grumble and complain, Moses gets really **discouraged**. He wants to quit. He wants to die. But notice: while the people complained **about** God, Moses complained **to** God. Big difference!
- 3) For the PEOPLE. When the redeemed grumble and complain, they remain **stuck** in the desert of spiritual mediocrity forever, doing laps in the wilderness, going in circles in their self-imposed pit of self-pity.

C. The CURE for grumbling.

- 1) For MOSES (11:16–17). I think Moses wanted God to solve his problem by **removing** it. But God did not get rid of grumblers. Rather, he raised up 70 leaders who would help Moses to **bear the burden** of leadership. Often God eases our burdens not by removing the weight but by making us stronger.
- 2) For the PEOPLE (11:18–20, 31–35). God gave them what they wanted! He answered their prayer. *You want meat? I'll give you meat!* (400 square miles of quail, 3 feet deep, over 50 bushels of quail for each person; eat until it comes out your nostrils!) *So he gave them what they asked for, but sent a wasting disease upon them* (Psalm 106:15). Moral of the story: be careful **what you ask for!**

## TABLE TALK

1. Did you consider grumbling to be a serious sin before today? What does this reveal about your own understanding of sin?
2. Is there some area of your life where you are being called by God to live in the Land of In-between? How are you handling this? Has this lesson been an encouragement? Or perhaps a discouragement?
3. Have you ever been stuck in the cycle of sin? What was it like? Is this all that we should expect from salvation? Is this the normal Christian life?
4. Has God ever given you something you asked for... and then you regretted that he did? What does this teach us about prayer?
5. Paul wrote in prison, *"I have learned the secret of being content"* (Phil. 4:11–13). Contentment is something that must be learned. How are you doing?

## LESSON 8. KADESH BARNEA—NUMBERS 13–14

### I. The Moment of Truth.

- A. The PURPOSE of redemption. The *Why?* question. *He **brought us out** from there (Egypt), that he might **bring us in** (to Canaan)....* (Deut. 6:23).
- B. The TIMING of redemption. The *When?* question. It has been **about 2 years** since the Red Sea. *It is an **11-day** journey from Horeb (Sinai)... to Kadesh-Barnea (southern border of Canaan). In the 40th year....* (Deut. 1:2).
- C. The PLACE of redemption. The *Where?* question. Many want to locate the place of full redemption in heaven. The Jordan River becomes a metaphor of death and Canaan a metaphor of paradise. The desert wanderings become a picture of the **normal Christian life**. Many hymns and literature (*Pilgrim's Progress*) promote this type of thinking, but I find nothing in the Bible that says the victorious life must wait until we die! Romans 8 (not 7) should be considered normative.
- D. The WHAT of redemption. The *What?* question. The author of Hebrews 3:7–4:13 uses Numbers 13–14 as his text for a Gospel sermon. His message is addressed to Christians who have begun their journey with Christ:

*Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test.... Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.... So then, there remains a **Sabbath rest** for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his... (Heb. 3:7–4:13).*

Canaan living is when we come to a place of **full surrender** and **complete trust**, working diligently to possess our inheritance and yet finding rest in the labor. Kadesh is that place in our journey when God brings us to the moment of truth. Will I surrender my all and trust him completely? Or will I **condemn myself** to live in spiritual mediocrity, doing laps in the desert forever? I must choose.

### II. What happened at Kadesh-Barnea.

- A. The reconnaissance mission of the 12 spies (13:1–24).
  - 1) Twelve spies are chosen and sent to explore the land of Canaan. Among them are Joshua from the tribe of Ephraim and Caleb from Judah (13:1–16).
  - 2) It was a fact-finding mission: *Go up and see what the land is like, whether the people are strong or weak, few or many, whether the land is good or bad, rich or poor, whether the cities are camps or strongholds* (13:17–20).

- 3) The spies return with “a single cluster of grapes” (13:23, 27). It’s true! It is more wonderful than we imagined! It flows with milk and honey (I Cor. 2:9).

**However**, *the people who live there are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the Anakim and Nephilim, and the Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites and Canaanites* (13:27–29).

THE MAJORITY REPORT (10 spies): *We **are not able** to go up against the people for they are stronger than we are. They are of great height. We seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers and so we seemed to them.* (13:31–33).

THE MINORITY REPORT (Caleb and Joshua): *Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we **are well able** to overcome it....* (13:30).

- 4) The results of a split vote on the committee.
- FOR THE CONGREGATION. *They **grumble**. Let’s choose a leader and go back to Egypt* (14:1–4). They want to stone Moses and Aaron (14:10).
  - FOR MOSES AND AARON. They plead with the people not to rebel against God. *They are bread for us. Their protection is removed. The Lord is with us.* (14:5–9). Moses intercedes: *What would the nations say? Please **pardon this people** according to your steadfast love....* (14:13–19).
  - FOR GOD. *How long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have done? I will strike them with the pestilence and **disinherit** them* (14:11–12). He kills the spies who brought the bad report (14:36–37).
- 5) God forgave the people (14:20). But even forgiven sin has **consequences**.

*None of those who have put me to the test these 10 times and disobeyed my voice shall see the land I swore to give to their fathers (except Caleb and Joshua). God sends them back toward the Red Sea. They will wander in circles for 40 years until the entire generation is gone* (14:20–35).

### III. Why it happened. Four reasons why people fail in their moment of truth.

#### A. **Fear**.

*We can’t go over there. There are giants and we might get hurt!* When we have **grasshopper theology** we can only see the problems, not the solution. We can only think of our resources, not God’s. We can only focus on the present cost, not the future blessing. Oswald Chambers said: *The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else.* (See Luke 12:4–5).

B. **Popular Opinion / Listening to the Majority / Democratic Principles.**

The vote on the committee was 10-2. Is that how the will of God is determined? The Kingdom of God is not a democracy! God's heroes are always those willing to stand alone (Noah, Elijah, Luther, Wilberforce, Bonhoeffer). *Am I seeking the approval of **men** or of **God**? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ (Gal. 1:10).*

C. **Double-mindedness.**

When the going gets rough in the Land of In-between, we begin to think it might be better to choose a new leader and go back to Egypt (14:3-4). The result is spiritual **bi-polar disorder**, schizophrenia. This sickness makes us unstable in all our ways (James 1:8) and ensures that we will remain in the desert forever. They are out of Egypt but Egypt is not yet out of them! Kierkegaard said, "*Purity of heart is to **will one thing.***" Sanctification is that work of grace when God gives us an undivided heart (Psalm 86:11). *Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded (James 4:8).*

D. **Unbelief.**

God brings us to Kadesh-Barnea so we will know the truth: we may have had enough faith to **get out** of Egypt, but do we have enough faith to **get in** to Canaan? When God looks at your life does he ask, *How long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? (14:11). Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6).*

THE BIG QUESTION: What happens to those who **die in the desert**? Where do they go when they die?

IV. Conclusion—Perhaps this the moment of truth for you! (See section I).

### TABLE TALK

1. Define the "normal Christian life."
2. Do you think of "Canaan" as heaven or as a metaphor of the victorious Christian life? Why is the answer to this question so important?
3. How does your theology "explain" people who have enough faith to get out of Egypt but not enough to get in to Canaan? What happens to them when they die?
4. Has God ever brought you to a place like Kadesh Barnea? How did you respond at your "moment of truth"? What have you learned?
5. Which one of the four reasons that caused the Hebrews to turn back (fear, popular opinion, double-mindedness, unbelief) represents your greatest struggle?



## LESSON 9. THE PLAINS OF MOAB— NUMBERS 25, 32 AND DEUTERONOMY

After the sin at Kadesh-Barnea, Israel spent the next 38 years doing laps in the desert. These are the **wasted years** notable for their tedious boredom and inconsequentiality. You can read the sad story in Numbers 15–21. But finally the people reach the Plains of Moab (Num. 22:1). From this perspective they can see the Jordan River and just beyond it, Canaan. Three events occurred here that had huge implications for the future.

### I. Baal Peor (Numbers 25).

- A. How unsettling it must have been for the Moabites to see 2 million Hebrews walking through their territory! Not having the strength to stop them militarily, the Moabites decide to use **deception** and trickery to defeat their enemy (a Trojan Horse strategy).
- 1) PLAN A. The King of Moab (Balak) hired a professional sorcerer (Balaam) to put a curse (evil spell) on the Hebrews (Num. 22–24). But the plan backfired when Balaam’s **donkey** spoke warning him of the danger he was in and he actually blessed the Hebrews instead!
  - 2) PLAN B. Balaam urged the Moabite women to seduce the Israelite men by inviting them to join in their **fertility rites** to Baal (see Num. 31:8, 14–16). Read what happened in Numbers 25:1–9.
- B. Which comes first, the **chicken** or the **egg**? Did their lust for women lead them to worship Baal? Or did worshipping Baal lead them to lust for women? Does bad theology lead to immorality or vice versa?
- C. Paul warned the **Christians** in Corinth of the dangers of sexual immorality by referencing this incident. *We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and 23,000 fell in a single day* (I Cor. 10:8). This is why Paul insists we need a deeper work of grace in our hearts. *This is the will of God, your **sanctification**: that you abstain from sexual immorality....* (I Thess. 4:3–4).
- D. Satan still seeks to defeat and destroy God’s people through sexual temptation. Four steps to victory over sexual temptation:
- 1) Be **alert**. One of the surest ways to fall into sexual sin is to assume you are immune. But if sexual sin caused the downfall of the **strongest** man (Samson), the **wisest** man (Solomon), and the **godliest** man (David), beware! *Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall* (I Cor. 10:12).
  - 2) Be **severe**. Like Phinehas! *But among you there must not be **even a hint** of sexual immorality or of any kind of impurity* (Eph. 5:3). Set boundaries. Luther said, *“I can’t stop the birds from flying overhead. But I can stop them from building a nest in my hair.” “I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl!”* (Job. 31:1).

- 3) Be **gone**. In all other temptations, the Bible urges us to stand and fight. But when it comes to sexual temptation, we are told to **turn and run**. *Flee from sexual temptation* (I Cor. 6:18; II Tim. 2:22).
- 4) Be **holy**. Fight fire with **fire**. Fight the carnal fire of lust with the holy fire of Pentecost. Thomas Chalmers famously preached on “*the expulsive power of a new affection.*”

## II. The Almost Christian (Numbers 32).

The eastern border of Canaan was the Jordan River (Num. 34:10–12). In other words, the area on the eastern shore (Gilead) was **not a part** of Israel’s inheritance. But three of the tribes (Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh) decided they wanted to settle down there and make Gilead their home. After all:

- They were **tired**. They had been travelling for 40 years.
  - They were **so close** to Canaan (we can see it and smell it from here).
  - This just **makes logical sense**. This land is good for livestock and we have livestock (Num. 32:4).
  - We’ll even help our brothers to fight their battles over there.
  - C’mon Moses, can we? Please. Do we have to go **all the way**? *If we have found favor in your sight, let this land (Gilead) be given to your servants for a possession. Do not take us across the Jordan* (Num. 32: 5).
- A. This is not open rebellion as happened at Kadesh Barnea or at Peor. Rather this is much more subtle and refined. The name of this sin is **compromise**. Beware: when the subnormal begins to look normal then God’s normal begins to look **abnormal**.
  - B. The three tribes considered this little compromise as no big deal, but Moses took it very seriously. *Why will you discourage the heart of the people of Israel from going over into the land that the Lord has given them* (Num. 32:7).
  - C. It is one thing to fall short of Canaan while we are still struggling to get there. But it is another thing to make a **willful choice** to stop before we’re there. Moses uses Joshua and Caleb as an example of what God expects from his people: *they have wholly followed the Lord* (Num. 32:12).
  - D. Amazingly, God gave them what they wanted (see Psalm 106:15). *There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, “Your will be done” and those to whom God says, “Your will be done.”* (C. S. Lewis).
  - E. Preachers of an earlier generation warned of being an “**almost Christian**” (John Wesley, George Whitefield, Matthew Mead, etc.). Their favorite text was Acts 26:28. *Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”*

### III. The Last Words of Moses (Deuteronomy).

- A. The book of Deuteronomy comprises the final sermons of Moses. Here on the Plains of Moab, in sight of Canaan Land, Moses (120 years old) pours out his final thoughts. This is what he wants them **remember**.
- B. At the risk of over-simplification, let's summarize Moses' final words (34 chapters worth!) in three succinct questions:
- 1) What does God **really want**? Read Deuteronomy 6:4–9. *You shall love the Lord with all your heart.* What God really wants from us is not our worship, our fear, or even our obedience. He wants to know this: “**Do you love me?**” (John 21:15–19). (Tevia, in *Fiddler on the Roof*).
  - 2) So what is the **real problem**? What is really hindering us from giving God what he really wants? Read Deuteronomy 10:12–16: *Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart and be no longer stubborn.* The one thing God wants is the one thing we can't give. The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. It's not a behavior problem. The disease is much deeper than that! Our hearts are hard, stubborn, uncircumcised. There are two important things to remember about heart disease:
    - a. It normally occurs when we get **older**.
    - b. It is very difficult **to detect** (*I feel fine!*).
  - 3) Is there a **real cure** for the real problem so that we can give God what he really wants? Read Deuteronomy 30:6. In chapter 10:16 God had told the people to circumcise their own hearts. But this never works. No one can do heart surgery on himself! In this passage, God makes an amazing statement: *The Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live* (Deut. 30:6).

*Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; **he will surely do it.** (I Thessalonians 5:23–24).*

*For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, “Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?” Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, “Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?” But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that **you can do it.** (Deuteronomy 30:11–14).*

## TABLE TALK

1. Why is sexual temptation such a recurring problem on the journey of salvation?
2. Does bad theology lead to immorality? Or does immorality lead to bad theology?
3. Three tribes “almost” made it to Canaan. Which is worse: staying in Egypt (the non-Christian) or living in Gilead (the almost-Christian)?
4. Jesus said the greatest commandment was to love the Lord with ALL our hearts. Is this comforting to you? Or troubling?
5. We know our performance can never be perfect in this life. But can our love? Can we love with perfect love? How? When?

## LESSON 10. THE JORDAN RIVER—JOSHUA 1–5

### I. Almost Home.

As the passage of the Red Sea is a symbolic moment in the journey of salvation so is the passage of the Jordan River. Its importance is not to be sought in some outward manifestation or miracle but rather in what it symbolizes (similar to that symbolic moment when Julius Caesar “crossed the Rubicon” in 49 BC). The Jordan represents the passage from the old way of living into the new. In theological terms, it is the passage from understanding salvation in terms of what Christ has done **for** us to what Christ wants to do **in** us and **through** us. The Jordan River is the passage from justification to **sanctification**.

*And he **brought us out** from there, that he might **bring us in** and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers (Deut. 6:23).*

Many make the Jordan a metaphor of **death** and Canaan a metaphor of **heaven**. The desert becomes a picture of the normal Christian life and possessing our inheritance happens only after we die. Though Gospel songs and books like *Pilgrim’s Progress* use this kind of language, it is difficult to find support for this in the Bible. Romans 7 becomes normative<sup>1</sup> and salvation looks like this:

- 1) Get saved (Red Sea).
- 2) Wander in circles (40 years?). **Try hard**, be disciplined, grow, modify behavior.
- 3) Die and then you can experience freedom from sin and a life of victory.

In Hebrews 3:7–4:13 we get another picture of salvation. The inspired author is preaching the map. Using Numbers 13–14 as his text, he exhorts Christians to *strive to enter God’s rest*. The point of his sermon is not heaven. Rather, he is warning believers not to harden their hearts and waste their lives in the desert of **spiritual mediocrity**. Salvation now begins to look like this (Romans 8<sup>2</sup>):

- 1) Get saved (Red Sea).
- 2) Walk with God in the desert (2–3 years?) learning the weakness of the flesh and the power of the Spirit. Desert U is a good place to be!
- 3) Come to a place of decision: whole-hearted **surrender** and whole-hearted **trust**.
- 4) **“Cross over”** into a new dimension of rest and blessedness. *It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me* (Gal. 2:20). Victory, power, and fruitfulness.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Alexander Whyte (1836–1921) once thundered to his Edinburgh congregation, “You’ll never get out of the 7<sup>th</sup> of Romans while I’m your minister” (quoted in J. I. Packer, *Quest for Godliness*, p. 197).

<sup>2</sup> “But the real Jordan, the spiritual ‘Jordan,’ is not physical death, as has usually been supposed. We need not and must not wait until we die to live in the land of milk and honey....” (Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, p. 43).

II. You Have Not Passed This Way Before. Read Joshua 3:1–4:7, 19–24.

A. The Diagnosis.

To cross over from where we are to where we ought to be requires first a deep **dissatisfaction** with the status quo and a hunger for more of God. No one enters into victorious Christian living who doesn't want to. You can be sure you are still in the desert of mediocrity if these characteristics define your life:

- 1) I'm **stuck**. Spiritually, my life is going nowhere. I'm going through the motions, running in circles, doing laps in the wilderness. It's been years since I've had a break-through moment with God. I just keep doing the same old, same old. Life is on autopilot. Somewhere, somehow, the zeal dampened and the sizzle fizzled. The fire in my heart became lead in my feet.
- 2) I'm **barren**. In the desert, the soil is so poor, the sun is so hot and the rain is so scarce, nothing grows. Nomads may find this tolerable but not God's redeemed people. They are made to inherit a kingdom where they can plant crops and be fruitful. If your life is barren and fruitless the cause is likely this: you are still in the desert.
- 3) I'm **tired**. Fatigue defines existence. Every day feels heavy. Listen: *The Lord is providing you a **place of rest** and will give you this land* (Joshua 1:13). The whole point of the sermon in Hebrews 3–4 was an invitation to *enter that rest* (Heb. 4:11). But Canaan is not a place of inactivity. *Au contraire!* There are battles to fight, crops to plant, and cities to build. But now, *his yoke is **easy** and his burden is **light*** (Matt. 11:29–30).
- 4) I'm confused and **frustrated**. "*Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results*" (Einstein?). What a great definition for life in the desert! In the spiritual no-man's land of In-between, many begin to suffer from spiritual bi-polar disorder. And many believe there is no cure!
- 5) I'm **hungry**. Though manna was adequate for a desert environment, it was hardly the type of sustenance that God wanted for his people long term. Milk and honey, that's what God has in mind! *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied* (Matt. 5:6).

B. The Cure.

*Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?* (Jer. 8:22). **Yes!** There is a cure for sin and the invitation to enter our inheritance still stands. The land over there is better than you ever imagined. But there are giants, fortified cities and many difficult battles to face. Salvation is free but it is never cheap. Though it is a free gift it will **cost you everything**. Are you sure you want to go?

- 1) Take the **first step** (Joshua 3:3). There are **divine moments** when God says "now" ... and everything hangs in the balance. *Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts* (Heb. 3:7–8). "A journey of a thousand

miles begins with a single step” (Chinese proverb). The first step is nearly always the hardest!

- 2) **Consecrate** yourself (Joshua 3:5. Compare Rom. 12:1–2). The word means to sanctify, to purify, to make holy. Joshua is saying: Get rid of everything and anything that will **hold you back, slow you down, or trip you up**. If you take this step with God, there will be no turning back. Though God is ultimately the one who sanctifies us, God is calling us to sanctify ourselves:

- By coming to a place of whole-hearted **surrender**.
- By coming to a place of whole-hearted **trust**.

For Joshua this moment of whole-hearted surrender and trust came in a dramatic encounter with the Commander of the Army of the Lord. Read Joshua 5:13–15. When General Jesus shows up you can be sure that he has not come to **take sides**... he has come to **take over**!

- 3) The waters will part only **after** you put your foot in the water (Joshua 3:13–16). If you wait for the waters to part **before** you begin, you will never begin. You will stay in the desert forever. It will take great courage and faith to leave the security (?) of the desert... to step into turbulent water... to face the giants on the other side. *You have not passed this way before* (Josh. 3:4).

*No eye has seen, no ear heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him* (I Cor. 2:9).

## TABLE TALK

1. What did you learn today? Discuss the importance of thinking rightly about the theological significance of the Jordan River?
2. Which is more normative in your own theology and in your own spiritual experience: Romans 7 or Romans 8? The desert of mediocrity or the life of victory?
3. How is it possible to rest and fight at the same time? What does “rest” look like in Canaan? Isn’t a “light burden” an impossibility?
4. Has there been a “divine moment” in your life when, with God’s help, you “crossed over” into a deeper experience of God’s grace? Talk about how it happened and what it means.
5. Describe what “the victorious Christian life” looks like.



## LESSON 11. JERICHO—JOSHUA 5:13–6:27

### I. The Good Fight.

#### A. Chart of the Book of Joshua.

PREPARATION FOR THE CONQUEST		THE CONQUEST		THE DIVISION OF THE LAND BY LOT		FINAL SERMON	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Spies</li> <li>• Cross Jordan</li> <li>• Circumcision</li> <li>• Passover</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jericho</li> <li>• Ai</li> <li>• Gideon’s cunning</li> <li>• Southern campaign</li> <li>• Northern campaign</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trans-Jordan</li> <li>• Canaan</li> <li>• Cities of Refuge</li> </ul>		<i>Choose today who you will serve....</i>	
1	5	6	12	13	22	23	24

#### B. Possessing the Land.

Finally, God’s people are in Canaan. Their wanderings in the desert are over. They are home. Ahhhh.... But wait a minute! The land is occupied by giants who live in fortified cities. Welcome to the Kingdom of God! Once in the Land of Promise, the people learn three realities about the abundant life:

- 1) The  **blessings**  are great and free. Read Deuteronomy 8:7–10. *No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no one has even imagined the things God has prepared for those who love him* (I Cor. 2:9). And it is all free, a gift of his lavish grace.
  
- 2) The  **choices**  are God’s. Read Joshua 14:1–2. No one gets to choose his own inheritance! The determination is made by casting lots so that the decision would be God’s alone. God gave each tribe the territory he knew was perfectly suited for them! Those who insist on choosing their inheritance for themselves (Genesis 13, Numbers 32) invariably regret it. God gives the best to those who leave the choice with him!
  
- 3) But the  **battles**  are fierce. Though they have reached their destination their “journey” is not done! Though they have received the promise of their inheritance, there is much that must be possessed. Though they have entered their “rest” they immediately discover that there is much work to do.

C. Soldiers of Christ.

It is not politically correct today to speak of the Christian life in terms of **warfare** and yet this is a prominent theme in the Bible. *The LORD is a man of war* (Exodus 15:3) and we are created in his image. We are made to fight! When our hearts are carnal and sinful, this desire to fight has tragic consequences. But God does not want to eradicate this urge to fight... he wants to **sanctify** it!

- *Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil...* (Eph. 6:10–20).
- *Fight the good fight of the faith* (I Tim. 6:12).
- *... wage the good warfare...* (I Tim. 1:18).
- *Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ...* (II Tim. 2:3).
- *I have fought the good fight....* (II Tim. 6:12).

II. The Battle of Jericho: The Model for Spiritual Warfare.

Immediately after crossing the Jordan into Canaan, the fortress of Jericho stands in the path, blocking all progress. What to do? This story introduces us to the secrets of spiritual warfare and victory. There are four things a soldier of Christ must know:

A. Know what it means **to know**.

*If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know* (I Corinthians 8:2).

Most of us have a Western (Greek) concept of “knowing.” We think we “know” something if we can describe it, analyze it, or if we have an awareness of certain information or facts. Knowledge is a matter of the head, academic, cerebral, intellectual. But “knowing about” something is very different from “knowing” it. In Hebrew thought, “to know” something means to **experience it** (Gen. 4:1; Jer. 22:16). Therefore, the first thing a soldier of Christ needs to know is that it is not enough to know about spiritual warfare (James 1:22).

*Now these are the nations that the Lord left, to test Israel by them, that is, all in Israel who had not experienced all the wars in Canaan. It was only in order that the generations of the people of Israel might **know war**, to teach war to those who had not known it before.* (Judges 3:1–2).

B. Know your **Commander-in-Chief**. Read Joshua 5:13–15.

The turning point in the battle of Jericho took place long before the battle did. The most important issue to settle in possessing our inheritance is this: **who’s in charge?** No battle is greater than this one. The real question is not whether God is on my side but whether I am on his! Victory comes through **surrender**. We win by losing! The first creed of the Christian church: Jesus is Lord.

- C. Know your **enemy**. Read Joshua 6:1–2.

Discerning the enemy is not easy. Rahab the prostitute was not “the enemy” though she was a citizen of Jericho (Joshua 6:17). In fact, Rahab is one of the greatest heroines of faith in the Bible (Matt. 1:5; Heb. 11:31; James 2:25). So who is the real enemy?

*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the **cosmic powers** over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12).*

- D. Know your **strategy** and your **weapons**. Read Joshua 6:3–5.

The most amazing thing about this battle was the strategy employed and the weapons used! No catapults, battering rams or siege towers. The strategy God wants us to follow and the weapons he wants us to use are just as important as the battle itself. *For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war **according to the flesh**. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds (II Cor. 10:3–4).* If we use weapons of the flesh to fight battles of the Spirit, we will never accomplish the Lord’s purposes. We must fight the Lord’s battles in the Lord’s way. Ephesians 6:10–18 describes the weapons of our warfare:

- The belt of **truth**.
- The breastplate of **righteousness**.
- The shoes of the **Gospel of peace**.
- The shield of **faith**.
- The helmet of **salvation**.
- The sword of the Spirit, which is **the Word of God**.
- **Praying** at all times in the Spirit.
- Notice that there is no armor for **the back**.

## TABLE TALK

1. Do you tend to think of spiritual warfare as part of the normal Christian life or as an exception to the rule? Discuss.
2. Describe a situation when you knew you were in the right battle and on the right side but you used the wrong weapons. What was the result?
3. Why is it so important to realize that our real enemy is in the cosmic realm rather than the human realm?
4. Think of a spiritual battle you are currently facing. Look again at the “four things a soldier of Christ must know.” What is God saying to you?