



# THE LIFE OF MOSES

*So now, go. I am sending you to  
Pharaoh to bring my people the  
Israelites out of Egypt.*

Exodus 3:10

## STANDING IN THE BREACH (10 BIBLE STUDIES)

**EXAMINATION APPLICATION**  
**BIBLE STUDIES**

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## THE SMALL PRINT

THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Co

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### **Your Commitment**

I would encourage you to make a commitment to attending your group regularly. I realise that sometimes there are things that get in the way, but do prioritise studying the Bible with other. This will involve sacrifice, and effective use of your time, but I really believe that in doing so you will get the most out of studying the Bible and praying together in your small group.

### **Your Contribution**

What you put into the group is going to determine what you get out of the group. I encourage you to contribute honestly to the discussion and workings of the group. I understand people come from different backgrounds with unique personalities & life experiences. But, we all have a big part to play, so I encourage you to be fully present and take ownership of your group.

### **Your Preparation**

These materials are primarily for use in preparing and/or leading group discussions, but they will also be useful in keeping your thoughts together in one place. The materials provide you with the passage so that you can identify and highlight recurring themes and note down your own thoughts and questions. Also, the materials include questions designed to provoke thought, and help you reflect on what the passage meant, both at the time it was written, and also what it means for us now.

I would encourage you to make good use of these materials, as doing so will help you contribute and get the most out of the group discussions. The materials are, however, only “tools” – they are there to help you, and not to restrict you, or force you to think in a certain manner. I want to see God speaking to you through these passages, and if the questions or notes don't help you, simply don't use them!

I have also included within these materials an introduction to the Life of Moses. Make of this what you will, but I hope that it is helpful in getting you started with these studies!

### **Your Leadership**

Here are some useful pointers in how to lead your Bible study group. Be aware that included in this study guide are more questions than you can possibly ask and/or answer in one session. They are not designed to be used rigidly, and there will rarely be a need to ask every question! Make sure that you spend some time praying at the start and ensure you read & re-read the passages as much as possible. In relation to the passages, then consider the suggested questions with an open mind. There is rarely “a single right answer” and I would encourage you to share your thoughts with your group.

I have also included a number of quotations from relevant Christian literature, most of which are readily available online if you want to do further thinking or study. My prayer is that as you study together you would grow to love Jesus and experience Him more deeply.

I would appreciate your feedback and suggestions on how to make these materials even better!

*Steve McClure  
Spring 2019*

## INTRODUCING “THE LIFE OF MOSES”

**Studying the life of Moses;** Studying the life of Moses has been quite a journey for me but one that I would heartily recommend. There is something here in the life of this great prophet for everyone.

Moses lived for 120 years and his life divides neatly into three sections: (1) The first 40 years from his birth until he fled to Midian. As Pharaoh’s son, Moses learned how *to be somebody*. (2) The second 40 years from the flight into Midian to the Exodus. In desert places he learned how to become *a nobody*. (3) The third 40 years—from the Exodus to his own exodus. As the leader of God’s hosts he learned that *God was everybody*, the one he could speak to face to face as a man speaks to his friends.

**The Early years;** Moses was born of Israelite parents in the land of Egypt (Ex 2:1-10) amidst challenging times for Israel in Egypt. The Israelites were enslaved and Pharaoh had ordered the execution of all Israelite males birth in order to keep them from growing too numerous. Hidden among the reeds by the river’s bank, Moses was found by Pharaoh’s daughter. So favourably was she disposed toward this Hebrew baby that she requested Moses’ mother to nurse him until he was old enough to be taken to the royal court, where he spent the first forty years of his life.

Little is narrated in the Book of Exodus regarding the early period of the life of Moses. Stephen in his address to the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:22) asserts that Moses was not only instructed in the science and learning of the Egyptians but also was endowed with oratorical ability and distinctive leadership qualities. The court of Egypt provided educational facilities for royal heirs of tributary princes from city-states of the Syro-Palestinian territory subject to the Egyptian rulers. Consequently Moses may have had classmates from as far north as the Euphrates River.

It was at this point that Moses tried to take Israel’s future into his own hands only to end up with egg on his face. It was a humbling experience which led to him fleeing from Egypt and the Israelites he had hoped to deliver. It would be another 40 years before Moses would return to Egypt, and then only reluctantly. He would become one of the greatest prophets of all time, but it would be a long road back, with many hard lessons along the way.

**Called as a Prophet;** Moses is hardly eager to be a prophet and drags his feet all the way. God refutes every objection Moses offers, and yet Moses persists with his objections about returning to Egypt. Despite these excuses and objections Moses reluctantly obeys God and became one of Israel’s greatest ever leaders.

It is hard to believe his incredible hesitance to obey God here but there is a positive perspective in this as well. There is something very impressive with the fact that many of those whom God chose for leadership roles were very aware of their human limitations (1 Sam 18:18; 2 Sam 7:18; 1 Chron 17:16; 29:14; 2 Chron 2:6; 1 Kings 3:5-9; Jer 1:4-10). There is something quite concerning about those who are too eager (sometimes almost driven) to become leaders, and who feel confident in their ability to lead the people of God. Moses may well have gone too far in his self-abasement, but in some ways, he was at least heading in the right general direction—he didn’t trust in his own strength.

Moses received a fantastic upbringing as the “son” of Pharaoh’s daughter and may also have been being groomed to be the next Pharaoh. Perhaps this is why Stephen claims that Moses was “powerful in words and deeds” (Acts 7:22). It was this powerful man, Moses who sought to help his people in his own strength. This first attempt ended in failure with Moses killing an Egyptian. Moses failed to gain the respect of the Israelite he had sought to rescue. Consequently Moses had to give up everything he had once considered to be a strength and fled into the wilderness, where he tended sheep for 40 years. After 40 years God appeared to Moses and told him to go back to Egypt and demand that His people

be set free. Moses had been transformed from a man of great status to a fugitive wanted for murder. Moses was right where God wanted him, aware of his weakness and the fact that his task was indeed “mission impossible.” This time around if the Israelites were to be delivered it would be because God had commanded him to go and because God would go with him and empower him.

**Sharing the load;** Even great leaders get overwhelmed and Moses’ Father-in-law gave him some good advice on this (Ex 18). Moses took his advice although apparently not immediately as it seems that the recommended leaders were not installed until after the crisis depicted in Numbers (compare Ex 18 with Num 11). Moses was not threatened by the thought of sharing ministry with others. In prophetic fashion the people came to Moses to seek the “will of God” for their lives. When the 70 men were set apart to assist Moses in this ministry, they too were empowered to prophesy. This they did only once (according to the text), but this was enough to demonstrate that they had been enabled to carry out their “prophetic” ministry. All of this was to assist Moses in conducting his prophetic ministry. Joshua perceived the prophesying of the 70 as a threat to Moses’ leadership but Moses didn’t see it that way. Moses did not cling to the gift God had given to him but rather wished that all might possess it. How easy is it to fall into the trap of thinking “If you want a job to be done right, you have to do it yourself”? Moses welcomed the help of others, and in doing so, the ministry prospered. Moses’ leadership prospered because he encouraged the ministry of others and gladly shared his ministry.

**Standing in the breach;** Moses’ instinctive first reaction to almost everything seems to be to pray and talk to God. This is one of the most consistent patterns in Moses’ leadership; the regularity with which he prays for the people he was leading and seeks God’s guidance for situations involving them is hugely striking. After the incident with the golden calf God was very angry with the people of God and Psalm 106:23 describes Moses as having ‘stood in the breach’. In this aspect Moses typifies the Lord Jesus as the mediator between the people and God. God expects to be pleaded with, He expects godly believers to intercede with Him. Later in history Ezekiel 22 records God saying <sup>30</sup> *“I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one. <sup>31</sup> So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD.”* Here in the time of Moses, God was looking for someone to ‘stand in the gap’, someone to ‘stand in the breach’ on behalf of the people...time and time again Moses was that person. Just consider if we allowed intercessory prayer to shape our influence and interactions with people; what would the impact be on us and the people we are connecting with?

**Moses’ Character;** Moses also shared his ministry with his siblings Miriam and Aaron. And yet it was them who turned against their brother and their leader. The issue here was not really about “equality” or “plurality” in leadership. The root issue here was racial (12:1); the fact that Moses had chosen to marry a Gentile (Cushite / Ethiopian) woman. Moses’ leadership was not challenged until Moses chose to lead in a way that his siblings found unacceptable. Then they complained that Moses was setting himself above them, and that their authority was as great as his. Since they considered themselves to be his equals and they agreed that Moses was in the wrong ...Moses was outnumbered.

Moses could have used the situation to his advantage in order to shame them, silence them and make an example of them for all the Israelites to see. Moses could easily have justified doing so, but he chose not to. Moses as the ‘victim’ here could also have reported it quite differently in what was written in Scripture. Moses however under inspiration from God can do nothing other than report the facts. He

was not free to “doctor” the account and paint his siblings in such a light that exaggerates their sin. Despite all that he could have said Moses simply tells the story as simply and as truthfully as he can. In fact Moses did not need to say anything because God is both quick and forceful in his defence. God orders all three of them to appear immediately at the tent of meeting. At this point Miriam and Aaron must have known they were in serious trouble. God rebuked them, making it very clear that Moses called the shots. God communicated with Moses in the most intimate fashion and it was this intimacy which set Moses apart from others. None of this was spoken by Moses—even though he was the one being attacked—and even though he was the “lead prophet.” All of this was spoken by God Himself, and we know that Miriam and Aaron listened, especially when Miriam was stricken with leprosy for a week. The man who normally spoke for God remained silent, and let God do the speaking for him. In the context of this attack against Moses by his own siblings, we read these words: *“Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth”* (12:3). If anyone ever had the opportunity and the ability to defend himself, it was Moses, but he chose not to do so. This was genuine meekness and humility; a huge strength and certainty not weakness.

### **Reflections on the life of Moses**

**A great prophet, but not perfect;** Moses, perhaps the ‘greatest prophet’ was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. Why? Numbers 20 records the account of various personal and ministry crisis for Moses. Included in that chapter is an account of the events surrounding God’s provision of water from a rock akin to what God had previously done in Exodus 17. This time however God’s instructions are different and Moses fails to do as God had asked. The events are described in Psalm 106:32-33 as *“By the waters of Meribah they angered the LORD, and trouble came to Moses because of them; <sup>33</sup>for they rebelled against the Spirit of God, and rash words came from Moses’ lips.* Moses’ failure to trust God had severe consequences and though at the end of his life God shows Moses the Promised Land from Mount Nebo but he never sets foot there. A great prophet but he made his mistakes.

Moses did however anticipate the Great Prophet—our Lord Jesus Christ. The imperfections and flaws of His prototypes only serve to underscore the need for One far greater and this One could be no mere man, but must be the Son of God Himself. The imperfections of Moses cause us to look forward to Him who is the perfect Lawgiver and Prophet. We should also recognize that Moses was perhaps the greatest prophet of Israel; indeed it seems as if God said so Himself in Deut 34:10-12. Flawed though he was, and far from perfect, Moses was a great man indeed. One cannot read the books of Moses without reaching this conclusion, and later inspired writers regard him in the same way. Moses was a great prophet, the likes of which we have more than likely never seen since in any mere man.

**A prototype of Christ;** It was in his rejection, and in his strengths, that Moses was a prototype of the Messiah to come. Moses himself spoke of this in Deuteronomy 18. Some of the parallels between Jesus and Moses are:

- Both were preserved from the perils of infancy (Exod. 2:2-10 with Matt. 2:14, 15)
- Both were tempted but had mastery over evil (Exod. 7:11 with Matt. 4:1)
- Both knew what it was to fast for 40 days (Exod. 34:28 with Matt. 4:2). Solitude was their strength.
- Both had power to control the sea (Exod. 14:21 with Matt. 8:26)
- Both fed a multitude (Exod. 16:26 with Matt. 14:20, 21)
- Both had a radiant face (Exod. 34:35 with Matt. 17:2)
- Both endured murmurings (Exod. 15:24 with Mark 7:2)

- Both were discredited at home (Num. 12:1 with John 7:5)
- Both were mighty intercessors (Exod. 32:32 with John 17)
- Both spoke as the oracles of God (Deut. 18:18 with John 7:46)
- Both had seventy helpers (Num. 11:16, 17 with Luke 10:1)
- Both established memorials (Exod. 12:14 with Luke 22:19)
- Both reappeared after death (Matt. 17:3 with Acts 1:3)

**God's enabling was critical;** Being a prophet is a supernatural ministry which requires supernatural power. When Moses first attempted to deliver the people of Israel, he did so in his own strength—and he failed miserably. As a man who was raised in the royal courts of Egypt, Moses had become well-educated, persuasive, and influential. And yet none of this enabled him to successfully deliver even one fellow-Israelite. It was Moses' idea to try and rescue his people, not God's (Acts 7:23, 25). His human efforts no matter how great or sincere, were inadequate. Moses came to see that this was a much bigger task, and thus one which required God's help. No wonder he was reluctant to return to Egypt when God instructed him to do so. We see this same attitude exemplified in the life of Paul (Philippians 3:1-10 and 2 Cor 12:1-10). Jesus himself said that "What is impossible with man is possible with God" (Luke 18:27); what a challenge to trust God and get on board with what He is doing.

**God's means are seldom what we would expect;** Moses assumed God would use him because of his power and influence as one closely associated with the throne of Egypt. He was wrong and as a result he failed. God did not use a "Pharaoh-to-be but rather a felon—a murderer—with a warrant out for his arrest. It was not that his 40 years of education and preparation in Egypt were of no value, but his last 40 years of training were in the wilderness, leading sheep. It was not through the "hand of Moses," or through his act of violence (murder) that God rescued His people, but through the "hand of God," when neither Moses nor the Israelites raised a hand against an Egyptian.

The great men of God are those who are not threatened by the ministry of others, but who gratefully embrace it as God's plan to multiply ministry, rather than for men to monopolise it. Because the job was too big for him, he appointed others, on whom the Spirit of God fell, equipping them to share this prophetic ministry with Moses.

**Perfected by adversity for a glorious ministry;** Moses grew in his faith and in his obedience when adversity came his way. It is said that even Jesus was perfected through adversity and suffering (Heb 5:8). In the Bible we see that the prophets were the most persecuted people around, and that persecution is to be expected by all who live godly lives. Adversity is God's purifying and perfecting work. It is by our conduct in the midst of adversity that we have the opportunity to imitate Christ.

The ministry of Moses had its share of misery, resistance and opposition, even by those he led from Egypt and by his own siblings. But whatever we say about the adversity Moses endured; he was also a man who was highly privileged. Moses enjoyed the most intimate relationship with God that any man (after Adam) had experienced in Old Testament times. There was "great glory" associated with his ministry, and yet this glory is vastly overshadowed by the greater glory that we all can experience in the practice and proclamation of the gospel today (see 2 Cor 3). In the midst of the "grind" of life, let us never lose sight of the glory.

**Steve McClure, Aug 2012**

*"All God's giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on God being with them." Hudson Taylor*

**STUDY 1 – EXODUS 1-2 – MOSES’ BEGINNINGS**

**INTRODUCTION:** We begin with the sad story of Israel's plight in Egypt after the death of Joseph who had been Prime Minister in Egypt (Genesis 38-50). Some 200 years after Joseph the Egyptian Kings forgot what Joseph had done for Egypt and starting viewing his descendants as a dangerous minority.

**SETTING THE SCENE (chapter 1):** How does chapter 1 set the scene for Moses' arrival in chapter 2? What do you think it would have been like to be one of these Hebrews facing escalating oppression? What strategies did Pharaoh employ to try and control the Israelites growth?

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**COURAGEOUS MIDWIVES (1:17-21):** What do imagine it would have been like for the midwives to stand up against Pharaoh? How does (or should) your fear of God motivate you in your behaviour? How do you account for Israel's increasing growth against the backdrop of increasing pressure?

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**A PLAN TO SURVIVE (2:1-10):** How do you see God's hand at work in the survival of the baby Moses against the backdrop of Pharaoh's edict? What did his survival cost both his mother and his sister? What might have motivated Pharaoh's daughter to have defied her father?

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**SPLIT IDENTITY:** What do you imagine it would have been like to be raised in a situation like this? To what extent was Moses both a Hebrew and an Egyptian; how might he have struggled with his identity? How do you think that Moses coped with the pain of his situation? Do you identify with Moses at all in this?

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**WHAT LIES BENEATH (2:11-14):** In light of Moses childhood what do you think motivated Moses (a) to kill the Egyptian and (b) to settle the fight between the two Hebrews? Through these events to what extent do we see what lay beneath coming to the surface? What lies under the surface in your life?

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**FINDING HIMSELF (2:15-23):** Why do you think that Moses flees to Midian and how does this work out to be a crucial step in finding himself? What can we learn from the way he rescues the girls at the well? Why are the statements in v19 (note that Moses does not correct his introduction as an Egyptian) and v22 (describes himself as a foreigner in a foreign land) such fascinating incites into Moses?

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**A PLAN TO REDEEM ISRAEL (2:24-25):** How do you understand what is said in these verses about God hearing His people's groaning, remembering His covenant and His subsequent concern for His people? How were these 'questions of identity' that Moses had been working through critical to his role in God's plan for redeeming His people?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Share with one another about what God has been teaching you about identity: what are the patterns that lie behind the behaviours and situations that are working themselves out in your life right now. Pray into these things together asking God to bring things to light and to bring restoration and healing.

**MEMORY VERSE: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17**

"A leader is a person who must take special responsibility for what's going on inside him or herself, inside his or her consciousness, lest the act of leadership create more harm than good."

*Quoted in Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership, Barton, pg 48.*

**STUDY 2 – EXODUS 3:1-4:17 – CALLED AT THE BURNING BUSH**

**INTRODUCTION:** God's concern for His people results in action as He prepares to intervene. Moses was God's chosen man and God set out to make him aware of His plan. This passage is about God's call and Moses interaction and subsequent excuses in following God's call.

**THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD (3:1-4):** What do you imagine it would have been like for Moses on the mountain of God that day? What was it about the burning bush that caught Moses' attention? Why do you suppose that so many key encounters with God happen on mountain tops?

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**PAYING ATTENTION:** How do you respond to the apparent cause-and-effect relationship between Moses' willingness to pay attention and God's willingness to speak? Is there space in your life to allow you to pay attention to the places where God is at work? If not how can you create space?

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**HOLY GROUND (3:4-10):** How does Moses initially respond to God ('here I am' and 'hiding his face')? Why does he react to God in this way? If and when you have experienced God's presence in the past how have you reacted (ignorance, awe, reverence, shock etc)? What is the significance of how God introduces and describes Himself to Moses?

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**CALLING:** Why was or wasn't Moses an obvious choice for God to call to lead His people (see also 2:11-25)? In calling Moses to lead His people out of Egypt what exactly was God asking Moses to do (think about all God has been doing in Moses up to this point)? If you don't experience a 'burning bush' moment, how can you know God's purpose for your life?

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**RESPONDING TO GOD'S CALL:** Work through each of the 5 objections and excuses that Moses gives (see below); How does Moses respond to what God has called him to and why? In each case how does God respond?

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- #1 – WHO AM I? (3:11-12)
- #2 – WHO ARE YOU? (3:13-22)
- #3 – WHAT IF THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME OR LISTEN TO ME? (4:1-9)
- #4 – WHAT IF I AM NOT GOOD ENOUGH? (4:10-12)
- #5 – PLEASE SEND SOMEONE ELSE (4:13-17 & 6:28-7:6)

In what ways do you resonate and identify with Moses' stubbornness in the face of God's clear call on His life? In what ways can you trace Moses' response back to his beginnings (e.g. his confusion with identity, the tendency to define himself in relation to others)? Can you identify times when you have struggled with these kinds of question in the light of God's leading or calling?

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**DRAWING IT TOGETHER:** What does this passage reveal about the character of God and how He interacts with His people? How did Moses experience the great paradox of calling: It's all about us (because we have been called) and it's not about us at all (because it is all about God and His work in us and through us)? How is God calling you to step up and step out?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Talk and pray about your experiences of hearing God speak in the past. How you can make space and time so that you can pay attention to God and respond to what God is calling you to do?

**MEMORY VERSE: JEREMIAH 20:9**

*Calls are essentially questions. They aren't questions you necessarily need to answer outright; they are questions to which you need to respond, expose yourself, and kneel before. You don't want an answer you can put in a box and set on a shelf. You want a question that will become a chariot to carry you across the breadth of your life. **Greg Levoy, Callings***

*"Many of us are choosing to live lives that do not set us up to pay attention, to notice those places where God is at work and to ask ourselves what these things mean." **Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership, pg. 62, Barton***

**STUDY 3 – EXODUS 12:29-42, 13:17-14:31 – GOD’S CURIOUS WAYS**

**INTRODUCTION:** The story has jumped from Moses’ calling at the burning bush to the Exodus. Moses had gone to Pharaoh and delivered God’s message to let His people go. God sends the 10 plagues (Exodus 7-12) upon Egypt culminating in the plague on the firstborn sons (Passover). We join the story as Pharaoh finally allows the Israelites to leave.

**LEAVING AT LAST (12:29-42):** How would you describe the emotions felt by the Israelites and the Egyptians when Israel finally left? How remarkable is the phrase “driven out of Egypt” (see 6:1 & 12:39) in light of Pharaoh’s stubbornness in refusing to let them go? (see also 5:2, 7:13,22, 8:15,19,32, 9:7,35,20,27-28)

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**PROMISE FULFILLED:** What was the significance of these events in relation to the promises given to Moses (see for example 3:20-22)? How would this have changed, formed and/or strengthened Israel’s understanding of God’s character? In what ways have you found God’s warnings and promises to be true in your own life?

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**A ROUNDABOUT ROUTE (13:17-22):** What can we learn from the fact that God didn’t take Israel on the shortest route through Palestine (13:17-18)? What good have you seen come from God’s detours in your own lives? How do you see short-term (following the pillar) and long-term (Joseph) faith in action in 13:19-22? How is God leading you?

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**TIMES OF TESTING (14:1-12):** Why do you think God tells the Israelites to camp by the sea? In light of the Israelites reaction to the situation, where do you think they are at on their spiritual journey? God orchestrated this situation; how did the situation demonstrate God’s glory (14:4)?

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**STAND FIRM (14:13-14):** How would you contrast Moses' response to the brash, impulsive, take-matters-into-his own hands kind of leader he used to be? How does Moses' answer address the Israelites needs (14:10-12)?

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**MOVING FORWARD (14:15-31):** How is it possible to stand firm AND move forward simultaneously (v13, 15)? What did God's escape plan require of both Moses and the people? What can we learn from the way that Moses led the people to the safety of dry ground? What did the Israelites learn about their leader Moses (God's servant) and about the LORD (14:31)?

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**JOURNEY WITH GOD:** As you reflect upon the dramatic journey that God took Israel on after leaving Egypt, what do you see are the key points of learning for Moses and the people of Israel? How does this journey parallel the spiritual journey (spiritual bondage to freedom) that God is taking each of us on (think about the cross roads, the roundabout routes, times of testing, times of keeping still / waiting)?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Share with one another about the journey of deliverance that God is leading you on from spiritual bondage to freedom in Christ. Pray for one another about the obstacles, times of testing and challenges to stand firm that you are facing.

**MEMORY VERSE: HEBREWS 11:29**

*"Moses spent his first forty years thinking he was somebody. He spent his second forty years learning he was a nobody. He spent his third forty years discovering what God can do with a nobody." D.L. Moody*

**STUDY 4 – EXODUS 19:1-20:21 – MEETING WITH GOD**

**INTRODUCTION:** Arriving at Mt Sinai heralds a key turning point in Exodus; the people of Israel will remain there for the rest of the book. Israel had been grumbling about their situation since Egypt but God had provided. They were however no closer to Canaan than when they left Egypt. Here at Sinai God would give Israel an identity that would provide substance to the freedom that He had given them.

**COVENANT REAFFIRMED (19:1-7):** After two months on the road what is the situation Israel find themselves in at Sinai? In what sense is God's covenant to Israel (first given in Genesis 12) both conditional and unconditional? How does a covenant change a relationship?

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How would these promises have encouraged Israel? What do you think God means by “my treasured possession”, “a kingdom of priests” and “a holy nation”? Peter applies these ideas to Christians; in what sense do these terms relate to us (1 Pet 2:9)?

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**OBEDIENCE AFFIRMED (19:8-9):** How do you respond to Israel's declaration of obedience and God's intent to appear in a cloud to encourage people to trust Moses? Why do you think Israel is so confident in their decision to obey God (v3-4); what evidence and experiences do you have that help you to continue to trust and obey God?

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**PREPARING TO MEET GOD (19:10-25):** Why do you think God chooses to create such an awesome experience for this historic meeting? How have you observed God making Himself known? What did God insist on by way of consecration in order to meet with Him? What do some of the limits (which came with severe consequences) teach us about God? What is required of us to meet with God?

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**THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (20:1-21):** How would you summarise the overall message and purpose of the Ten Commandments? Jesus said the greatest commandment was to love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and love your neighbour as yourself (Mark 12:28-34). How does this summary fit with the Ten Commandments?

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**GOD'S CHARACTER REVEALED:** Do you agree with the following list of characteristics of God derived from the Ten Commandments? How have you experienced these characteristics of God?

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|---|---|
| 1 <i>ONE GOD</i> ; God is supreme / a jealous God   | 6 <i>MURDER</i> ; God is the giver of life  |
| 2 <i>IDOLATRY</i> ; God is Spirit                   | 7 <i>ADULTERY</i> ; God is faithful         |
| 3 <i>BLASPHEMY</i> ; God is not to be challenged    | 8 <i>STEALING</i> ; God is the provider     |
| 4 <i>SABBATH</i> ; A God to be worshipped           | 9 <i>FALSE TESTIMONY</i> ; God is truth     |
| 5 <i>HONOUR PARENTS</i> ; A God of respect / honour | 10 <i>COVETING</i> ; God is outward looking |
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What implications should these commandments have for us living under the new covenant? How do you think that the whole experience would have impacted on Moses and God's people (see 20:18-21)?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Share with one another how you respond to the concept of obedience. Talk about how this study has helped you understand more about God's character and about what it means to meet with an awesome God. Pray for one another and your personal relationship with God.

**MEMORY VERSES: DEUTERONOMY 6:6-7**

**STUDY 5 – EXODUS 32:1-33:6 – IDOLATRY AND INTERCESSION**

**INTRODUCTION:** While Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving instructions for Israel's worship the people below were getting restless. After months of marching through the desert they had been idle for a month waiting for Moses to reappear. So while God meets with Moses, Israel does the unthinkable and approaches Aaron and asks him to make them an idol... cue the golden calf.

**VIOLATING GOD'S COMMAND (32:1-6):** What do you think motivated Israel to violate the first two commandments which God had recently given them (20:2-4, Jeremiah 17:9)? Why was it so significant that they used the gold from the plunder in Egypt (see 11:2-3, 12:35-36 & 12:35-36)?

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Why do you think that Aaron went along with it? To what extent was his attempt to redeem the situation successful (32:5-6) and why? Why do you think we are so prone to making idols? What are some of the idols we make for ourselves today (anything that takes God's rightful place in your life)?

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**GOD'S FIERCE ANGER (32:7-10):** How do you react to the LORD's assessment of the situation at the foot of the mountain? What does it mean to be 'stiff-necked'? Why is God's intent to destroy Israel such a surprise in light of the promises He had made to Abraham (Gen 12:2. 15:13-21)?

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**INTERCESSION: STANDING IN THE GAP (32:10-14):** Why do you think God offers to make Moses into a great nation (v10b)? What reasons did Moses give for turning down this offer (v11-13)? Does the phrase "God relented" (v14) mean that God changed His mind (compare with Num 23:19)?

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Why is Moses' role here so significant in the working out of God's purposes (Ezek 22:30, Ps 106:23)? Is your initial response to cry out to God like Moses did (see also Ex 15:23-25, 17:3-4, Num 11:2, 12:13, 14:19)? How is God working out His purposes through your prayers of intercession for others?

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**MOSES' ANGER (32:15-29, 35):** When Moses came off the mountain how did Moses' reaction to Israel's sin compare to that of the LORD (v10 & 19)? Was Moses justified in breaking the tablets (v19) and making Israel drink the ground gold (v20)? Why do you think Aaron lies to Moses (v22-24)?

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When has your experience of sin caused you to react in righteous anger against it? Do you share Moses' hatred of sin? How was God's judgement carried out against Israel (v27-28 & 35)?

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**ATONEMENT (32:30-34):** What do you make of the fact that Moses did not even try to offer a sacrifice for this idolatry but instead offered himself as a sacrifice? How does Moses' example demonstrate what it means that Jesus "always lives to intercede for us" (Heb 7:25)?

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**THE PEOPLE MOURN (33:1-6):** Why did God's statement that they should head to the Promised Land but He would not go with them cause such pain to Israel? How has dealing with 'golden calves' in your own lives been painful and distressing?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Share with one another about the things that you find yourself putting in the place of God in your own lives. Intercede for another and claim 1 John 1:9 on one another's behalf.

**MEMORY VERSE: 1 JOHN 1:9**

"God expects to be pleaded with, he expects godly believers to intercede with him. Their intercession is his own appointed means for bringing about His relenting, and if they fail in this respect, then he does not relent and his wrath is poured out. If we understand something similar to have happened in the life of Moses, we must conclude that Moses is effective in prayer not in the sense that God would have broken his covenant promises to the patriarchs, nor in the sense that God temporarily lost his self-control until Moses managed to bring God back to his senses. Rather, in God's mercy Moses proved to be God's own appointed means, through intercessory prayer, for bringing about the relenting that was nothing other than a gracious confirmation of the covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

*A call to spiritual reformation, pg 164-165, D.A. Carson*

**STUDY 6 – EXODUS 33:7-34:35 – MOSES AND GLORY OF THE LORD**

**INTRODUCTION:** Moses here experienced a deep sense of loneliness, the loneliness of feeling abandoned by God. It was the emptiness of losing the one thing that mattered, the one thing that gave the journey meaning. Moses was sure He couldn't go on without it so he stopped. He refused to accept that God wanted to bail on the Israelite mission and took it up with God Himself as he always did.

**MOSES' RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (33:7-11):** Why was it important for Moses to have a special place to connect with God (the tent) and how did his time with God there impact the rest of the people? How would you describe the relationship between Moses and God? In light of v20 what do you think a "face to face" relationship with God looked like for Moses and for God?

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Why do you think Moses enjoyed such a close relationship with God? What time and/or place have you set aside to seek God? What would it take for you to develop such a relationship with God? What would it do for you and for God?

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**SHOW ME YOUR GLORY (33:12-23):** What is at the heart of Moses requests (v13, 15 & 18) in this section? How do you respond to the boldness Moses demonstrates in making these requests? Have you ever been in a place where you needed God to do something out of the ordinary to confirm His presence with you in order to proceed to whatever is your metaphorical "Promised Land"?

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How do you understand the reasons that God gives for why He will grant Moses' requests (v17, 'pleased with you' and 'I know your name'? How is it that God's goodness (v19), His name (v19) and His presence (v14) meet Moses' needs? Do you think these things are enough to meet your needs?

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**EXPERIENCING GOD'S GLORY (34:1-10):** How was Moses to prepare for meeting with God and why (v1-3)? As you allow these verses to have their full impact on you how do you respond (shock, awe,

worship?) to the way that God reveals Himself to Moses? What do we learn about God's nature and character when God proclaims His name in v6-8? What can we learn from Moses' response (v8-9)?

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Moses could not see God's face. What is our privilege and responsibility in light of John 14:8-14 and Hebrews 1:1-4? How do we experience God through Jesus?

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**EFFECTS OF GOD'S GLORY (34:29-35, 2 COR 3:7-18):** In 34:10-26 God renews His covenant with Israel before sending Moses back down the mountain. What did seeing God's glory do to Moses and why? What is the effect of meeting with God in your life?

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In light of Paul's commentary in 2 Corinthians on these events, how is ministry under the new covenant more glorious than ministry under the old (2 Cor 3:4-18)? What is required of us if we are to reflect God's glory? What evidence do you see of this transformation in your own lives?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Share together about your awareness of God's presence and your experiences of God revealing Himself to you. Pray for one another that God would give you more of the quality and depth of relationship that Moses had with God.

**MEMORY VERSE: 2 CORINTHIANS 3:18**

"This is the pivotal moment in the life of a leader. It is the moment when whatever the Promised Land is for us – a church of a certain size, a new ministry, a new building, writing a book, being sought out as an expert – pales in significance when compared with our desire for God. At this point we might realise that we are missing the presence of God for ourselves personally. We might look around at what we've done or built and wonder whether we have gotten where we are merely through our own effort and whether we have somehow gotten out ahead of the very Presence that called us to this journey in the first place. Or maybe we see that our own relationship with God has been overtaken with ministry concerns, and we grieve the loss of a sense of God's presence deep within. Leadership has taken its toll. A great emptiness has opened up, and we realise, as Moses did, that there is no promised land that we could ever envision that matters nearly as much as the presence of God in our life right here and right now." *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership, Barton, pg 159.*

**STUDY 7 – NUMBERS 11:1-12:16 – GRUMBLING AND OPPOSITION**

**INTRODUCTION:** Numbers continues from where Exodus left off at Sinai, it was now 2 years after they had left Egypt (1:1). Numbers 1:1-10:10 focuses on getting ready for the journey onwards. Then in 10:11-12 the pillar of cloud lifts and they are back on the move. Our passage concentrates on how Moses (with God's help) handles the burden of leadership amidst grumbling and opposition.

**LIFE'S ADVERSITIES (11:1-3):** How do you imagine the people of Israel were feeling about their situation now that they were back on the road? Why do you think that it resulted in such a strong response from Israel (complaining about their hardships) and from God (arousing His anger)?

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**LIFE'S DEFICIENCIES (11:4-10):** To what extent can you identify with the cravings of 'the rabble' for greater culinary variety? How did their somewhat selective memory contribute to their discontent? Who were this rabble and why were they a poor example for the people of Israel (v10, every family)?

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God had faithfully provided of all their needs since they left Egypt so how is it possible that they had become so discontent with what they had? In what areas of life do you find yourself struggling to feel content with all that God is providing for you? What such complaints have you made to God?

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**MOSES' VULNERABILITY (11:11-23):** What **would** and **wouldn't** you commend Moses for in his response to God? Why do you think that Moses jumps to the conclusion that God was displeased with him (11) and failure was imminent (15)? How does God respond to Moses' concerns (v18-20, v23)?

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To what extent can you identify with Moses' feeling of inability to lead the people on his own? In what way did this exaggerate his role as leader? How do we strike a healthy balance between coming to God with our struggles and concerns whilst keeping a perspective on things?

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**SUPPORT TEAM (11:16-17, 24-29):** What was the significance of the support team God provides for Moses to help him lead (see also Ex 3:16, 4:29, 18:13-26)? How does God resource this new team of people for their tasks? What lessons can we learn from God's treatment of Eldad and Medad who did not join the group of 70 elders at the tent of meeting?

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**OFFENDERS CONDEMNED (11:31-35):** The Spirit comes upon the elders, then the Spirit (wind) drove in the quail from the sea before moments later the LORD's anger burned against the people. How do you respond to God's wrath poured out against those who 'craved other food' (v33-34)?

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**DISLOYAL COLLEAGUES (12:1-16):** What do you make of the source and substance of Aaron and Miriam's objections to Moses' leadership (ethnic concerns, envy, family rivalry)? How do you think Moses would have felt about the objections (see 12:3)? Why do you think that Moses declines to defend himself? How does Moses show himself here to be characterised by meekness and humility?

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As we glimpse Moses' strengths and weaknesses, what encouragement do you receive for your own responsibilities in serving God and God's people?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Share your struggles in being either a leader or a follower of others. Pray for one another that you would find a deeper sense of contentment physically and relationally.

**MEMORY VERSES: PHILIPPIANS 4:12-13**

"What a stirring moment it must have been for Moses and for the individuals who gathered around the tent of meeting as God literally took part of the spirit of Moses and placed it on them. One of the ways they knew it was real was that they all prophesied – which had never happened before. It was proof that this "sharing of the spirit" was more than just rhetoric. Now they, too, bore the passion and responsibility for leading the people on this journey. By God's grace, Moses was no longer alone with all that he was carrying, and others now had the privilege of sharing more deeply in it. What a soul strengthening experience this must have been!"

*Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership, Barton, pg. 172*

**STUDY 8 – NUMBERS 13:1-14:25 – TRUSTING GOD AMIDST OPPOSITION**

**INTRODUCTION:** This account has been 'written to teach us' so that with God-given endurance and the 'encouragement of the Scriptures' we might have hope (Rom 15:4-6). Joshua and Caleb are the encouragers of God's people, their ministry was rejected by Israel but it must not be lost on us. We also need to listen to their encouragement to trust in God.

**GOD'S PROMISE AND FAITHFULNESS (13:1-22):** What was God's purpose in sending the spies to explore Canaan? Why should God's instructions have reminded them about God's promises to Abraham (Gen 12:1-9)? To what extent had these promises already been fulfilled in the life of Israel?

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What is the significance of the instructions about where the spies were to go (see Genesis 12:9, 13:14-18 and 23:1-20)? Why do you think that these reminders of God's faithfulness to the ancestors failed to encourage the spies about the prospect of entering the land?

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**GOD'S GENEROSITY (13:23-27):** Why do you think that Moses asks them to "do their best" to bring back the fruit of the land? How did what they brought back confirm the reliability of God's word? When has 'change' left us hesitant and like the Israelites unable to trust in God's unfailing generosity?

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**RECEIVE GOD'S RESOURCES (13:28-33):** How are the spies guilty of magnifying the problems and minimising the resources? How do you respond to the contrast between the optimism of Joshua and Caleb and the despairing pessimism of the rest?

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Hudson Taylor said "All God's giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on God being with them." How can we nurture such an attitude in our own lives as we face seemingly insurmountable challenges of our own?

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**THE HOSTILE MULTITUDE (14:1-4):** How do you understand such a strong response from the Israelites? (Consider how Israel despises God's provision, question His protection, doubt His unfailing love, disown His redemption and spurn His anointed leader)

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**PLEADING WITH THE PEOPLE (14:5-9):** How much can you sympathise with Moses, Aaron, Caleb and Joshua as they plead with the people not to rebel? How do Caleb and Joshua present a different perspective on the situation by emphasising God's generosity, holiness, power and presence?

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**INTERCESSION (14:10-19):** In light of all that had happened why do you think Moses (who they were talking about stoning) asks God to forgive them? Are you jealous for God's glory like Moses (v13-16)?

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**JUDGEMENT AND MERCY (14:20-23):** How is God's decision to bar an entire generation from entering the land an expression of both judgement and mercy (20-23)? How might spending 40 years in the desert under Moses' leadership help address the Israelites lack of faith?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Talk and share about the harsh warnings about rebelling against God contained in this passage. Pray for one another that you would be able to trust God, stand firm, move forward as God directs and not fall into sin (1 Cor 10:12).

**MEMORY VERSE: ROMANS 15:4**

**1Corinthians 10:11-13** <sup>11</sup>These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. <sup>12</sup>So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! <sup>13</sup>No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

**STUDY 9 – EXODUS 17:1-15 AND NUMBERS 20:1-21:3 – COPING WITH CRISIS**

**INTRODUCTION:** At times life is very unpredictable. Towards the end of Moses' life it seemed as though everything was against him. This chapter contains bereavement (Miriam and Aaron), grumbling & opposition (internally and externally) and frustration. In a moment of testing in the midst of this Moses loses control and does something which also caused him deep regret and disappointment.

**BEREAVEMENT (20:1, 22-29):** Moses would surely have seen many of the 'rebellious Israelites' perish in the desert as God had promised; how would losing his sister (part of the revolt at Kadesh?) and brother (as a result of the events in this section) have really brought this home to him? How would the fact that Aaron was to be gathered to his people (v24,26) have been an encouragement?

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**PERSISTENT GRUMBLES (20:2-5):** Why might slavery to Pharaoh have seemed preferable to freedom in the desert at this point? How had following God turned out to be confusing, disappointing, or different in some way that what they had expected, can you identify with that in your own life?

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**UNTRUSTING LEADERS (20:6-13):** Amidst yet another 'leadership crisis' what do you make of Moses and Aaron's interactions with God? What exactly does God command Moses and Aaron to do in order to bring about God's provision of water? How different is what they actually do?

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*"Instead of making the occasion a joyful manifestation of God's effortless control over nature, they had turned it into a scene of bitter denunciation." Quoted in BST: The Message of Numbers, pg 179, Brown*

How do you respond to strict way that God treats His faithful servants here (compare with similar event earlier in Exodus 17:1-7)? Do you think God treats Moses overly harshly (compare with quotation above? How did Moses' action display disobedience to God (v8), a misuse of God's gifts (v10-11), a lack of trust (v12) and an obscuring of God's glory (v12)?

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**LOVELESS NEIGHBOUR (20:14-21):** How are Moses' gifts as a skilful negotiator seen in the way he approaches Edom about travelling through their land (consider his sensitivity, compassion, courage & persistence)? How did the Kings words in v18 come back at Edom later in judgement (Amos 1:11-12)?



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**SUCCESSOR and AGGRESSORS (20:22-21:3):** What would Eleazar coming down the mountain dressed in Aaron's High Priestly garments have communicated to a watching Israel? Why was it so important for the baton to be passed on to a new generation?

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King Arad's attack and subsequent capture was Israel's first taste of defeat since they disobeyed God 40 years earlier. How would you evaluate the Israelites response to this taste of defeat? In what ways might this defeat have helped prepare Israel for entering the Promised Land?

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**DRAWING IT TOGETHER:** How does this portrayal of Moses coping under crisis encourage you amidst the challenges and struggles that life brings? What do you think were the key lessons Moses learned from these things, and what can we learn from his example?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Share with one another about the encouragements and discouragements that God has been throwing your way this past term. Share prayer requests and pray for one another as you head home for the Christmas holidays.

**MEMORY VERSES: PSALM 106:32-33**

"Every time I read about Moses' relationship with God I am filled with longing, and it is not the longing to get somewhere – although there are always new places to get to. It is the longing to be a certain kind of person. A person who knows God. A person who is faithful against all odds and does not shrink back. A person through whom God can perform whatever deeds needs to be done – mighty or otherwise – but also a person who can be just as content settling down beside a well or sitting on the side of a mountain in God's presence. Someone whose face shines because she has been talking to God. Someone whose face shines because she has been talking to God. Someone whose every move is as a result of an attempt to listen to God and then do what he says. Someone who, when God says, "it's time to let go; it's time for you to come home," easily let's go and rests ion the arms of this One whom she has grown to love and trust with her every being."  
*Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership, Barton, pg. 219*

**STUDY 10 – DEUTERONOMY 31:1-13, 32:48-52 & 34:1-12 – PASSING ON THE BATON**

**INTRODUCTION:** Israel is about to cross over into the Promised Land and Moses is about to leave them to be with his LORD. Moses addresses them one last time (Deut 31-33); what he says and the way he says it are a model for all leaders who will eventually pass on their responsibilities to others. Then Moses climbs Mount Nebo where he is shown the Promised Land before he died

**120 YEARS OF MOSES (31:1-2):** How would you describe Moses' attitude as he prepares to set down his leadership and hand over to Joshua? In what ways did each phase of Moses life help him mature into 'the servant of the LORD' (Egypt - 40 yrs, shepherd - 40 yrs & Israel's leader - 40 yrs)?

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**PREPARING TO ENTER (31:3-6):** How did Moses prepare them to enter the land without fear this time around? How can we apply these exhortations and encouragements to our own circumstances?

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**THE NEW LEADER (31:7-8):** What have we learned about Joshua in the story to this point? In what ways do you think that shadowing Moses had been significant in his growth as a leader? What were his primary responsibilities to be? Why do you think Moses repeatedly encourages and exhorts both Israel and Joshua to be strong, courageous and not be afraid (v6, 7-8, 23)? How can fear inhibit us?

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**ENCOURAGEMENT TO REMEMBER (31:9-13):** Why do you think it was so important for Israel to have God's word written down, to celebrate it and to read it before all the people? How are the key themes of 'land' and 'law' related to one another (v12-13)?

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**PICTURE #1: SEEING THE LAND (32:48-34:4):** How hard do you think it would have been for Moses to see the Promised Land but know that he would not enter it? Do you think Moses argued with God about not entering the Promised Land, why or why not? How would you feel if you worked your whole life towards a vision but God said you wouldn't be the one to see it fulfilled?

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**PICTURE #2: THE FUTURE (34:9):** What does this act of Moses laying hands on his successor teach us about Moses, about Joshua and about how we should pass on our responsibilities to others? Who are you investing in that could step into your shoes of influence?

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**PICTURE #3: LEGACY (34:10-12):** What is the essence of how Moses is described in these verses? What kind of legacy would you say that Moses left for generations to come? What would you honestly like to be said of you by those reflecting on your life? What needs to happen to make that a reality? Thinking about Deut 18:15 / Acts 3:22 how was Jesus a prophet like Moses?

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**DRAWING IT TOGETHER:** Barton writes, "This is what I have come to see most clearly in the life of Moses: *for Moses the presence of God was the Promised Land*. Next to that, everything else had already paled into insignificance." (*Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, pg. 214) To what extent do you agree that for Moses the concept of the Promised Land had become about God's presence?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Share about what you have learned from studying the life of Moses. Talk and pray about the kind of legacies you want to leave for others and your initial thoughts on how you (with God's help) might get there.

**MEMORY VERSE: DEUTERONOMY 18:15 (ALSO QUOTED IN ACTS 3:22)**

# MEMORY VERSES

## STUDY 1: MOSES' BEGINNINGS

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation. The old has gone, the new is here!  
**2 Corinthians 5:17**

## STUDY 2: MOSES AND THE BURNING BUSH

But if I say, "I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot. **Jeremiah 20:9**

## STUDY 3: GOD'S CURIOUS WAYS

By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. **Hebrews 11:29**

## STUDY 4: MEETING WITH GOD

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. **Deuteronomy 6:6-7**

## STUDY 5: IDOLATRY AND INTERCESSION

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. **1 John 1:9**

## STUDY 6: MOSES AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate [or reflect] the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. **2 Corinthians 3:18**

## STUDY 7 – GRUMBLING AND OPPOSITION

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. 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 all this through him who gives me strength. **Philippians 4:12-13**

## STUDY 8: TRUSTING GOD AMIDST OPPOSITION

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. **Romans 15:4**

## STUDY 9: COPING WITH CRISIS

By the waters of Meribah they [Israel] angered the Lord, and trouble came to Moses because of them; for they rebelled against the Spirit of God, and rash words came from Moses' lips. **Psalms 106:32-33**

## STUDY 10: PASSING ON THE BATON

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. **Deuteronomy 18:15**