

# Journey to the Land of Promise

*Leader's Guide*

*by*

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This *Leader's Guide* provides suggestions for guiding a group study of *Journey to the Land of Promise* by Page Kelley. The book is available from Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., by calling **1-800-568-1248** or by visiting our on-line bookstore at **[www.helwys.com/online.html](http://www.helwys.com/online.html)**

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## **Introducing the Leader's Guide**

This *Leader's Guide* provides suggestions for guiding a group study of *Journey to the Land of Promise* by the late Dr. Page Kelley. This book is available from Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., by calling this toll-free number: 1-800-568-1248.

## **How the Leader's Guide Can Help You**

Dr. Kelley's book combines biblical information and spiritual insights. The study of the Pentateuch with his book as a guide will be most meaningful when these elements are combined in the study sessions, too.

These teaching suggestions are intended to help you achieve this result with the group you lead. They're meant to provide you with step-by-step ideas for helping the group understand, think about, and personalize the content of *Journey to the Land of Promise*. Too, the suggestions in this *Leader's Guide* are intended to save you time in preparation.

The teaching suggestions for each study session are sequenced and numbered so you can follow them step-by-step. When followed step-by-step, the suggestions will help you lead the group through the chapters in *Journey to the Land of Promise* and the accompanying Scriptures. If you choose to adapt the suggestions, rearrange them, skip some, or let them stir your creative juices to develop other suggestions, you'll find them helpful when used in those ways, too.

## **What These Study Sessions Can Be Like**

Imagine your study group in an informal setting, either in a classroom at church or in someone's living room. Everyone in the group feels free to make comments, ask questions, and share personal insights about their lives and their faith. That's the kind of setting in which these teaching suggestions for *Journey to the Land of Promise* will have their most natural use.

These teaching suggestions provide guidance for leading an eleven-session study of *Journey to the Land of Promise*. Each study session is envisioned to be about fifty to sixty minutes long. If participants in your group engage freely in discussion (uh, talk a lot!) and you worry about "covering all the material," don't worry. Remember that we can sometimes help people learn more by teaching less. Connecting with significant ideas by talking about them can be a key part of the learning process.

The suggestions in this *Leader's Guide* follow the pattern of *Journey to the Land of Promise* and thus provide a survey of the first five books of the Bible. If your study group wishes to extend the study and devote more time to particular passages of Scripture or particular issues, fine, of course! You may find it best, however, to use this study as a survey of these Bible books prior to digging into one or more.

## Resources You'll Need to Lead This Study

The basic resources you'll need to lead this study include a copy of *Journey to the Land of Promise*, by Dr. Page H. Kelley; a Bible; and this *Leader's Guide*. A chalkboard or other large writing surface will also be helpful, though not essential. For small group work, providing the assignments in written form will likely be helpful, though also not essential.

Beyond these basics, the study mainly depends on the personal insights and willingness to discuss them that you and your fellow participants bring to it.

## How to Help Study Group Participants Get the Most Out of the Study

As you lead the study of *Journey to the Land of Promise*, try to develop an atmosphere of informality, friendliness, and mutual support that will encourage individual discussion and personal sharing. Here are some suggestions about how to make this happen:

- Try to distribute the book *Journey to the Land of Promise* to group members prior to the first session.
- Be prepared to listen at least as much as you talk!
- Be willing to share your own personal pilgrimage so that others will more readily share theirs.
- Set up the meeting room in an informal way—with chairs in a circle or semi-circle, perhaps around a table.
- Agree on a beginning and ending time for the sessions, and stick to it.
- Encourage participants to enter into an agreement with one another to attend faithfully, prepare for each session, offer support to one another, and keep any confidences that are shared.
- Suggest that participants use one of these translations of the Bible if they do not have a modern translation: the New Revised Standard Version, the New International Version, the New American Standard Version, or the Contemporary English Version.

If possible, try to stay at least a session ahead of the group in your preparation. Also, if different leaders are leading various sessions, be sure those arrangements are made at least one session ahead—preferably more. Planning ahead may enable you to find ways of involving participants more in the study, perhaps by making some assignments in advance.

## How Study Group Participants Can Get the Most Out of the Study

Your fellow study group members will get the most out of the study if, prior to the study session, they will read the passage of Scripture to be dealt with and also will read the study book

chapter. As they read, perhaps they will also want to jot down questions and comments for class discussion. They'll certainly want to think about the meaning and personal relevance of the information.

**Best wishes to you and your fellow study group participants!**

## Session One

### *Introduction—The Pentateuch*

*Overview:* This study session focuses on the Introduction to *Journey to the Land of Promise*.

### **Learning Activities**

1. Invite people to share their pilgrimage in Bible study by responding to questions like those that follow. You could write the questions on pieces of paper and put them on participants' chairs before they arrive. Encourage people to talk about the questions with fellow group members before the session formally begins.
  - a. When and where did you first become aware of the Bible?
  - b. What is one of your most meaningful experiences with the Bible?
  - c. What place does the Bible have in your life?
  - d. What would you like to gain from this study?
2. Share Dr. Kelley's pilgrimage of Bible study from page 1. Then invite responses from the group to questions *a*, *b*, and *c* in step 1. Share your own responses. Then invite responses to question *d*. Put suggestions on chart paper. Add to the suggestions from session to session. Look for ways to slant the study in the direction of what participants would like to learn.
3. Review the definitions of "the Pentateuch" Dr. Kelley provides in the section titled "Importance," which begins at the bottom of page 1 (first five books of the Bible, Torah, Law, teaching).
4. Invite participants to name as many events or people as they can think of that appear in these first five books of the Bible. If you have access to a chalkboard, jot down these events as people name them. Don't worry at this point about whether all the answers are "right." Before the session, write on a large piece of paper the outline of the Pentateuch that appears on page 3. Display it now. (If displaying the outline doesn't seem best for your study setting, just refer participants to p. 3 of *Journey to the*

*Land of Promise.*) Then go through the list of events and people that participants have named. Ask the group to suggest the section in which each character or event appears. Write the appropriate Roman numeral beside that character or event. If people aren't sure, don't know, or think an event didn't occur at that point, put a question mark beside that event. Suggest that these question marks become things to look for during the study.

5. To help the group consider the nature of the Pentateuch, identify the two major views about the authorship of these books (see *Journey to the Promised Land*, pp. 3-4). Inquire why exploring alternatives to Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch may be (a) a matter of concern and appear to threaten a person's faith and, on the other hand, (b) sensible in light of the kinds of questions mentioned in paragraph two of page 4. Invite further responses to these two major views. Leave room for participants to have varying opinions.

6. Invite responses to the idea that the Bible is both divine and human in its origin. Suggest that if the Bible has a human element in it—that God used human beings to share and preserve God's message through the Bible—then the Bible's history can be studied. Use the following thoughts to summarize the three major phases of the writing of the Pentateuch (see *Journey to the Land of Promise*, p. 4):

(1) *Oral accounts.* The assumption that the elements of the Pentateuch were originally passed around and then down the generations orally is based on the way other ancient peoples in general transmitted what was important to them.

(2) *Written collections.* What was being transmitted orally was written down. Serious study of the Pentateuch shows that portions of it tend to have different interests and use different names for God. One theory is that such items indicate different sources for these portions.

(3) *Edited, completed books.* The books of the Pentateuch were put together in their final form during the period between about 1000 B.C. and about 400 B.C. Note that we do not have any original manuscripts or any portions of any original manuscripts of any part of the Pentateuch (or of any other Bible book).

7. Use Dr. Kelley's thoughts on pages 5-6 and the following ideas to summarize the section about "Major Sources":

- The "J" source uses the Hebrew word "Yahweh" for God. The word "Yahweh" is translated LORD in English versions of the Bible. It pictures God in human terms.
- The "E" source uses the Hebrew word "Elohim" for God. God is pictured in a more exalted manner.
- The "P" or priestly source deals a lot with worship and sacrifices. It is concerned about details, numbers, and genealogies. God is transcendent.
- The "D" source is found only in Deuteronomy.

Ask participants to look up some of the Scripture passages Dr. Kelley mentions in discussing each source and read them aloud while the group listens for the qualities of each source.

8. Point out that the idea of sources for the Pentateuch has a parallel in the four Gospels of the New Testament. Each Gospel has its own insights, point of view, characteristics, and purpose. Unlike the four Gospels, however, the J, E, and P sources of the Pentateuch were woven together instead of being allowed to remain separate. Explore with the group the differing details in the account of similar events in the Gospels (compare Matt 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43). Then compare the P account of Noah's taking two of every animal into the ark (Genesis 6:19-20; 7:8-9) with the J account, in which God commands Noah to take seven pairs of clean animals into the ark (Genesis 7:2-5). Give participants opportunity to respond to these variations in detail. Suggest that different sources may be one reason for the variations.

9. Refer to Dr. Kelley's ideas on page 8 in the first paragraph in the section titled "The Nature of Biblical Truth." Use these questions to engage the group in discussion:

- a. How do you respond to the idea that one can believe too much about the Bible?
- b. Can you think of times when the church's view of the Bible having ultimate authority in every area, including science, has been challenged successfully? (See "Copernicus" in an encyclopedia!)
- c. What does this suggest about insisting that the Bible is preeminent in its knowledge of science and similar areas?
- d. How essential is it to one's faith that the Bible be inerrant in its view of science and history?
- e. How do you respond to Dr. Kelley's thoughts on page 8 about biblical truth being "existential" truth, truth about the meaning of people's lives in relation to themselves, others, and their circumstances?

10. Summarize from pages 8-10 of *Journey to the Land of Promise* Dr. Kelley's thoughts about the biblical writers' need to use the language and thought forms of their day to describe God and God's truths. Point out that we today commonly use unscientific language to communicate truth. Ask, for example: Did the sun rise this morning? (We say it did in spite of our scientific knowledge that it didn't.)

11. Suggest that more important than determining the details of what a video camera would have seen had it been trained on a particular biblical event is the meaning of the event as the biblical text describes it. Encourage participants to use these keys to help them in their Bible study and particularly to keep these keys in mind as they study Genesis 1—3 for the next session:

- a. Study Bible texts carefully to understand the meaning for the first readers.

- b. As you study, try to identify the question behind the answer the text provides.
- c. Think about how this question may apply to you or to your culture.
- d. Identify how and in what ways (and whether) this biblical answer speaks to you and to your culture.

For next session: Read pages 11-20 of chapter 1, “Before Abraham Was,” and Genesis 1—3.

## Session Two

### *Before Abraham Was—Part One*

*Overview:* This study session deals with chapter 1, “Before Abraham Was,” in *Journey to the Land of Promise* and focuses on Genesis 1—3.

#### **Learning Activities**

1. Begin by pointing out that many cultures have creation stories. Dr. Kelley mentions several neighbors of Israel who also had creation stories (see p. 7, “The Seven-Day Creation Story”). Ask the group to name some reasons they think many cultures have creation stories. (Could it be that everyone wants to know, “Where did I come from?”) Then ask what additional reasons might apply to Israel. (For example: The creation story distinguishes the nature and power of its God from the ways of the gods of the surrounding peoples. It also shows how Israel fits into the larger human family.)
2. Ask for volunteers from the group to read aloud at least some of the Scripture references cited in the section “Creation Outside Genesis,” on page 11. (On Job 38—42, consider reading Job 38:4-27.) Ask the group to listen for ideas to summarize God’s work as creator.
3. Ask someone to read aloud Genesis 1:1-2 while others listen for words that describe the earth (formless, empty, dark, watery). Use Dr. Kelley’s thoughts on page 12 in the section “The Earth as Formless and Empty” to overview God’s work of bringing control to the formlessness of the earth and filling its emptiness. Note that in Days 1—3, God brings light to banish darkness; and a dome to separate the waters above from the waters below. This separation made possible the atmosphere below the dome and also a further division of sea and dry land underneath the dome. In Days 4—6, the emptiness is filled.
4. To help the group consider the three proposals for understanding the relation of the seven days of creation to

current scientific thought, explain each proposal and ask half the group to listen especially for positive features and the other half to listen especially for any problems they see in it. After each group has reported, compare the results for each proposal.

5. Lead the group to discuss further the relation between the biblical account and science by asking questions like these:

- What is the basic problem with each of these proposals? (See *Journey to the Land of Promise*, p. 13, last paragraph.)
- What are some difficulties in trying to relate the Bible to any scientific framework? (Scientific frameworks change. Science becomes the judge of reality and reliability. We assume that the Bible is concerned with scientific views rather than having a larger purpose. See the statement on p. 14 of *Journey to the Land of Promise* by Vawter, that Genesis disregards current science.)

6. To help participants review and compare the accounts of creation in Genesis 1—2, form at least two groups of three to six people each. Assign one group the account of creation in Genesis 1:1—2:4a and another the account of creation in Genesis 2:4b-25. (Form additional groups if more than twelve people are present.) Give the following assignment to each group:

- a. At the beginning of the account of creation in your passage of Scripture, what is the world like?
- b. What is the chronology in your account of creation?
- c. What is the order of creation in your account?
- d. How are human beings created in your account?
- e. What are some questions you think your account of creation answers?

After about 10 minutes, receive reports from each group. Use this summary plus the ideas from Dr. Kelley on pages 14-17 to guide additional comments you might make as groups report.

*1:1—2:4*

- a. Watery chaos
- b. Seven days
- c. Order of creation
  - 1—light
  - 2—firmament
  - 3—dry and seas; vegetation
  - 4—heavenly bodies
  - 5—marine life and birds
  - 6—land animals; man (male and female)
  - 7—Sabbath
- d. Male and female
- e. Possibilities: Is creation evil or good in itself? What is the nature of creation—orderly and dependable or chaotic and undependable? Is God in control? Where do human beings—male and female—fit in God's creation? How important is the Sabbath?

*2:4-25*

- a. Waterless waste
- b. No mention of chronology
- c. Order of creation
  - man
  - plants
  - animals
  - woman
- d. Male from dust, then female from the male's rib after no appropriate partner was found
- e. Possibilities: Is God in control? How important are human beings? How is man related to the earth? How are man and woman related?

Discuss the creation accounts further by inquiring:

- What would we miss without each one?
- What are some values of having both?
- What do the differences in the creation accounts imply?  
(Different sources, different purposes; little or no concern for harmonizing variant accounts)

7. To help participants understand the meaning of Genesis 3 to its early readers, reshuffle the groups if necessary so there are at least three groups. Assign the Scriptures as follows: Genesis 3:1-7; Genesis 3:8-13; Genesis 3:14-25. Ask each group to read its assigned Scripture and answer this question: What questions might have given rise to this text so that it is included in Genesis?

Some ideas for possible answers:

- 3:1-7—Why is life like this? What is the relation between human beings and God? Why do we wear clothes, and why is nakedness disturbing?
- 3:8-13—Why do we feel guilty about our actions? What makes us want to excuse ourselves by blaming others? How responsible am I for my actions?
- 3:14-25—Why does the serpent crawl on its belly? Why do human beings fear snakes? Why is there such pain in childbearing? Why is work so hard? Why is there sometimes a conflicted relationship between husbands and wives, who were intended to complete each other? Why is there a conflicted relationship now between the man and the ground from which he came? Why do we not live in paradise? What is our God like?

8. As groups report, ask them to list their questions so that all can see. Then encourage participants to identify questions that seem to apply to them or to their culture. As questions are identified, ask the group to suggest how and in what ways (and whether) the biblical answer speaks to you and to your culture.

9. Using Dr. Kelley's comments in "Paradise Lost" on pages 17-20, summarize these ideas:

- Adam and Eve's role ("spoiled by prosperity," p. 18)
- their position of each bearing responsibility for their own sin (p. 10)
- the alienation from God, from each other, from animals, and from earth itself that they experienced because of their sin ("A Bitter Harvest," p. 19).

Consider with the group how these thoughts and this portion of Scripture illuminate current human experience.

NOTES

For next session: Read the remainder of chapter 1 (pp. 20-28 in *Journey to the Land of Promise*) and Genesis 4—11.

NOTES

## Session Three

### *Before Abraham Was—Part Two*

*Overview:* This study session deals with chapter 1, “Before Abraham Was,” in *Journey to the Land of Promise* and focuses on Genesis 4—11.

#### **Learning Activities**

1. Begin by overviewing Genesis 4—11. Note the two themes Dr. Kelley identifies: “the growing power of sin and the hidden growth of God’s grace” (p. 20). Point out that in the foreground of these chapters is humankind’s growing sinfulness, which God punished through the Flood and which yet continued even afterward. In the background of the portrait is God’s grace as God continually seeks to build a redemptive relationship with people. Genesis 4 moves from Adam and Eve to their children Cain and Abel and tells the story of the first murder. Genesis 5 has been labeled “the march of death” and takes the reader to Noah. Genesis 6—9 is the story of the Flood, a rainbow that indicated God’s grace, and yet continued alienation from God. Genesis 10 is a sort of “roll call of the nations,” which reminds the reader of God’s relatedness to all people. Genesis 11 begins with the Tower of Babel, aimed at achieving independence from God, and concludes with an introduction to Abraham and Sarah, through whom God wanted to work to bless all people.
2. To lead the group to identify ongoing themes in Genesis 1—11, enlist someone to read aloud Genesis 4:1-16, and ask the rest of the group to listen for parallels between the story of Adam and Eve’s sin and the story of Cain’s sin. (Refer to the first paragraph on p. 21 for Dr. Kelley’s insights on this topic.)
3. To lead the group to gain greater knowledge and personal understanding of the story of Cain and Abel, suggest that the biblical account raises many questions to which we may want answers. Share some or all of the following questions with the group, by reading them aloud, printing them on individual handouts, or posting them for all to see (even printing them in large letters on individual sheets and tossing them randomly on the floor so that the group can see them). Remind the group that many questions people have about a Bible passage may have little or no relation to the original intent of the passage and so we should not expect the Bible passage to answer it. Invite the group to choose any of the questions on which they’d especially like to gain more insight. Then invite discussion of the passage. During discussion, be sure to lead the group to evaluate whether the question is one that is related to the passage’s intent. Here are some questions people sometimes ask about Genesis 4:1-16:

- Why didn't God accept Cain's sacrifice? (See a later response in Hebrews 11:4 and 1 John 3:12 to this question.)
- How is God's acceptance of the sacrifice related to God's acceptance of the person? Is it? Did the sacrifice really matter in whether Cain or Abel was accepted?
- Didn't God realize that Cain likely would feel he was rejected after God had rejected his sacrifice? How could God do that to Cain?
- Why didn't Cain recognize his responsibility to keep, care for, shepherd his brother the shepherd?
- Since God was the one whom Cain felt had wronged him, why did Cain take his anger out on his brother?
- What do you suppose Cain and Abel said to each other between the time of the sacrifice and Abel's murder? Anything?
- Why did Cain decide to commit the murder of his own brother?
- Why do differing religious views and practices seem to lead so readily to hostility, violence, and even murder?
- Why didn't Cain "master" the sin that was crouching at his door, ready to attack? God had warned him, hadn't he?
- Why doesn't the snake appear in this story about sin as it did in Genesis 3?
- Why didn't God prevent the murder?
- Did God know what Cain had done to Abel before God asked Cain about it?
- How does Cain's being "cursed from the ground" relate, if it does, to the curse on the ground in Genesis 3:17?
- What does God intend the mark on Cain to mean?
- Can we count on God to make things right? When?
- What kind of God is this?
- How is it that Cain, who feels he is condemned to be "a fugitive and wanderer on the earth," instead builds a city (see Genesis 4:14, 17)?
- If the Bible is inerrant historically and otherwise and is to be interpreted literally, just where *did* Cain get his wife?
- When, like Cain, have you done your best, received no instructions about standards to meet, and been blindsided by criticism—perhaps from a person in authority—that it wasn't good enough? How did you feel?
- When, like Abel, have you done your best and something bad still happened? How did you feel (a question possible to ask since you, unlike Abel, are still alive)?
- Why did the Hebrews start telling this story anyway?

- Why didn't God make the message of this story clearer, especially the details?
- How would this story have helped you in a conflict you've had with another person?
- How would this story have helped you in a conflict you've had with God?
- What's the meaning of this story for us?

4. Lead the group to compare the genealogies of Cain in Genesis 4:17-24 and of Seth, Cain's other brother, in Genesis 4:25—5:32. Use Dr. Kelley's comments on pages 21-22 as a resource.

- First, note the similar names.
- Then point out the introduction of the name of the Lord in Genesis 4:26. Note that this reference may be a way of suggesting to the Hebrew readers of Genesis that the worship of the true God goes back to ancient times, before Moses' encounter with God in Exodus 3 in which Moses learned God's name.
- Third, refer to the long lives in the genealogies, noting that the number of years involved is conservative when compared to the literature of other ancient peoples.

5. To assist the group in considering the story of the Flood and Noah's ark in Genesis 6:1—9:17, refer to the four themes Dr. Kelley identifies in this section on page 21. Ask the class to think of aspects of the story from which these themes may have emerged.

6. Ask someone to read aloud Genesis 6:1-4. Share Dr. Kelley's thoughts on pages 22-23 about the two interpretations.

7. In leading the group to consider the Flood story, point out that, as with the story of creation, many ancient cultures also had a Flood story. Enlist someone to read aloud Dr. Kelley's summary at the bottom of page 23 of the Babylonian flood story. Ask the group to listen for ways in which the story of Noah is similar to it and different from it. You could ask half the group to listen for ways the stories are alike and the other half to listen for ways they are different. Ask for reports afterward. Suggest that the relation of the biblical story to the Babylonian story indicates that the development of Hebrew religion did not occur in a vacuum. Rather it occurred in relation to as well as distinctness from that of surrounding cultures.

8. Point out that God's covenant with Noah after the Flood was an act of grace. Compare God's covenant with Noah in Genesis 9:1-17 with God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17:1-14. Enlist people to read aloud the related Scripture verses Dr. Kelley identifies on page 25.

9. Refer to Genesis 9:18-28 and Dr. Kelley's comments on pages 25-26 on this passage. Note also the unanswered questions Dr. Kelley mentions about this passage. Remind participants that interpreting the Bible requires care and humility. Slave owners and racial segregationists once used an interpretation of this passage and the genealogy of Ham in Genesis 10:6 to justify slavery and then racial discrimination.

10. Enlist someone to read aloud Genesis 11:1-9 while the group listens for ways the tower-builders' sin was like that of Adam and Eve. Summarize Dr. Kelley's comments from pages 26-27.

11. Go around the room and invite each participant to name a word or phrase that describes their impression of Genesis 1—11. Jot down the words on a chalkboard or piece of poster paper. Point out that Genesis 11:26 shows the story beginning to narrow down to Abraham, through whom God again planned to seek to share God's blessings with all humankind.

For next session: Read chapter 2, "Pilgrims of Faith," and Genesis 11:27—25:11.

## Session Four

### *Pilgrims of Faith*

*Overview:* This study session deals with chapter 2, "Pilgrims of Faith," in *Journey to the Land of Promise* and focuses on Genesis 11:27—25:11.

### Learning Activities

1. Begin by inviting people to tell of times when they have been "pilgrims of faith" like Abraham and Sarah, leaving familiar places for an unknown destination because they believed doing so was what God wanted them to do. As participants share, use questions like these to generate further thought and discussion:

- What was the most difficult part of the decision?
- What was the most difficult part of the journey?
- Was it true for you, as *Journey to the Land of Promise* suggests on page 29, that "When our wills are brought into line with God's will, the road becomes clear, and we can move ahead without fear or hesitation"? How clear was your road?
- If you had known all the difficulties you would face, would you still have done it?
- How well did things work out?

2. Use the ideas in the section titled “Date” on page 30 to set the time of the patriarchs in context. Remind the group where Abraham’s native city of Ur was by referring to a map, if possible. Point out, too, that the world in which Abraham lived was already populated with ancient cultures. Suggest that a part of the culture in which Abraham lived prior to God’s call involved worship of other gods, with Ur and Haran being centers for worshipping the moon god (see p. 31).

3. Review with the group the section titled “Religion” on page 32. You might ask people to work together in pairs to scan the material and identify differences between the religion of Baal and the religion of Yahweh, Israel’s God.

4. Overview with the group the three themes that recur in the patriarchal narrative—promise, election, and conflict (see p. 33 of *Journey to the Land of Promise*).

5. Note that the story of the patriarchs, including Abraham, is the story of God’s working out problems in spite of obstacles the patriarchs faced, with several of these obstacles being brought about by the patriarchs themselves. As Abraham dealt with the obstacles he and Sarah faced, his faith was tested. Organize the study of Abraham and Sarah around the ten tests of faith Dr. Kelley identifies and summarizes on pages 35-43. If you choose not to look at all ten in detail, zero in on five of them—tests one, two, five, nine, and ten. Small groups of three to six participants each could be an effective way to study these. Depending on the number of participants, assign each group one or more of the tests. Make these assignments to each group:

- a. Summarize the test using the Scripture references and Dr. Kelley’s comments.
- b. Suggest what ancient Israel would have learned from this test their ancestor Abraham faced and passed.
- c. Identify similar concerns that exist today.
- d. Suggest how and whether this passage of Scripture speaks to those concerns.
- e. Identify tests of faith participants have faced.

6. Receive reports from groups. Encourage additional insights from other participants as groups report. You might use these additional ideas for further exploring the tests:

- Test One—Do you think Abraham’s decision was more or less difficult than geographical moves are today? Why?
- Test Two—How are being “in God’s will” and everything working out perfectly related? Does being “in God’s will” mean that no difficulties will be encountered?
- Test Five—How could Abraham have known that in this case he should wait patiently rather than take the initiative to solve the problem himself?

- Test Nine—What are some factors that would have made this a great test of Abraham’s faith?
- Test Ten—How do you suppose Abraham dealt with the fact that, after risking everything to follow God’s call, the only portion of the Promised Land he ever owned was his family burial plot?

For next session: Read pages 45-52 of chapter three, “Heirs of the Promise,” and Genesis 25:12—36:42.

## Session Five

### *Heirs of the Promise—Part One*

*Overview:* This study session deals with pages 45-52 of chapter 3, “Heirs of the Promise,” in *Journey to the Land of Promise* and focuses on Genesis 25:12—36:42. The study features the patriarchal couples Isaac and Rebekah along with Jacob and Rachel.

### Learning Activities

1. Preview this study session for the group by indicating that it will deal with the patriarchal couples Isaac and Rebekah and then with Jacob and Rachel. In their own way, Isaac and Jacob continue the faith tradition God that began with Abraham. Each, however, did it with very different style.
2. Note that Isaac as the “middle patriarch” can be characterized like the stereotypical middle child—often overlooked and forgotten. Or, Isaac can be compared to the stereotypical child of a famous parent who has little opportunity to shine on her or his own. Point out that the Bible’s references to Isaac deal mainly with his youth and his old age. Ask whether anyone recalls an incident from Isaac’s youth (almost being sacrificed, Gen 22; receiving Rebekah as his wife, Gen 24). Then inquire whether the group recalls an incident from Isaac’s old age (being tricked by his son Jacob into giving him the birthright, Gen 27). As people report, encourage the group to fill in the details of the stories. Use insights from the section titled “Isaac and Rebekah” on pages 45-46 to provide additional details.
3. Refer the group to Genesis 26 for information about the middle years of Isaac’s life. Enlist someone to read aloud Genesis 26:1-5. Ask the group to compare what Isaac did when the famine came with what his father had done (see Gen 12:10). Then enlist people to read aloud passages about God’s call to and covenant with Abraham to help participants see the similarities with God’s covenant with Isaac in Genesis 26:1-5 (read Gen 12:1-2; 15:5; 17:1-8).

4. To introduce Jacob, refer to Dr. Kelley’s description on page 47 of Jacob’s life as being similar to a drama in four acts.

5. Then use the Scripture reading idea on page 48 of *Journey to the Land of Promise*. To make this work effectively, be sure that all the readers have the same Bible translation. You could write the passages as a script, with readers indicated. If someone in the group has access to a computer version of the Bible text, enlist that person to develop it as a script, print it out, and provide copies to the readers in advance. As the readers read the script, assign the rest of the group to listen for how Jacob acted. After the Scripture reading, receive reports on the listening assignment.

6. Encourage the group to recall other incidents in the life of Jacob. Fill in the gaps with ideas from pages 48-52 of *Journey to the Land of Promise*. Be sure these incidents are mentioned: Jacob’s dream of a stairway from heaven to earth (28:10-22); Jacob’s marriages to Laban’s daughters (29—30); Jacob’s flight from Laban (31); Jacob’s wrestling with a mysterious opponent (32); Jacob’s meeting with Esau (33). As each incident is recalled and discussed, lead the group to consider this question: Why do you think this story was remembered, told, and written down?

7. Ask the group to respond to the statement at the bottom of page 47: “God did not choose Jacob because of what he was but because of what he was capable of becoming.” How true is it? Suggest that God’s experience with Jacob also may indicate that God works with whoever is available and seeks to help them change for the better.

For next session: Read pages 52-60 of chapter three, “Heirs of the Promise,” and Genesis 37—50.

## Session Six

### *Heirs of the Promise—Part Two*

*Overview:* This study session deals with pages 52-60 of chapter 3, “Heirs of the Promise,” in *Journey to the Land of Promise* and focuses on Genesis 37—50. The study features Joseph and also considers the significant role of Judah.

#### **Learning Activities**

1. Begin by stating that this study of Genesis 37—50 deals mainly with Joseph but that it also considers the significant role of his brother Judah. Though Joseph is most prominent in this section of Scripture and the one from whom we learn the most, Judah has a background role that becomes more prominent in

later Hebrew history. Suggest that as the group mainly studies Joseph they watch for references to Judah. (You may want to list them at the side of the chalkboard as participants call them to the group's attention during the study session.)

2. Focus on Joseph first by sharing Dr. Kelley's thoughts about the literary device of "dramatic reversal," which "shows how God thwarts the will of evil persons by making their evil serve a good purpose" (see *Journey to the Land of Promise*, p. 52). Ask the group to recall and suggest examples in the life of Joseph (add Dr. Kelley's examples as needed).

3. Refer to the "four indicators of Joseph's emotional and spiritual maturity" on page 53. Invite discussion by asking questions like these:

- Do you agree that these qualities characterized Joseph?
- What incidents in Joseph's life demonstrate these qualities?
- What other qualities of Joseph enabled him to demonstrate personal strength and maturity?
- How can we encourage these qualities in our lives and in others' lives?

4. Use the section on pages 52-57 titled "A Story in Three Parts" to help the group trace the story of God's guidance of Joseph's life. In reviewing Part One, enlist someone to read aloud Genesis 37:1-11, and encourage the group to listen for facts about Joseph that suggest what he was like. After the Scripture reading, invite comments about participants' impression of Joseph. What negative impressions do they get? What positive impressions are conveyed?

5. Enlist someone to read aloud Genesis 37:12-36. Encourage the group to listen for what the various brothers did and suggest what they think motivated the various actions. After the reading, ask the group to analyze the actions of Joseph, Reuben, Judah, and the other brothers. Call attention especially to Judah's role.

6. Then refer to and trace the garment motif and the dream motif identified on pages 53-54. Enlist people to read the passages in Genesis 37—50 mentioned for each motif. Invite participants to describe how they respond to the ideas about these two motifs.

7. Use these cues to help the group spontaneously tell the story of Part Two of Joseph's life in Genesis 39—41: success in Potiphar's house, seduction in Potiphar's house, sentenced to prison, dreams by the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, Pharaoh's dream, Joseph's interpretation, Joseph as second-in-command. Fill in details as needed from Genesis 39—41.

8. Consider Joseph's resistance to the attempt at seduction by Potiphar's wife. Use questions like these to guide discussion:

- What are some possibilities that might have occurred if Joseph had yielded instead of resisted?
- Why did Joseph resist the temptation?
- What thoughts do you suppose Joseph had about his act of resistance during the long days and nights in prison?
- What kind of God lets people suffer because they acted in obedience to God instead of taking the easy but wrong way? (See the quote from Claus Westermann on p. 55.)
- What does this incident indicate about Joseph? about God? about our own ethical challenges? especially about ethical challenges in the workplace?

9. Again use the storytelling device to review Part Three of Joseph's story in Genesis 42—47. Give these cues: famine in Canaan, the brothers go to Egypt, everybody but Simeon, no more grain without Benjamin, the brothers return, Benjamin is accused, Benjamin to remain, a brother steps forward, Joseph and his brothers are reunited, Jacob comes, Jacob's family settles in Egypt.

10. Help the group get at the meaning of this portion of Scripture by discussing possible answers to these questions:

- Why do you think those who first heard or read these stories would have been interested in them?
- In what ways are our interests similar to theirs?
- How do the answers the Bible passages provide speak to us?
- What do these passages teach us about God's grace?
- What do they teach us about doing God's will?
- What do they teach us about family relationships?
- What do they teach us about human relationships in general?
- How can we tell whether an act that is unusual is an act of obedience to God or is just being out of touch with reality? ("I know it looks strange, but God told me to do this.")
- Does being and doing good pay—or does it just cost?

11. Call attention to Judah's background role in the story of Joseph. Refer to these Scripture passages that mention Judah: Genesis 37:28; 43:3, 8; 44:14-18; 46:28. Describe Judah's relationship with Tamar in Genesis 38, and note the mention of Judah and Tamar in the genealogy of Jesus (see Matt 1:3). Summarize Judah's role by enlisting someone to read aloud Genesis 49:8,10.

12. Conclude by pointing out the later rejection of Joseph's descendants for leadership of Israel (see Psalm 78:9-11,67-72). You may want to comment that Joseph served his day exceptionally well and cooperated with God in moving God's plan along. Maybe that's all anyone could ask of anyone. How well are we ourselves doing that?

For next session: Read chapter four, "Out of Egypt," and Exodus 1—15.

# Session Seven

## *Out of Egypt*

NOTES

*Overview:* This study session deals with chapter four, “Out of Egypt,” in *Journey to the Land of Promise* and focuses on Exodus 1—15.

### **Learning Activities**

1. Begin by pointing out that this session’s title telegraphs the end result of this section of Scripture, Exodus 1—15, as God redeems Israel, God’s child, “out of Egypt.” Note, though, that Exodus 1 begins with Israel’s arrival in Egypt and connects the events of Exodus with the events at the end of Genesis. In fact, the first word in the Hebrew of the Book of Exodus is “and,” indicating that Exodus continues the story from Genesis. Exodus 1 picks up the story of Jacob’s family in Egypt.

2. Use the outline headings and Dr. Kelley’s comments on pages 63-65 to summarize Exodus 1:1—4:26. Call attention to the “dramatic reversals” in both 1:1-22 and 2:1-15a.

3. Refer to the section on pages 66-68 titled “The Call of Moses.” List the main features shared by the call experiences of Moses, Abraham, Gideon, Saul, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Paul (see *Journey to the Land of Promise*, pp. 66-67). They are as follows: (1) vision, (2) voice of command, (3) wide range of responses (volunteers and draft-dodgers!), (4) warning of rejection, (5) promise of God’s continuing presence. Ask the group to think of occasions where they also have sensed that God was sending them on a mission and then to compare their experience to the main features of these call experiences.

4. Lead participants to consider further both Moses’ call and theirs by reviewing with them the excuses Moses made, as follows (list on a chalkboard or flipchart if possible):

- a. Exodus 3:11—Excuse: I’m inadequate for the task.
- b. Exodus 3:13—Excuse: I don’t know enough.
- c. Exodus 4:1—Excuse: They won’t believe me.
- d. Exodus 4:10—Excuse: I don’t have enough skill.
- e. Exodus 4:13—Excuse: Just send somebody else.

Review the excuses and identify God’s answers for the first four. Note that God’s anger in response to the final one may indicate that there’s no answer when a person is simply unwilling to accept God’s provisions of support and insists on opting out.

5. Suggest that the plagues God began to send on Egypt were far more than physical disasters. Rather the plagues were a confrontation of the God of Israel with the gods of Egypt. The three chief gods of Egypt were the Nile, the sun, and the

pharaoh. Animals also were considered sacred. Of course, all the plagues challenged the pharaoh. Various plagues challenged other sacred, divine entities. Ask participants to work together in small groups of three to six people each. Assign each small group one or more of the Scriptures and ask that they work together to (a) identify the plague; and (b) describe the response of the Egyptians.

- (1) 7:14-24
  - a. Blood.
  - b. Magicians did it, too. Pharaoh wouldn't listen.
- (2) 7:25—8:15
  - a. Frogs.
  - b. Magicians did it, too. Pharaoh agrees to let the people go; then he changes his mind.
- (3) 8:16-19
  - a. Gnats.
  - b. Magicians are unable to duplicate this one or any that follow.
- (4) 8:20-32
  - a. Flies.
  - b. Pharaoh agrees to let the people go worship, then changes mind.
- (5) 9:1-7
  - a. Plague on cattle.
  - b. Pharaoh refuses to let the people go.
- (6) 9:8-12
  - a. Boils.
  - b. Pharaoh would not let the people go.
- (7) 9:13-35
  - a. Hail and thunderstorm.
  - b. Pharaoh refuses to let the people go.
- (8) 10:1-20
  - a. Locusts.
  - b. Pharaoh refuses to let the people go. The people plead with Pharaoh to let Israel go.
- (9) 10:21-29
  - a. Darkness.
  - b. Pharaoh instructs Moses never to come to see him again.
- (10) 11:1-10; 12:29-33
  - a. Death of firstborns.
  - b. Pharaoh refuses to let the people go and then relents after the plague has occurred. The people plead with Pharaoh to let Israel go.

6. Review with the group the experience of the Passover and the carrying out of the tenth plague. Enlist someone to read aloud Exodus 12:1-13. Share comments from page 70 under the heading, "Freedom at Last."

7. To lead the group in considering the crossing of the sea, point out that Exodus 13—14 tells the story in prose and Exodus 15 tells it in poetry. Enlist three people to read aloud these Scriptures: Exodus 13:17-18; 14:21-31; 15:21. Point out that people often seem to want to know what the videotape of this event would look like. Refer to Exodus 14:21 and note how the Scriptures join together what we would call “natural” with divine activity. Suggest that the categories of natural or supernatural were foreign to ancient people, including the Hebrews. There was no “natural”; all was “supernatural.” The Hebrews had no understanding of nature as we do, and there is in fact no Hebrew word for “nature” as we understand it. Rather, for the Hebrews God’s hand was in *all* events, even those we would consider to be caused by natural laws. The Hebrews considered the crossing of the Red Sea (and similar events) a miracle because it happened at an opportune time and place and was seen by an inspired interpreter as having been done by God’s hand. Lead the group to consider that a more important question than “What does the video show” is “What does this mean?” Refer to Exodus 14:30-31 and 15:1-2, 13-18, 21 for hints about the event’s meaning to the Hebrews.

8. Call attention to the fact that this portion of Scripture and Dr. Kelley’s treatment of it offer rich insights for spiritual formation. Invite the group to discuss how they resonate with the thoughts that follow and to respond to the questions. You could read them aloud, refer the class to the pages on which they are found in *Journey to the Land of Promise*, or provide them in a handout.

- a. The Exodus “taught Israel that God’s promises were still valid even after centuries of postponed fulfillment” (p. 61). What does this teach about the importance and/or necessity of waiting?
- b. The Exodus shows that God’s choice of Israel was to be understood “not so much as the bestowal of special privilege but as the acceptance of special responsibility” (p. 61). What does this thought suggest about our own relationship to God?
- c. The difficult experience of bondage also taught Israel “to value human freedom” (p. 61). What have you learned from the difficult experiences you have had? (Consider: If we’re not going to learn from our difficult experiences, what’s the use of having them to begin with?)
- d. “Also because of the Exodus experience, the remainder of the Hebrew Scriptures exhibits a deep-seated bias in favor of the world’s weak, downtrodden, and oppressed peoples” (p. 62). To what extent do our actions demonstrate that we share this view?
- e. “God had chosen them not because of who they were, but because of who God was, a God of grace and forgiveness, whose ear was open to the eye of the needy” (p. 62). How much do we really believe in grace? Or, down deep, do we really believe that God should consider it a privilege to have someone like us on God’s side?

- f. “God often performs miracles through fragile and insignificant means” (p. 64), as he did in preserving the life of the infant Moses. How impressed are we with impressive things—plans, organizations, dollars, fluffy public relations campaigns?
- g. “...A way is usually provided for God’s people *through* their difficulties, not *around* them” (p. 71). Why do people keep insisting that faith enables us to find a way out instead of a way through?
- h. “Wherever people are victimized by injustice, oppression, poverty, ignorance, disease, or hunger, God is concerned that they be set free. God is no less concerned for their release from sin’s bondage” (p. 72).
- i. “All our basic questions about God could be reduced to two: ‘Is God able?’ and ‘Does God care?’” (p. 73). What do our worries and fears indicate about how we answer these two questions?

For next session: Read chapter, “Covenant and Commitment at Sinai,” and Exodus 15:22—20:21; 24:1—40:38.

## Session Eight

### *Covenant and Commitment at Sinai*

*Overview:* This study session deals with chapter five, “Covenant and Commitment at Sinai,” in *Journey to the Land of Promise* and focuses on Exodus 15:22—20:21; 24—40.

#### **Learning Activities**

1. Begin by stating that the subject areas to be dealt with in this session involve the Israelites’ journey from the Red Sea to Sinai, the covenant God made with them, and the building of the tabernacle. Later sessions will deal with the Ten Commandments and how they are spelled out in more detail in the Book of the Covenant.

2. Many participants will be able to grasp this section of Scripture more readily if they first understand the big picture of the chronology of the Exodus events. So, refer to and explain Dr. Kelley’s review of the chronology of the Exodus events on pages 84-85. Enlist someone to read the shorter portions of Scripture. Just refer to the longer ones as participants follow with you in their Bibles. You could put this information on a chalkboard or a flip chart. If you do, the review could be summarized more briefly in these outline points:

- a. Exodus from Egypt (Ex 12:2-6, 17-18)
- b. 3 months later—Sinai (19:1)
- c. Covenant-making ceremony 3 days later (19:16)

- d. Moses to top of Sinai for 40 days (24:15—31:18)
- e. Meanwhile, the golden calf (32:1-35)
- f. Moses back to top of Sinai to renew covenant (34:1-35)
- g. Moses instructs in building the tabernacle (35:1-19)
- h. People finish the tabernacle on day 1, month 1, of year 2 of freedom (40:17)
- i. Next month, leave Sinai (Num 10:11-12)

3. Use the information in the section titled “The Road to Sinai,” pages 75-77, to provide more details of outline point *a*. Help the group relate to one of the main features of this section—the people’s complaints. Enlist people to read aloud Exodus 15:24; 16:2-3; 17:2-3. Engage the group in discussion by asking questions similar to these:

- How could the Hebrews complain so soon after they had been redeemed from slavery and had experienced the miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea?
- What contemporary circumstances in the lives of individuals seem to parallel the Hebrews’ experience? in the circumstances of nations? (Consider, for example, the situation in some areas that formerly were part of the Soviet Union.)
- Why do people sometimes respond with complaints about what they don’t have instead of gratitude for what they do have?
- How can people in the Hebrews’ situation be brought to their senses?
- When is complaining a good thing to do? When does it become destructive, self-defeating, and a self-fulfilling prophecy that merely perpetuates the negative?

4. Note that a positive way of dealing with problems is to create a structure that gives attention to them and resolves them. Review Moses’ experience with his father-in-law Jethro and Jethro’s advice to Moses in Exodus 18. Enlist someone to read aloud Exodus 18:13-27. Ask the group to listen for principles for helping people work together more effectively (delegating to qualified people, using a sensible structure, teaching to prevent problems before they occur, listening to and implementing good advice). Call attention to the four qualifications Jethro set forth for people with whom Moses could share responsibility (see Ex 18:21 and p. 77 of *Journey to the Land of Promise*).

5. Refer to the section, “Covenant and Commitment at Sinai,” on pages 77-82 of *Journey to the Land of Promise*, especially to the six stages of “The Process of Covenant Making at Sinai” on page 78. Note that the events and emphases of the six stages fit in outline points *b* and *c* of step 2. Use the six stages as a guide for helping the group understand this portion of Scripture. You

could write these six stages on a chalkboard or flip chart, as follows, and enlist someone to read the Scripture passages as you lead the group through the stages.

(1) *God's invitation and the people's response (Ex 19:1-9)*. Ask the group to listen for words that describe the Hebrews (treasured possession, priestly kingdom, holy nation). Use Dr. Kelley's comments on page 79 to explain the words. Note that another element to grasp in this section of Scripture is God's grace. Refer to 19:4. Even in the giving of the Law, the setting is grace.

(2) *The preparation of the people for encountering the Lord (19:10-15)*. Ask the group to listen for the preparations the people were to make and to think of reasons for them.

(3) *God's awesome appearance (19:16-25)*. Ask: What do the events in this passage suggest about what God is like?

(4) *The proclamation of the Ten Commandments (20:1-17)*. Explain that the next session will deal with the Ten Commandments themselves. Point out briefly, though, that the Ten Commandments are unconditional law. They were not optional or debatable. They simply were to be obeyed. Israel was to consider them fundamental and basic, recognizing that true members of the covenant community did not do the things named. Read aloud the quote from David H.C. Read at the bottom of page 80. Ask which of these approaches is more restrictive: (a) Everything not expressly permitted is forbidden. (b) Everything not expressly forbidden is permitted. (The first is more restrictive, permitting only a small range of actions.) Ask which approach describes the Ten Commandments (b).

(5) *Moses as mediator (20:18-21)*. Ask: What does this passage suggest about how the people felt about God?

(6) *The sealing of the covenant (24:1-18)*. Ask people to turn to one or two partners and brainstorm answers to this question: What are some questions the Hebrews may have had that this passage of Scripture might have been intended to answer? Receive reports. Then follow up with these questions: What answers does this passage provide for us? What additional questions does it create?

6. Refer to the section, "The Breaking of the Covenant," which begins on page 82 of *Journey to the Land of Promise*. Relate this section to outline point *e*. Summarize the incident briefly, using Exodus 32:1-6 and Dr. Kelley's comments in this section. Note especially Moses' role in interceding for the people. Enlist someone to read aloud the following passages: Exodus 32: 9-12, 30-32. Ask:

- a. What picture of God do we get in these verses? (Ready to destroy the people and start over with Moses alone.)
- b. What picture of Moses do we get? (Interceding for the people's forgiveness, to the point of being willing to die himself instead of the people.)

7. Refer to outline point *f*, and enlist someone to read aloud Exodus 34:1-9. Use Dr. Kelley's comments to explain the verses.

8. Refer to outline points *g* and *h* about the building of the tabernacle. Explain what the tabernacle was (a kind of portable worship center). Enlist someone to read aloud Exodus 33:15-16. Point out that the tabernacle provided a visual cue about God's presence with the people. Invite people to tell of significant worship experiences they have had and of actions they may have taken to continue the experiences. Point out that the idea of God "tabernacling" with God's people continues into John's description of Jesus in John 1:14 and the vision of heaven in Revelation 21:3.

For next session: Read chapter 6, "Covenant and Law," and also read Exodus 20—23; Leviticus 1—7; 16; 18-20; 26.

## Session Nine

### *Covenant and Law*

*Overview:* This study session deals with chapter six, "Covenant and Law," in *Journey to the Land of Promise* and focuses on Exodus 20—23 and the Book of Leviticus.

### Learning Activities

1. Introduce the study by pointing out that fans of the Law, including the Book of Leviticus, should be happy during this session, since that's what the group will study! Point out also that people who are not excited about studying the Law, including the Book of Leviticus, should also be happy, since the group is studying that topic *only* this session! Note more seriously, however, that the attitude Israel held toward the Law was more positive than we ordinarily imagine. Israel and the Old Testament placed high value on the Law. It was considered a blessing, not a burden.

2. Enlist someone to read aloud Psalm 1:2. After the reading, enlist someone else to read aloud Psalm 119:97. Point out that Psalm 119 was constructed carefully so as to praise the Law. Psalm 119 is an acrostic. Each set of lines starts with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet and follows through with each letter in order. The careful attention to such details indicates that the psalmist intended to convey high regard for the Law. A major problem in the New Testament with the Law relates to the oral traditions that were added to the Law to interpret it. The New Testament also sees the value of the Law. Enlist someone to read aloud Galatians 3:19-24; Matthew 5:17.

3. Refer to the outline of the Book of the Covenant, Exodus 20:22—23:33, on page 89 of *Journey to the Land of Promise*. Form the class into groups of three to six participants each. Distribute the outline points and accompanying Scripture

passages as follows:

- (1) I and II: 20:22—21:32
- (2) III: 21:33—22:17
- (3) IV, V, and VI: 22:18—23:33.

Ask each group to work together to complete and report on the following assignments:

- a. Summarize the overall thrust of the Scriptures in your assignment.
- b. What relationship to any of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17 did you find?
- c. What did you find that you did not expect to find?

Receive reports after about nine minutes of group work.

4. Use the insights on pages 89-90 to comment on the unique features of the Book of the Covenant—a “broad humanitarian spirit” and “a demand for justice.” Point out, for example, the commandments in Exodus 22:21; 23:9 about not wronging aliens. Note also the concern for justice for all, including the poor; see 23:6. Invite discussion about the contemporary relevance of these instructions.

5. Provide an overview of the Book of Leviticus. Suggest that when we are in the world of Leviticus we find ourselves in a different world from ours. Leviticus deals with things like sacrificial offerings, unclean animals, and unfamiliar feasts. Leviticus is important, though, for understanding much of the rest of the Bible. Enlist someone to read aloud Exodus 25:8-9 as background for seeing how Leviticus fit into the life of Israel. The instruction was to build the tabernacle, where God would be present. Read Leviticus 20:26 to see that the kind of God who dwells in the tabernacle is a holy God. Furthermore, God’s people are to be holy and thus should live in a holy manner. So, Israel is to serve a holy God as a holy people by living in a holy manner. Leviticus offers guidance for two ways to accomplish this: (1) regulations to enable the people to stay holy and (2) ways the people could renew their relationship with God when it had been broken by their unholiness.

6. Refer to the section on “Laws Concerning Sacrifices” on pages 92-95, which deals with the guidance in Leviticus 1—7 for offering sacrifices to God. Point out that Leviticus 1—7 provides instructions on the five types of offerings that were included in the Hebrew sacrificial system. Consider using a chart as a learning method for this section. You could put this chart on the chalkboard, or you could follow the suggested design and develop a handout that participants could complete. You could use this chart with the entire group, or you could ask smaller groups to work together, fill it in, and report. In any case, use the comments on pages 92-95 to clarify each sacrifice. Here’s the outline of the chart: *(next page)*

Name of offering	Scriptures	Purpose of the offering	What was offered
Burnt			
Grain			
Shared			
“Sin”			
Guilt			

7. You could continue to use this chart for the study of the Day of Atonement, which is explained on pages 98-99 of *Journey to the Land of Promise*. Emphasize that the Day of Atonement was the high point of the Jewish sacrificial system. Ask, What is the Jewish name for this holiday? (Yom Kippur) Point out that the Day of Atonement was the supreme way by which Israel’s broken relationship with God was restored.

8. Review with the group the Holiness Code, contained in Leviticus 17:1—26:46. Note that Dr. Kelley suggests that “these chapters provide a blueprint for holy living” (p. 99). To help participants identify some of the emphases of the Holiness Code, ask them to scan silently Leviticus 19:3-37 and locate verses that remind them of the Ten Commandments (see especially 3, 4, 11, 12, 13, 16, 30). Point out the New Testament use of Leviticus 19:18, too. Refer also to Leviticus 19:34, where the same command applies to aliens. Consider again the relevance and importance of this verse for the current day.

9. Conclude by calling attention to the fact that even in the Law there is grace. Summarize or read aloud Leviticus 26:40-45, which indicates that God will forgive those who repent and turn to God. Invite participants to read together with you as a parting prayer Numbers 6:24-26, which is printed on page 100.

For next session: Read pages 101-107 of chapter 7, “From Sinai to the Plains of Moab,” and also read Numbers 10—36 (especially Numbers 10—14; 20—25).

# Session Ten

## *From Sinai to the Plains of Moab*

### *Part One*

NOTES

*Overview:* This study session deals with pages 101-107 of chapter 7, “From Sinai to the Plains of Moab,” and focuses on Numbers 10—36.

### **Learning Activities**

1. Introduce the Book of Numbers by stating that one way of understanding the Book of Numbers is to notice where Israel was when Numbers began and where Israel was when Numbers ended. Enlist someone to read aloud Numbers 1:1, and another reader to read aloud Numbers 36:13. Ask the group to notice where Israel was at the beginning of the book and where Israel was at the conclusion (1:1, Sinai; 36:13, on the plains of Moab, only a few miles from the Promised Land). You may want to point out these sites on a map. Note that the title of this chapter in *Journey to the Land of Promise* is an apt description of the Book of Numbers.

Add that the English title for the Book of Numbers also provides a clue for understanding the book. The title “Numbers” reflects two censuses taken in the Book of Numbers. The first was taken before Israel left Sinai (refer to 1:2-3), and the second was taken after Israel had arrived in Moab (refer to 26:1-2). Explain that both censuses were aimed at discovering how many men were available for war. The second was also a basis for the division of the Promised Land.

Continue to introduce Numbers by suggesting that the Hebrew title for the Book of Numbers reveals even more about the book. The Hebrew title is taken from the fourth word of the Hebrew text. The Hebrew word can be translated, “in the wilderness.” So, Numbers tells the story of Israel in the wilderness before reaching the Promised Land. Israel was in the wilderness geographically as it moved through the rugged country from Sinai to Moab. Israel was also in the wilderness theologically, for the book is filled with accounts of Israel’s complaining, rebellion, and unfaithfulness.

2. Lead the group to consider first the part of Numbers dealt with in “Events from Sinai to Kadesh” (*Journey to the Land of Promise*, p. 101). If a map is available, point out the location of Kadesh in relation to Sinai and in relation to the Promised Land.

3. Refer the group to the incident in Numbers 12 in which Aaron and Miriam, Moses’ brother and sister, challenged Moses’ authority. Enlist someone to read aloud Numbers 12:1-3 while the group listens for what Aaron and Miriam did and why they

did it. Receive reports (what they did: spoke against Moses; why they did it: Moses' marriage to a Cushite woman). Invite discussion of reasons Aaron and Miriam might have opposed Moses' marriage. Add insights from *Journey to the Land of Promise*, page 102 (Aaron's jealousy of the leadership of Moses, the younger brother; jealousy among religious leaders; resentment of a person who was not like them, not a Hebrew). Invite discussion of the background to the problem of jealousy. How could Aaron have handled his feelings of jealousy in a better manner? Then deal with the stated cause—resentment of Moses' marriage to a foreigner, someone not like them and even of a different race, as Dr. Kelley states. Inquire: What does this passage suggest about the attitude God encourages toward people different from us?

4. Enlist someone to read aloud Numbers 12:4-16, and encourage the group to listen for God's response to the revolt (support for Moses, punishment for Aaron and Miriam, especially Miriam). Invite people to raise questions they have about the passage. Point out that this passage likely would not be referred to very much in times of intense tension between people of different origins, such as during the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Should it be? (If you want to explore this idea further, you might note that in times of such tension it's more tempting to refer only, for example, to the incident in Ezra where Jewish men were ordered to divorce their foreign wives. Note the danger of emphasizing only the Bible portion with which we agree and universalizing it.)

5. Ask participants to scan silently Numbers 13—14 and then look for this information with a partner:

- a. What happened?
  - b. Why do you think the people responded the way they did?
  - c. How did God respond?
  - d. What motto or slogan would you suggest to capsule the intended learning from this incident?
- (Consider writing the preceding questions on the chalkboard so that the group can refer to them.)

Receive and discuss reports. Explore *b* and *d* especially. In exploring *b*, why the people responded as they did, remind the group of the comments in the last paragraph on page 103 of *Journey to the Land of Promise*, that the Israelites had not been able to handle their freedom effectively.

Summarize this incident by stating that as a result of the Israelites' rebellion, forty years were required to accomplish an objective the Israelites could have reached in two weeks had they been faithful to God.

6. Review briefly the other incidents of rebellion in Numbers 16 and Numbers 20. Use the insights in "More Acts of Rebellion" on page 104. Call attention especially to the first sentence: "The

Israelites never seem to have learned anything from the suffering they brought upon themselves.” Inquire: Why didn’t they? Why don’t we? (You might suggest that Einstein is supposed to have defined insanity as doing the same things over and over again but expecting different results each time.)

7. Move to the story of Balak and Balaam in Numbers 22—24. Note that some Bible scholars consider, with good reason, that Balaam is one of the strangest figures in the Bible. Balaam is not an Israelite, but he is aware of and claims to know the God of Israel (22:13; 24:13). He furthermore is one of the funniest, unintentionally, of Bible characters. In fact, these incidents portray him as being dumber than a donkey. And, as Dr. Kelley suggests, “Any time a prophet has less insight than a donkey, the prophet needs to examine his or her credentials” (p. 106). Invite someone to read aloud Numbers 22:1-5 to identify Balak and Balaam. Then summarize from Numbers 22:15-35 the incident with the donkey. You could have this passage read aloud as a dramatic reading with these five readers—(1) narrator, (2) Balak’s servants, (3) Balaam, (4) God and “angel of the Lord,” (5) donkey—if you can persuade someone to be the donkey.

Summarize the three incidents in which Balaam attempted to curse the Israelites—(a) Numbers 23:1-12; (b) 23:13-26; (c) 23:27-30. Then note from 23:8-10 and 24:17-18 the tributes Balaam pays to Israel.

Engage the group in discussion by asking:

- Why do you think the Hebrews remembered and recorded these incidents in Scripture?
- What meaning do you think they have for us?

For next session: Read pages 107-119 of chapter seven of *Journey to the Land of Promise* and also read the Book of Deuteronomy, especially Deuteronomy 1—6; 31—34.

## Session Eleven

### *From Sinai to the Plains of Moab—Part Two*

*Overview:* This study session deals with pages 101-119 of chapter seven, “From Sinai to the Plains of Moab,” and focuses on the Book of Deuteronomy.

## Learning Activities

1. Introduce the Book of Deuteronomy by quoting this sentence from page 107 of *Journey to the Land of Promise*:  
 “Deuteronomy is widely considered to be the most influential book in the Pentateuch.” Ask the group why they think this is so. Provide and explain these reasons as needed:

- a. Deuteronomy played a great role in the reforms of King Josiah during the 7th century B.C. (see 2 Kings 22:8 to 23:24).
- b. Deuteronomy serves as the theological framework for understanding the history of the Israelites from the time they entered the Promised Land until the time they were exiled in Babylon. The books from Joshua to 2 Kings (except for the Book of Ruth) are known as the “Deuteronomic history.”
- c. Deuteronomy influenced prophets such as Jeremiah and Hosea.
- d. Deuteronomy is referred to or quoted often in the New Testament.

2. To introduce the Book of Deuteronomy further, refer to the title, “Deuteronomy.” Ask: If you knew that “nomos” is the Greek word for “law,” what would you guess the name “Deuteronomy” means? (second law) Suggest that the name “Deuteronomy” hints at the content of the book—a restatement of the Law for the future. Suggest that this restatement was needed for a couple of reasons:

- a. The generation of Hebrews who had received the Law at Sinai were no more. Inquire: What had happened to them and why? (Recall from Numbers 13—14.)
- b. As Israel entered, settled, and lived in the Promised Land, they were about to live a new kind of life, and their leader Moses was not going with them. A fresh look at the Law was needed for a new day, just as it was needed later during the time of Josiah (2 Kings 22—23), as suggested in step 1.

3. Summarize from the section “The Shape” on page 108 the outline of Deuteronomy, that it is composed of three farewell speeches by Moses.

Name and review briefly the three “Major Themes of Deuteronomy” (pp. 109-112). As you do, read the Scripture passages cited, especially those that are quoted. Emphasize the third major theme, “The Demand for Justice, Mercy, and Compassion.” Enlist someone to read aloud Deuteronomy 15:1-3,7-11, which describes the year of jubilee and humanitarian practices associated with it. Use questions like these to generate discussion:

- What was to be done?
- Why?
- What would make putting these instructions into practice difficult for the Hebrews?

- What would make putting these instructions into practice difficult for us?

Review briefly other passages, such as these: on kings—17:14-17; on religious leaders—18:3-8; on birds' eggs—22:6; on slaves—23:15-16; on employers—24:14-15; on merchants—25:13-16. Inquire: What are some truths these teachings indicate to you?

5. Use the insights from pages 113-117 to lead the study of the Ten Commandments. Encourage the group to consider current applications to life of each of them. Introduce the study by pointing out that the Ten Commandments were unconditional, not optional. Note also that the Hebrews themselves saw the need to find ways to understand how each commandment applied to particular circumstances. Ask whether anyone can explain the difference between a policy and a procedure. (A policy states the principle; a procedure gives further details about how the principle is worked out in particular circumstances.) In a sense, the Ten Commandments are the "policies," and much of the rest of the laws of the Pentateuch are the procedures. Note also that the Ten Commandments are also provided in Exodus 20 as well as Deuteronomy 5. With each commandment, ask the group (1) to think of a title for it and (2) to consider current applications to life.

- First commandment—Deuteronomy 5:6-7 (One God Only)
- Second commandment—Deuteronomy 5:8-10 (No Idols)
- Third commandment—Deuteronomy 5:11 (No Wrongful Use of God's Name)
- Fourth commandment—Deuteronomy 5:12-15 (Keep the Sabbath) Compare Deuteronomy 5:12-15 and Exodus 20:8-11 to see the differing reasons.
- Fifth commandment—Deuteronomy 5:6 (Honor Your Parents) Note Dr. Kelley's comments on page 115 concerning to whom this commandment was directed.
- Sixth commandment—Deuteronomy 5:17 (No Murder) Note on page 115 some ideas about the varying applications of this commandment.
- Seventh commandment—Deuteronomy 5:18. (No Adultery) Note on page 116 the meaning of adultery in the Old Testament. Consider the enhanced insights of the New Testament.
- Eighth commandment—Deuteronomy 5:19. (No Stealing) Remind the group that this commandment includes white-collar crime, too.
- Ninth commandment—Deuteronomy 5:20. (No False Witness)
- Tenth Commandment—Deuteronomy 5:21 (No Greedy Attitudes and Acts)

6. Suggest that in some ways Deuteronomy 6:4-9, the “Great Commandment,” also known as the *shema* (“Hear”), is an appropriate point at which to conclude this study of the Pentateuch. Enlist someone to read aloud Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and ask the group to listen for answers to these questions:

- What is God like?
- How are God’s people to respond to God?
- How important are these words?
- How should these words be passed on and remembered?

7. If all participants can see the same Bible translation, read together Deuteronomy 6:4-9 as the closing prayer for the session and the study.

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Dr. Ross West is the writer of this *Leader’s Guide*. He is also the author of *Go to Work and Take Your Faith Too!* (Smyth & Helwys), *How to Be Happier in the Job You Sometimes Can’t Stand* (Broadman and Holman), and many curriculum materials for adult study groups. He leads seminars for businesses and churches and provides publishing assistance to individuals and organizations. He’s also an adjunct instructor at Shorter College for courses in Introduction to the Bible, Christian Education, and Church Administration. He lives in Rome, Georgia, where he is a member of First Baptist Church.

The writer is honored to have a small part in the work of the late Dr. Page Kelley. He first had association with Dr. Kelley as a student of Dr. Kelley at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He remembers Dr. Kelley as an exceptional Bible scholar and teacher who both taught and lived the Scriptures. Dr. Kelley’s reverence for the Scriptures, his competence in interpreting them, his personal warmth, his integrity, and his commitment to Christ constitute a legacy that continues to bless many lives.