



Exodus Study Questions

Week 12

Have you ever been mid-way through a critical season of life only to have the proverbial wheels fall off? Your showcase project is wrapping up, but the company unexpectedly folds. Your home is about to hit the market but the market suddenly tanks. Your relationship is getting serious but the other person decides they have “the gift” that will keep you from moving forward. Sometimes, we’re to blame for the problem. This week in Exodus, Israel is at a critical point of its own following their golden calf rebellion. Now, the future is in jeopardy as they’re confronted with a hard truth: *they can’t be God’s people if they don’t have God’s presence*. Will God really leave them to journey on their own?

Main Text: Exodus 33:1-34:9

Connect

1. Have you ever been mid-way through a project or plan, only to have the wheels come off? Did you cause or contribute to the problem? Share your stories with the group!
2. What did you find most significant from this week’s sermon?

Understand

1. Read chapter 33, verses 1-6. Where do we see both God’s judgment and mercy in these verses following the aftermath of the golden calf incident?
2. What’s the significance of the people’s response in verses 4-6 when they take off their “ornaments,” or jewelry?¹ How does this compare with what the people did in verses 2-4 of chapter 32?
3. Read verses 7-11. Which words, phrases, or ideas describe the LORD’s presence and which depict His distance? Why is the LORD present, but at a distance from the people?
4. In verses 12-16, how do Moses’ requests align with God’s will and seek God’s glory rather than merely self-serving interests?

5. Read the rest of the chapter. What was it about Moses' requests that "found favor" in God's sight (v. 17) and led the LORD to grant what Moses was asking for?

Apply

1. This chapter depicts the consequence of rebellion (i.e., sin) against God. What can we learn about the impact of sin on our relationship with God?
2. The people of Israel display a genuine sorrow over their sin. Is there anything we can learn from their example in verses 4-6? What should it look like for us to express sorrow when we sin?
3. The LORD is present with His people in this chapter, even in spite of their sin. How should we think of God's presence with us today? Consult the last sentence of Matthew's Gospel as well as John 14:15-17.
4. In verses 15-16, Moses regards God's presence as the most valuable thing he and Israel could experience. If it were possible, would you want the blessings of the "Promised Land" if God was not there? Can you think of ways we might be tempted to pursue God's blessings but neglect God's presence?
5. Chapter 34, verse 6 describes God as "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness."² As a group, share examples of how you have experienced God in these ways and then thank Him in prayer.

Notes:

1. One scholar explains that "The wearing of jewelry expressed a positive, joyful attitude to life experienced as good. In times of mourning jewelry was inappropriate." (*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 3:322)
2. Similar expressions are repeated eight times in the Old Testament and serve as an example of how the "God of the Old Testament" is not what He is sometimes characterized as—an angry, vengeful God. Note the ESV footnote for v. 7 ("Or to the thousandth generation") which contrasts the scale of God's "steadfast love" with God "visiting the iniquity of the fathers [of the guilty]...to the third and the fourth generation." In this way, the magnitude of God's love far exceeds (thousands) that of His wrath (third and fourth) even though His wrath is justified!