

Week #:	82	Series:	Walking with God in the Desert	Title:	Session 2: Help Is Here'
Text:	Deuteronomy 32:10; Jeremiah 17:5-8; Genesis 17:4, Genesis 17:20; Genesis 22:1-14; Exodus 15:27; Numbers 11:31-32; Deuteronomy 8:4; Exodus 3:21-22; Exodus 31:1-11; Exodus 35:4-10; Exodus 35:20-29; Exodus 36:2-7; Exodus 37:1; Genesis 22:13-14; Numbers 6:24-26				
Songs:	Trust In You – Lauren Daigle (3:30)				
	El Shaddai – Amy Grant (4:11)				
	I Need You More – Lindell Cooley (5:03)				
Video:	Walking with God in the Desert: Help Is Here (Ray Vander Laan) (31:21)				
	The Aaronic Blessing – Jonathan Cahn (2:40)				

The Torah reveals that the Hebrews could have traveled from Egypt to the Promised Land in two or three weeks rather than in forty years! Yet, knowing that their journey would be painful, God had a specific purpose for leading His people into the “howling waste” of the Sinai desert (Deuteronomy 32:10). Through hard desert experiences, God molded and shaped them to be a people prepared to enter the Promised Land, a people prepared to take their place in God’s unfolding plan for redeeming His creation.

The Hebrews quickly discovered that they could not survive in the desert without God’s provision. In Egypt, they had irrigated their crops during the annual Nile floods and apparently came to believe that they provided for themselves. In the Promised Land, they would depend on God’s provision of annual rains that He promised would come if His people trusted Him and lived by His every word. In between was the desert, where the Hebrews learned to depend on their God for everything.

Although the desert path was at times difficult and painful, God was always with His people. He led them by pillars of fire and cloud. He traveled with their camp, His presence living on the holy Ark of the Covenant that was carried in front of the people. He faithfully provided just enough to sustain them each day.

Sometimes God’s provision came suddenly and miraculously. Manna fell from the sky, water gushed from solid rock, and bitter water became fresh. The former Hebrew slaves, unskilled in warfare, defeated powerful enemies. Those who were bitten by poisonous snakes were restored to health.

At other times, God met their needs through resources He had already provided in the desert. After they experienced great thirst, God led them to the twelve wells and seventy palm trees at Elim. At the right moment, He drove migrating quail into Israel’s camp in the Sinai, providing His people with meat. When they needed gold and silver, wood, and skilled craftsmen to build the Tabernacle, Egypt had provided the gold and silver, the desert provided the wood, and trained craftsmen among the Hebrews completed the work.

Although it may be tempting for us to believe that God never intends for us to suffer or to face hard times, and that He prefers for us to be blessed with abundance and to never experience lack, God often leads His people into or at least allows us to experience the pain and hardships of the desert. There we learn to trust in God’s presence and provision and grow into a closer, more intimate relationship with Him.

The day will come when we will no longer face the exhausting heat, brutal hardships, and overwhelming thirst of our earthly deserts. Today, however, we must journey through them. We must feel the pain, the loss, the confusion, the helplessness. But God never leaves us alone or uncared for in our deserts. As He has always done for His people, He walks with us in our deserts. He faithfully provides – sometimes in dramatic, unpredictable, amazing ways – exactly what we need to take our next step.

Jeremiah 17:5-8

⁵ Thus says the Lord: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord.

⁶ For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land which is not inhabited.

⁷ “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord.

⁸ For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit.

When we find ourselves in a painful desert experience – financial crisis, broken relationship, illness or injury, or a time when our path demands more than we are able to give – we reach a point where our own resources fail and we lack what we need to keep going. In such situations, as in the rest of our lives, God promises to provide for those who depend on Him.

1. In what ways has God provided for you during your desert experiences? _____

2. When has He suddenly done something miraculous, or when has He provided through something that was already in place on your desert path? _____

3. How had you learned to recognize and appropriate God’s provision for you? _____

****WATCH DVD****

4. Except for an occasional oasis that may support a few palm trees, the trees that grow in this vast desert region are the broom trees, the acacia, the tamarisk, and the ar’ar. These trees usually appear as single trees, or occasionally in a small cluster. How does this help you to understand why the Bedouin who live in these desert regions call the acacia tree their best friend? _____

5. When you realize that it may take decades, or even hundreds of years for a tree to grow to maturity in the desert, what insight do you gain into how god cares for His people as demonstrated by His provision of trees long before His people need them? _____

-
-
6. What insights have you gained regarding God’s provision for His people in light of the many different ways the acacia tree supports life in the desert where there are few other resources?

 7. What was your mental picture of what a tree planted by streams of water looked like, and how has this video changed your perception? _____

 8. How does the image of a tree planted by a stream in the desert change your understanding of the persistent effort required to be deeply rooted in God’s words in order to become a fruitful tree?

 9. When Abraham planted a tamarisk tree near Beersheba, he was making a powerful statement of His faith in God and His promises. How often do we even think of taking a step of faith that will bear fruit generations after we are gone, and how might thinking in this way change how we walk with God and experience Him in our deserts? _____

GOD HAS ALREADY PROVIDED:

Abraham, a nomadic shepherd whom God chose to be the father of many nations, the father of Israel (Genesis 17:4; Genesis 17:20), experienced God’s provision in many ways. During the years Abraham walked with God, God had provided food during times of famine, protection from angry kings, great flocks and wealth, protection for his nephew Lot, and the miraculous provision of an heir long after the normal childbearing years. Abraham knew that God would provide.

After living in Egypt for hundreds of years, Abraham’s descendants, the Israelites, apparently had lost sight of God’s faithful provision. Then God acted mightily to deliver His people from slavery in Egypt. He led them into the desert where they began to learn, as their father Abraham had, that their God would be faithful to walk with them and provide for them even in the desert.

10. After finally providing the son He had promised to his faithful servant Abraham, God told Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, to Him. (Genesis 22:1-14)
 - a. In what sense was this desert experience for Abraham, and in what sense was it not? ____

- b. What did Abraham trust God to provide in the desert? _____

- c. What kind of faith did it take for Abraham to hope and believe in God’s future provision?

- d. How did God provide what Abraham needed? _____

- e. What was Abraham’s lasting testimony of what god had done for him on that mountain (vs 14)? _____

11. When God led His people out of Egypt and into the unforgiving deserts of the Sinai, what had He already provided for them that would help them to survive their desert journey? (Exodus 15:27; Numbers 11:31-32; Deuteronomy 8:4) _____

12. After meeting with His people at Mount Sinai and establishing a covenant with them, God commanded them to build a sanctuary in which His presence would live among them. One might not expect that the Israelites, who left Egypt in a hurry, would have resources they needed to complete the job. How had god already provided exactly what His people needed to obey His commands? (Exodus 3:21-22; Exodus 31:1-11; Exodus 35:4-10; Exodus 35:20-29; Exodus 36:2-7; Exodus 37:1) _____

In many ways our seasons of pain, struggle, and suffering – our deserts – are similar to the deserts the Israelites faced. They lived in scorching heat of difficult circumstances, thirsted for a vibrant relationship with God, didn’t know where their future would lead, became discouraged, and had to choose whether or not to trust God to provide for them.

Just as God heard the cries of His ancient people, He still hears His people cry out during times of crisis – sickness, job loss, broken relationships, pain, loneliness, emptiness. Sometimes He comes alongside us providing comfort, restoration, and healing that enables us to continue walking in the desert. His provision may come in many ways – through a caring friend an unexpected gift, a surgeon’s skilled hands, or a portion of His word, the Bible. Sometimes He miraculously takes us out of the desert.

No matter how He provides, God will meet our needs as He has promised. What is most important, however, is that we recognize God – not ourselves – as our provider. This is the life-changing truth that Abraham and his descendants, the Israelites, discovered through their desert walk with God so many years ago.

13. Our times in the desert often lead us into a deeper relationship with God as we learn to love, trust, and obey Him. in what way(s) has God’s provision during desert times not only provided for your survival, but provided a way for you to walk more intimately with Him? _____

14. When God uses everyday means to meet your needs in the desert, to what extent do you tend to minimize His role and take credit for what He alone has provided? _____

15. When you find yourself in the desert experience, in what ways are you tempted to think that you can provide for yourself rather than recognizing and being grateful for God’s daily provision for you? _____

16. What specific things will you do, starting today, to cultivate an awareness of – and thankfulness for – God’s daily provision? _____

17. After God provided the ram for Abraham’s sacrifice (Genesis 22:13-14), what was Abraham’s testimony to what god had done for Him? _____

18. Do you think Abraham’s faith in God deepened that day? If so, how? _____

19. What is your testimony of what God has provided for you? _____

20. How emphatically have you declared it so that other people know what He has done for you? _____

Genesis 22:13-14

¹³ Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide [El Shaddai]; as it is said to this day, “In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”

PRAY:

Pray together, asking God to help you to trust Him to meet your needs during your desert times. Ask Him to help you to humbly recognize His provision for your life.

i