

Week #:	84	Series:	Walking with God in the Desert	Title:	Session 3: When Your Heart Cries Out
Text:	Deuteronomy 8:15; Exodus 13-17; I Samuel 23:14; I Kings 19:1-8; Deuteronomy 2:7; Psalms 78; Ezekiel 20; Acts 7; I Corinthians 10:1-13; I Kings 4:25; Psalms 124:1-8; Psalms 69:1-3; Psalms 69:13-17; Psalms 18: 1-6; Psalms 18:16-19; Psalms 18:46-50; Psalms 40:1-5				
Songs:	Trust In You – Lauren Daigle (3:30)				
	God Will Make A Way – Don Moen (4:20)				
	Holy Spirit – Jesus Culture (8:10)				
Video:	Walking with God in the Desert: Help Is Here (Ray Vander Laan) (31:21)				
	The Aaronic Blessing – Jonathan Cahn (2:40)				

At first glance, the desert may seem to have only negative connotations in the Bible. Its reputation as a place of danger, death, suffering, and hardship is well deserved. Even Moses, who spent most of his life in the desert, described it as that “vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions” (Deuteronomy 8:15).

Pushed by the hardships and uncertainty of the Sinai deserts, the Israelites soon came to the end of their own strength and resources. They rebelled against the Lord, murmuring and complaining against Him in spite of His miraculous provision. Because of their rebellion and lack of trust in God, the desert became a place of punishment for them.

Yet the desert was also a place of refuge, blessing, and intimate communion with God. When God delivered the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt, He marched them into the Sinai Desert where He miraculously provided bread from heaven, water from rock, quail, and protection from their enemies (Exodus 13-17). David often found safety from King Saul’s murderous intentions in desert strongholds (I Samuel 23:14). Elijah escaped execution by Queen Jezebel by escaping into the desert (I Kings 19:1-8).

In the barren deserts, God’s people experienced many miracles that turned their times of suffering into intensely personal experiences of God’s glory, guidance, and provision. God chose the desert as His classroom to teach His people to depend in Him as they faced the painful struggles of each day. There they experienced the Lord’s strength and learned to follow Him as their Shepherd, thus becoming equipped with the faith to advance the kingdom of heaven.

Through the desert hardships God molded His people – Abraham, Moses, the Hebrews, Joshua, David, Jesus, Paul, and many others – into the people they needed to become in order to be His instruments of blessing to all peoples.

The experience of God’s care for His people in the wilderness echoes throughout their history: in Moses’ last speech (Deuteronomy 2:7), David’s songs (Psalms 78), Ezekiel’s prophecies (Ezekiel 20), Stephen’s speech before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7), and Paul’s instruction to the early church (I Corinthians 10:1-13). The Israelites’ years of pain and struggle – the years when the hazards of the desert caused them to cry out to God to save them – not only bore fruit in their lives as God molded them, but continue to bear fruit in the lives of God’s people who learn from their stories today.

God desires that His people know Him intimately, trust Him completely, and obey Him wholeheartedly so that we can bring His provision and blessing to others who struggle in the deserts of life. But to create such character in us, God sometimes allows or leads us into painful deserts of disease, brokenness, loss, discouragement, rejection, and failure. We may complain and rebel, but when we face the heat, hunger,

and thirst of our deserts, when we face the overwhelming floods of adversity, we discover that if we cry out to Him for help He will hear our cries and answer.

God is with us! Just as He was present with His ancient people, God is present with us – providing “just enough” to sustain us for another day and another mile. Yes, the desert can be a difficult place that utterly overwhelms us, but it also is the place that drives us back into the arms of our loving, faithful God.

Psalms 69:1-2, 69:15-17 says:

<sup>1</sup> Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck.

<sup>2</sup> I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I have come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.

<sup>15</sup> Let not the floodwater overflow me, nor let the deep swallow me up; and let not the pit shut its mouth on me.

<sup>16</sup> Hear me, O Lord, for Your lovingkindness is good; turn to me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies.

<sup>17</sup> And do not hide Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily.

Now that you have an idea of what the deserts of the Bible are like, what do you think would be the challenges and dangers of living in or traveling through these deserts? \_\_\_\_\_

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What do you think is the greatest life-threatening danger people face in the desert? \_\_\_\_\_

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**\*Watch dvd\***

1. Part of this study was filmed in the Judean Wilderness above Qumran near the Dead Sea. Rain in the mountains of Beersheba, Hebron, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem are located, is what causes the flash floods in the wadis of the Judean Wilderness. About how far away are these mountains from the wilderness wadis near the Dead Sea? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. How would a person in the wilderness know that it was raining in the mountains? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. In what ways did the video change your understanding of what a flood in a wadi can be like? Of the danger of floodwaters in the desert? Of God’s watchfulness and power to save when His people call for help? \_\_\_\_\_

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It's hard to imagine how sudden and powerful a wadi flood can be. In the desert, some dangers build up gradually and one can see the risk increase to a hazardous level. Other dangers are unexpected, sudden, and dramatic.

4. What would be some examples of each kind of danger in the desert? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. What would be some examples of each kind of danger in the desert experiences of our lives? \_\_\_\_  
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6. What did the video add to your understanding of Jesus' parable about building one's house on the sand or on the rock? \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. What would be some examples of building on the "sand" today? \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. What would be some examples of building on the "rock" today? \_\_\_\_\_  
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During Biblical times, many of God's people lived near the desert, in the desert, or had traveled through the desert, so the common images from the desert that are used in the Bible helped people experience God and to be reminded of Him frequently as they went about daily life. To walk on sand is to remember the importance of building on the rock; to step into the sticky mud of a wadi is to remember the Good Shepherd rescuing His sheep and setting them safely on solid ground.

9. In what ways did the desert images shared in the video teach you about God and living in relationship with Him? \_\_\_\_\_  
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10. Which images common in your life or the life of your community might God use to teach you, to help you to experience a more vivid relationship with Him, or to help you to remember and obey His teaching? [For example what is it about being stuck in traffic and unable to move, experiencing the fury of a hurricane, being amazed by a new technology, or seeing a tornado approach that causes you to say, "That's what it is like when God..." or, "That is the kind of trouble I was in when God stepped in to save me," or, "When I see \_\_\_\_, it helps me to remember how important it is to obey God and walk with Him."] \_\_\_\_\_  
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## WHEN THE FLOODS OF ADVERSITY SWEEP OVER US:

Sometimes life is good in nearly every way, as was true during Solomon’s reign when the people “lived in safety, each man under his own vine and fig tree” (I Kings 4:25).

In our world, that picture of the good life may include having a secure job, living in a country that is at peace, having healthy children, and enjoying satisfying relationships. But at other times, life doesn’t seem to be very good. In fact, it can become extremely difficult and painful – like life in the desert. We may lose our job, our business may fail, our children may die in battle or by disease, and our relationships may become strained or end. Sometimes we see such desert experiences build slowly to a crisis, but at other times they come at us with startling speed and overwhelming power – like a flood in a desert wadi.

Before becoming king of Israel, David spent much of his life in the Judean Wilderness as a shepherd near Bethlehem and when running for his life from King Saul. So it is not surprising that he included many desert images in his psalms. Let’s read the following psalms aloud and see what they reveal to us about David’s experience with desert floods and how he trusted God to hear his cry and counted on God to save him.

### Psalms 124:1-8

<sup>1</sup> “If it had not been the LORD who was on our side,” Let Israel now say— <sup>2</sup> “If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us, <sup>3</sup> then they would have swallowed us alive, when their wrath was kindled against us; <sup>4</sup> Then the waters would have overwhelmed us, the stream would have gone over our soul; <sup>5</sup> then the swollen waters would have gone over our soul.”

<sup>6</sup> Blessed *be* the LORD, Who has not given us *as* prey to their teeth. <sup>7</sup> Our soul has escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we have escaped. <sup>8</sup> Our help *is* in the name of the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.

11. What kind of experience did David compare to raging flood in Psalms 124:1-8? \_\_\_\_\_

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12. What does this psalm add to your understanding of David’s life experiences and his trust in God’s help? \_\_\_\_\_

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13. Why do you think God allows us to experience “close calls” where we are at risk of being swept away or destroyed before He delivers us? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Psalms 69:1-3

<sup>1</sup> Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to *my* neck. <sup>2</sup> I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing; I have come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. <sup>3</sup> I am weary with my crying; my throat is dry; my eyes fail while I wait for my God.

14. In what ways is David's description of His trouble in Psalms 69:1-3 like a wadi flood, and how serious was the trouble he faced? \_\_\_\_\_

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Psalms 69:13-17

<sup>13</sup> But as for me, my prayer *is* to You, O LORD, *in* the acceptable time; O God, in the multitude of Your mercy, hear me in the truth of Your salvation. <sup>14</sup> Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; let me be delivered from those who hate me, and out of the deep waters. <sup>15</sup> Let not the floodwater overflow me, nor let the deep swallow me up; and let not the pit shut its mouth on me. <sup>16</sup> Hear me, O Lord, for Your lovingkindness is good; turn to me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies. <sup>17</sup> And do not hide Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily.

15. What do you notice as you continue reading David's plea for help in verses 13-17? To what extent does he seem frantic or confident about his cry for help and why do you think that is? \_\_\_\_\_

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16. What did David believe was the reason God would help him? Is it still the reason God helps people? If so, what would you expect God to do if you cannot avoid a desperate situation and you cry out to Him for help? \_\_\_\_\_

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NO ESCAPE FROM FLOODWATERS:

To be caught by rushing floodwaters in the bottom of the deep, narrow wadi in the Judea Wilderness would be a terrifying experience. A few months before the video for this session was filmed, four hikers died in the flood in the same canyon in which we stood. The fear we would experience if such a flood engulfed us became real. We had no place to run. there was no quick way to climb up the canyon walls to safety. As we stood in the bottom of the wadi, we gained a new understanding of the Bible passage that mention floods from which there is no escape and recalled experienced in our lives that could be described by a wadi flood. A sudden flood in a wadi such as this one leaves few options for escape.

David composed Psalms 18 after being delivered from enemies who wanted to kill him. Read verses 1-6, 16-19, and 46-50 below:

<sup>1</sup> I will love You, O Lord, my strength. <sup>2</sup> The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. <sup>3</sup> I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies. <sup>4</sup> The pangs of death surrounded me, and the floods of ungodliness made me afraid. <sup>5</sup> The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me; the snares of death confronted me. <sup>6</sup> In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry came before Him, even to His ears.

<sup>16</sup> He sent from above, He took me; He drew me out of many waters. <sup>17</sup> He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too strong for me. <sup>18</sup> They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my support. <sup>19</sup> He also brought me out into a broad place; He delivered me because He delighted in me.

<sup>46</sup> The Lord lives! Blessed be my Rock! Let the God of my salvation be exalted. <sup>47</sup> It is God who avenges me, and subdues the peoples under me; <sup>48</sup> He delivers me from my enemies. You also lift me up above those who rise against me; You have delivered me from the violent man. <sup>49</sup> Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the Gentiles, and sing praises to Your name. <sup>50</sup> Great deliverance He gives to His king, and shows mercy to His anointed, to David and his descendants forevermore.

17. With which desert image does David describe his desperate situation and God? \_\_\_\_\_

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18. How does what you have seen of the desert help you to better understand these images, particularly David's life experience with God and the reality of the trouble he faced? \_\_\_\_\_

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19. What evidence do you see that David had a deep, intimate relationship with God before calamity struck, and how did it help him in the tie of crisis? \_\_\_\_\_

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20. How did David respond to his deliverance, and how does this demonstrate what God wants His people to become through their desert experiences? \_\_\_\_\_

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Psalms 40:1-5 says:

<sup>1</sup> I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry. <sup>2</sup> He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. <sup>3</sup> He has put a new song in my mouth— Praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the Lord. <sup>4</sup> Blessed is that man who makes the Lord his trust, and does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. <sup>5</sup> Many, O Lord my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done; and Your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted to You in order; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

21. Which image from the wadis did David use in Psalms 40:1-5? \_\_\_\_\_

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22. Even though David was apparently at risk as if he were stuck in the muck of a wadi, why do you think he "waited patiently" for the Lord to find him? \_\_\_\_\_

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23. How might David’s experience as a shepherd have taught him to wait on God, his Shepherd? \_\_\_\_\_

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24. What story did David have to share about the trustworthiness of his God? \_\_\_\_\_

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Rushing water from the mountain transports heavy, slippery clay into the wadis where it settles in pools in the rock. Baked from the sun, the clay becomes nearly as hard as rock, but when new floods come, the clay softens into a sticky mud that is almost like quicksand. Bedouin shepherds tell stories of sheep that wandered into a wadi to drink and became so stuck in the mud around water pools that their shepherd had to lift them out and set them on rocks above the water. If a flood had come at that time, they all would have drowned. It is likely that David had personal experience rescuing sheep from the mud of wadis in the Judea Wilderness near Bethlehem.

Many of us have had to face frightening situations that we cannot escape – situations that fit David’s descriptions of being trapped in a raging wadi flood or hopelessly mired in sticky clay. As a teacher, for example, I [Ray] have known parents who have experienced “desert floods” when their child chose paths other than God’s path. Whether their child chose sexual experimentation, alcohol, drugs, rebellion, or crime, these parents felt trapped. They could not change their child’s path. They could only watch, knowing all too well the disaster that might shatter their lives. Sometimes God spared them such pain, but sometimes floodwaters of pregnancy, addiction, serious injury, death, or the child’s complete rejection of the Christian faith overwhelmed them. When I have shared the images David used to describe his time of crisis, they can relate. Every parent who had experienced this devastation had also “cried out” in fear, helplessness, and even terror.

25. What is your wadi flood? [The sudden death of a loved one? An unexpected diagnosis? A devastating breach of trust in a relationship? a crippling financial crisis?] \_\_\_\_\_

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26. How long did you know your difficult time was coming? Did you see the crisis building, or did it crash over you before you knew what was happening? \_\_\_\_\_

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27. How did it feel to be stuck in the “mud” of your circumstances and be unable to avoid or prevent the coming crisis? \_\_\_\_\_

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28. In what ways were your feelings like and unlike David expressed during his times of crises? \_\_\_\_\_

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29. What can you learn from your experience and David’s example to help you face a crisis in the future? \_\_\_\_\_

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30. Did you cry out to God to save you? If not, why not? If so, what did you expect Him to do? \_\_\_\_\_

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31. How did God rescue you from the crisis or sustain you through the crisis so you were not completely swept away? \_\_\_\_\_

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32. Why is it important to have a deep and intimate relationship with God before tragedy strikes or times of trouble come? \_\_\_\_\_

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33. How might you cultivate this kind of relationship with God? \_\_\_\_\_

Pray together.