

**The following are personal devotional and small group questions to accompany the Lent sermon series, THE LAND BETWEEN. This follows the period between the land of slavery and the land of promise. We encourage you to read through the book of Exodus, and time permitting, Numbers and Deuteronomy, in preparation for this series. Small groups may opt to do all the questions or focus on a few.**

### **Week One - Fertile Ground for Courage**

#### **Open**

What is one daring thing that would take all your courage to undertake?

#### **Dig Deeper – Read Exodus 12: 1-11; 13: 3,9**

1. Put yourself in the place of an Israelite hearing these Passover instructions – what’s going on in your mind, in your emotions, in your body? What will you need courage for on this night and in the days to follow (The Land Between)?
2. Read the following verses: Ex 7:5; 7:17; 8:1; 8:20; 9:1; 9:13; 10:3; 12:12. What do these verses leading up to the Passover tell us about God’s heart and purpose?
3. As we consider the blood on the doorposts, is there anything illuminating about the fact that all those with faith in the true God and who put blood on the doorposts, not just the Israelites, were saved (Ex 12:38)?
4. Read Ex 13: 3,8,9 and then Mt 26:26-28; 1 Cor 5:7; Heb 9:13-15. What new meaning does Jesus as the Passover lamb give to this remembrance?

#### **Our Story**

1. Does this picture of God striking down every firstborn sit uncomfortably with your image of a loving and caring God? Why or why not?
2. What did ‘I am the LORD’ mean in your life specifically today (perhaps in an action, attitude or worship)?
3. We regularly commemorate Jesus’ blood on the ‘doorposts of our hearts’ at Communion. How would you describe the place and meaning of Communion in your life?
4. The image of God’s ‘mighty hand’ (Ex 13:3), with often ‘and outstretched arm’ added, is used many times in the Bible. How can this image give you courage as you face a difficult situation in your life this week?

#### **For further reflection and study**

We regularly sing:

*‘What will wash away my sin?*

*What will make me whole again?*

*Nothing but the blood, nothing but the blood of Jesus’* (Redman)

To further reflect on why Jesus’ blood saves and transforms, read:

Lev 17:11; Matt 26:28; Luke 22:20; John 10:55-59; Acts 20:28; Rom 3:24-25; 1 Cor 11:24-30; Col 1:20; Eph 1:7; Heb 9:14; Heb 10:19; Heb 13:2; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Rev 1:5; Rev 7:14; Rev 12:11

## Week Two - Fertile Ground for both Faith and Doubt

### Open

What's one thing you find yourself complaining about regularly?!

**Dig Deeper – Read Exodus 14:10-14 and Numbers 13:26-33** *These passages record the Israelites' complaints and doubts at the beginning of the Exodus, and then forty years later as they are about to enter the Promised Land.*

1. Optional: To get an idea of the repeated pattern of doubts and complaints of the Israelites read the following:  
Exodus 14: 10-14  
Exodus 15: 22-26  
Exodus 16: 1-11  
Exodus 17: 1-5
2. Discuss what you consider to be at the **heart** of the Israelites complaints and doubts in the Exodus and Numbers passages?
3. Is there anything surprising or enlightening to you about how God, through Moses and Caleb, responds to each of these complaints? What does this tell us about what God is like?
4. Can anger at God be Godly? Is there a difference between the Israelites' venting and the Psalms of lament venting? (To illustrate read Psalm 10:1: Psalm 44:24: Psalm 142:2: Psalm 88:15-18)

### Our Story

1. Do you ever think, "Those close to me would be shocked if they knew some of my doubts I have about my faith?" Can faith and doubt co-exist?
2. Do you agree with the following statement by Philip Yancey: *The life of faith sometimes consists of acting as if the whole thing is true.*
3. Discuss the current nagging questions about the life of faith that you come across in your daily life.
4. Lewis Smedes writes: *Hope can feel unbearable when we passionately long for what we do not have and it is taking too long to come; we are restless as a farmer waiting for rain.* Why is patience toward God in the Land Between so difficult? Is there an example you would like to share?
5. The Israelites often had spiritual amnesia but throughout Scripture God calls his people to 'remember, remember, remember'. What role does 'remembering' have in your faith journey? If you keep a journal or prayer journal share how this has helped you.

## Week Three - Fertile Ground for God's Guidance

### Open

Who would you rush to for advice when facing a decision or difficulty?

### Dig Deeper – Read Exodus 13: 20-22; Exodus 33: 12-33

1. The Lord's guidance for the Israelites was unmissable – the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. How do these images of God guiding his people in this way link it with Colleen's recent sermon when she spoke of God as both Comforter and Disruptor? Also read Nehemiah 9: 16-21
2. What effect does God's visible and supernatural expression of his presence have on the Israelites' faith? Also read Nehemiah 9:26-31
3. How does God meet Moses' words of uncertainty and vulnerability in the Exodus 33 passage? What is significant about God saying 'I know you by name' and how does this relate to guidance?
4. How is God's presence and glory fully revealed in Jesus? Read John 1:14 – what strikes you about this verse?

### Our Story

1. We no longer have a pillar of cloud or fire – discuss the various means God uses to guide his children today.
2. Read and discuss the following two statements concerning God's guidance by David Benner:
  - *We fail to recognise that our problem is not so much knowing God's way **as** being utterly convinced that choosing God is choosing life*
  - ***How** we decide can often be as important as what we decide. If Christ is to have our will, he must first have our heart*
3. The central way we hear God's voice is through his Word. Describe some of the ways you make space to hear God through his Word. Do you need fresh and creative ways of engaging with God's Word to you?
4. How will the reassurance that God knows you individually by name help you as you face an uncertainty or change in your life? Are you able to trust that in some way this situation will play into God's bigger picture? Does this feel obvious or hidden?
5. How have you heard God's voice in the study tonight?

## Week Four - Fertile Ground for Provision

### Open

Would you describe yourself as a worrier or someone who just takes life as it comes?

### Dig Deeper – Read Exodus 16:1-12

1. God purposefully led the Israelites into the wilderness. Discuss what you think the wilderness training was really about and why God allowed them to get into life-threatening situations? Read Isaiah 40:11
2. Was the Israelites complaint just about food or was it something more than that?
3. Read John 6:30-35 What is Jesus saying about the true manna/bread? (*Notice that Jesus is speaking in the present tense*)
4. Discuss the link between manna only being provided daily and Jesus directing us to pray, 'Give us our daily bread'.

### Our Story

1. How would you define and describe God's provision? Do you see it in terms of health, wealth and happiness, or do you understand it in another way?
2. Can you describe a time when God provided in an obvious way? How has this impacted your faith?
3. Can you describe a time when God did not provide in the way you expected (or continues to not provide)? How has this impacted your faith?
4. In what ways might God want us to be his channel of provision to others? Discuss what this might look like with family or friends going through unrelenting trials.
5. Read Matthew 6:25,26 Is this passage realistic when we're faced with a need that has us awake in the middle of the night? Can you share spiritual or mental exercises we can use to reduce worry and trust God for the way he wants to provide for our needs?

## Week Five - Fertile Ground of Obedience and Growth

### Open

What has your dog (if you own one) taught you about obedience?!

### Dig Deeper – Read Deuteronomy 30: 11-20

1. What unspoken objection is answered in verses 11-14? (*Question from Serendipity Bible*)
2. Read vs 15 to 20 and make two lists – what defines obedience, and the blessings of obedience.
3. Reading the same passage, make two lists – what defines disobedience, and the realities of disobedience.
4. Why do the Israelites repeatedly see-saw in their obedience and resistance?
5. As we've considered the way God relates to his people during their exodus, does grace follow law, or does law follow grace?

### Our Story

1. What do you consider to be the one major factor in our failure to love the Lord with heart, mind, soul and strength?
2. List together 'other gods' that we are tempted to bow down and worship. Which is the most tempting for you?
3. Throughout these passages it's as if God is desperate for us to choose him and life but he limits his power by allowing us to choose. What drew you to choosing Life? Have you experienced the rewards defined in this passage?
4. Read the following by Tish Harrison Warren: *The waters of baptism initiate us into a life of obedience to the God of love and mercy revealed in Scripture. It's a life of painful redemption, of unrelenting transformative grace that teaches us to repent and sets us free from sin to be born again and again and again and again and again into new life in Christ.* Why would we do well to remember our baptism as we seek a life of obedience and growth?

**Optional question!** There are 601 laws in the basic OT law structure. They are all fulfilled in Christ except for twelve of them, which are repeated in the NT. Can you name these twelve?