

A person is walking on a sandy ridge in the foreground, looking out over a vast desert landscape. The middle ground is filled with colorful, eroded hills in shades of orange, red, and yellow. In the background, there are blue and purple mountains under a clear sky.

Finding
GOD *in the*
DESERT
of the **SOUL**

A Four-Session Video-Based Study for Small Groups

BUDDY OWENS

Finding **GOD** *in the* **DESERT** *of the* **SOUL**

Edition 2.0

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Published by Saddleback Valley Community Church
1 Saddleback Parkway
Lake Forest, CA 92630
www.pastors.com

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Photography by: Frank Baker, Jeremy Elder, and Kim Blake
Cover Design by: Julie Head and Anthony LaGrasta
Interior Design by: Betty Hopkins

Printed and bound in the United States of America

ISBN: 978-1-4228-0180-2

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Manly Beacon at Zabriskie Point



Sunrise at Death Valley

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Red Cathedral

Understanding Your Study Guide

Here is a brief explanation of the features of this study guide.

LOOKING AHEAD / CATCHING UP

You will open each meeting by briefly discussing a question or two that will help focus everyone's attention on the subject of the lesson.

KEY VERSE

Each week you will find a key Bible verse for your group to memorize together. If someone in the group has a different translation, ask them to read it aloud so the group can get a bigger picture of the meaning of the passage.

VIDEO LESSON

There is a video lesson for the group to watch together each week. Fill in the blanks in the lesson outlines as you watch the video, and be sure to refer back to these outlines during your discussion time.

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Each video segment is complemented by three questions for group discussion. There is no reason to rush through the answers. Give everyone ample opportunity to share their thoughts.

PRAYER DIRECTION

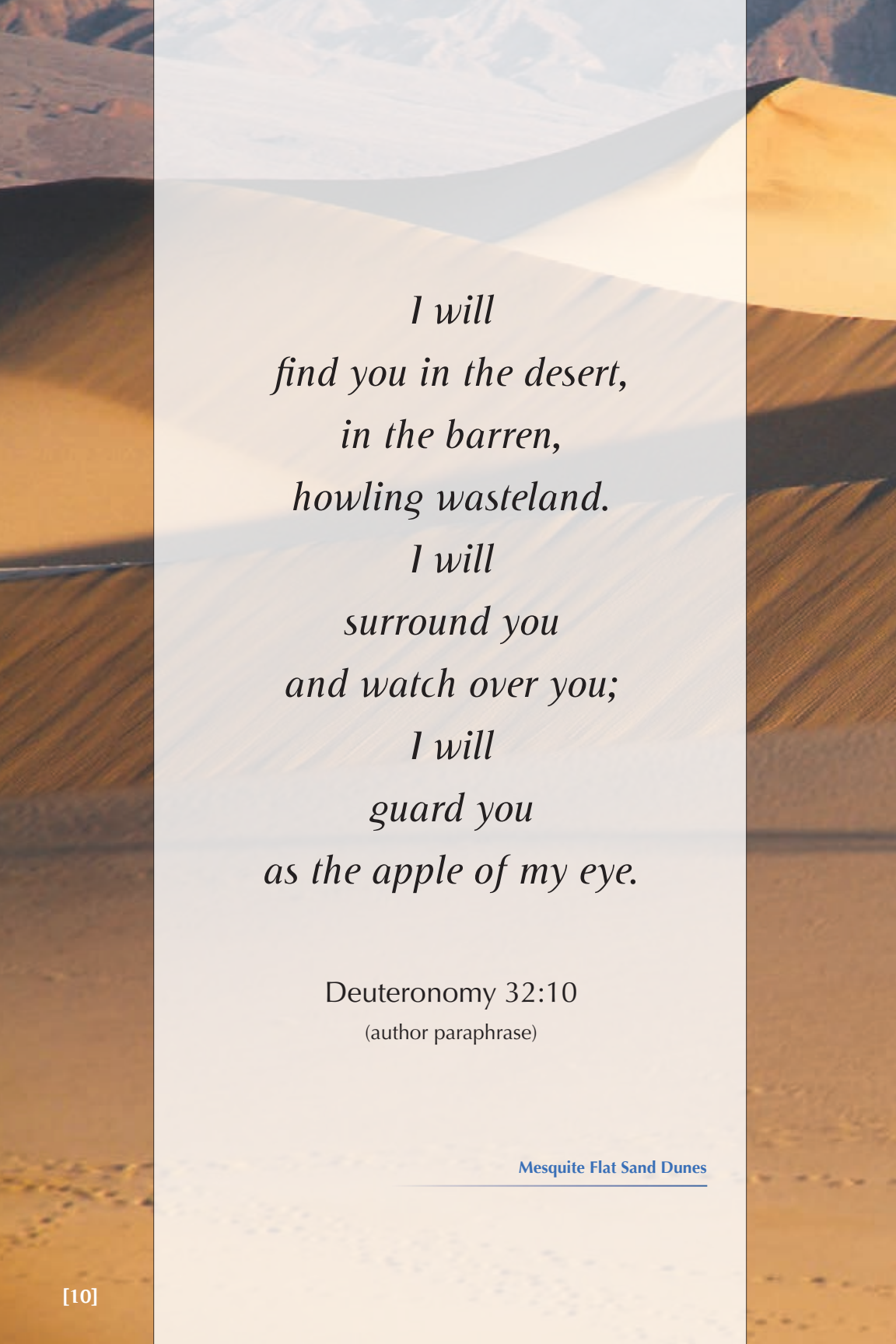
At the end of each session you will find suggestions for your group prayer time. Praying together is one of the greatest privileges of small group life. Please don't take it for granted.

PARTING SUGGESTIONS

At the end of each session you will find two suggestions for consideration throughout the week.



Salt Flats at Badwater Basin



*I will
find you in the desert,
in the barren,
howling wasteland.
I will
surround you
and watch over you;
I will
guard you
as the apple of my eye.*

Deuteronomy 32:10

(author paraphrase)

Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes

SESSION ONE

A Dry and Weary Land
Where There
is No Water

Filmed in Death Valley, California at
Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes, Badwater Salt Flats,
Devil's Cornfield



Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes

LOOKING AHEAD

- What are you hoping to get from this study?
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- What do you think of when you hear the word “desert”?
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KEY VERSE

My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.
Psalm 63:8 (NIV)



Watch the video lesson now and take notes in your outline. Refer back to the outline during your group discussion.

There are three kinds of soul deserts:

- **When the** _____ .

Your desert prayer is, "God, where are you?"

- **When your** _____ .

Your desert prayer is, "God, I just don't care anymore."

- **When there is more** _____ **than**
_____ .

Your desert prayer is, "God, I don't have anything left to give."

*O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you,
in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*

Psalms 63:1 (NIV)

Three questions to consider in the desert:

- How did I get here?
- What am I supposed to learn?
- When will I get out of here?

When God leads you into a desert, don't be in a hurry. If you rush your way through, you might miss something. There is a special beauty in the desert that is unlike anywhere else. The Bible says, "[God] has made everything beautiful in its time" (Ecclesiastes 3:11 NIV).

Let your desert prayer be, "God, you can take as long as you need because I don't want to go through this again. I want to learn the lesson the first time."

How long you spend in the desert, to a great extent, depends on you. God wants to see if you will remain faithful to what is right and true.

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Galatians 6:9 (NIV)

In all things God works for the good of those who love him.

Romans 8:28 (NIV)

I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. ³Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. ⁴I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. ⁵My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. ⁶On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night.

Psalms 63:2–6 (NIV)

What do you think about through the watches of the night? When sleep eludes you and you find yourself staring at the ceiling or pacing the floor, do what David did: Take an inventory. Remember what God has already done for you. Think about his love and faithfulness:

- How has he provided for you?
- How has he protected you?
- How did you first meet him?
- How has he answered your prayers in the past?

Don't focus on the prayers he has not answered yet. Instead, think about what God has already done in your life. It will build your faith for your current situation. Instead of blowing your worries out of proportion, it will bring everything into a perspective of faith.

Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings.

Psalm 63:7 (NIV)

Begin to fill your world with songs of faith and worship.

My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.

Psalm 63:8 (NIV)

If you remember him, think of him, and sing to him, it will help your soul cling to him in the darkest hours of your desert experience. I can't tell you how long your season in the desert will last, but I can tell you this: Don't give up hope. God has not abandoned you. He promises in his Word, *"I will never leave you nor forsake you"* (Hebrews 13:5b NKJV).

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Subgroup: If there are more than ten people in your group, we suggest you subdivide the group during your discussion time. This will allow everybody to participate in the conversation.

1. **What did you hear?** What point or Bible passage was the most meaningful to you in this session?

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2. **What do you think?** What are your thoughts about what you heard—what does it mean to you and how does it apply to your life? Are you surprised, challenged, encouraged, hopeful?

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3. What will you do? The Bible says we are not just to be hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word as well (James 1:22). So what are you going to do about what you heard? Is there a change you need to make in your thinking, your beliefs, or your behavior?

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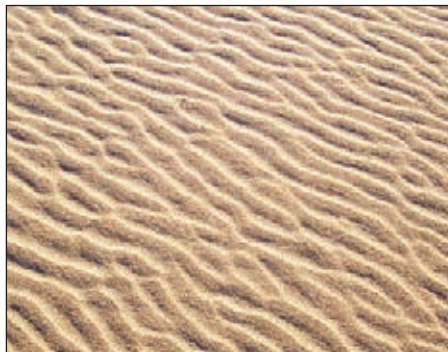
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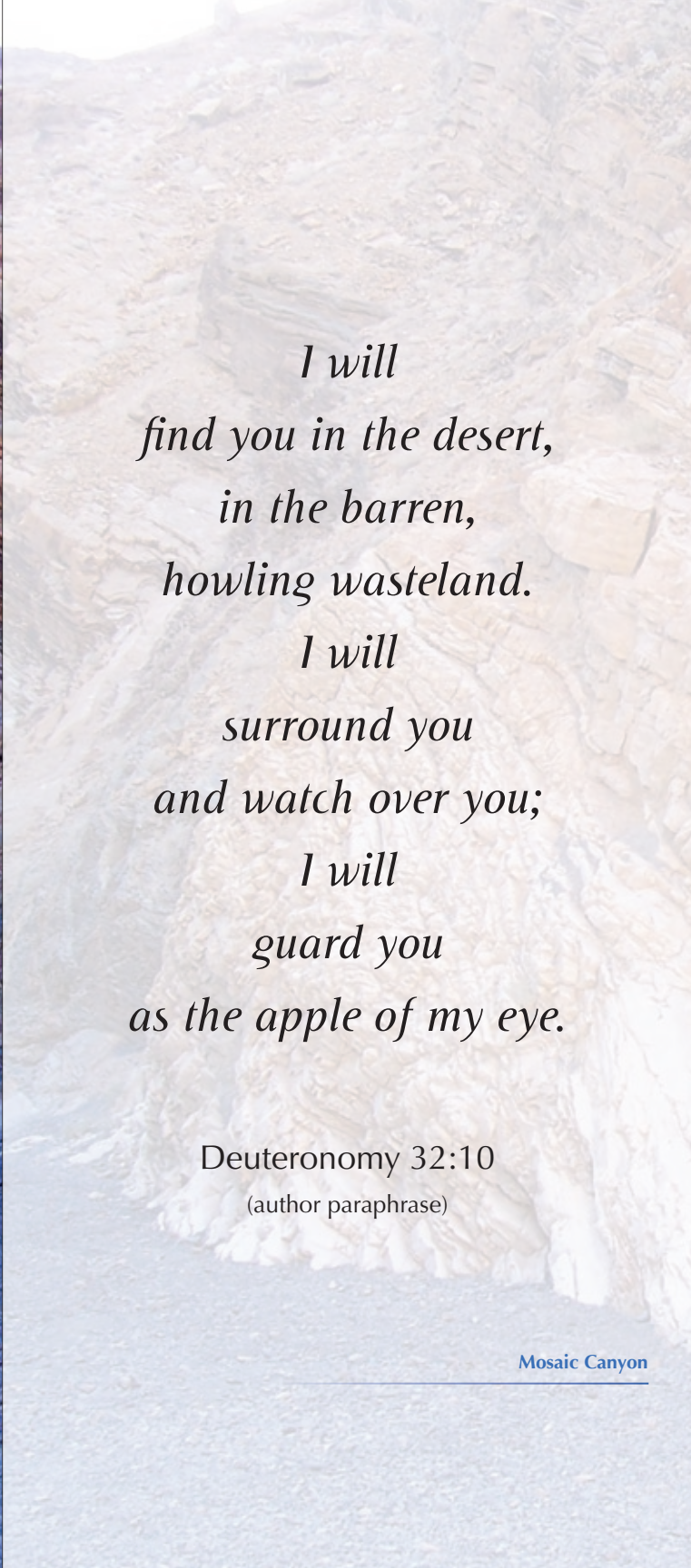
PRAYER DIRECTION

- 1. As you begin your group prayer time, spend a few minutes thanking God for his faithfulness and for the lessons he has taught you in your soul deserts.
- 2. Pray for anyone in your group who is currently in a desert of the soul.

PARTING SUGGESTIONS

- Between now and your next small group meeting, memorize the Bible verse that was most meaningful to you in this session, and make it the focal point of your daily devotions this week.
- Before you go to bed tonight, take inventory of what God has already done in your life. Then take a few minutes to thank him. It will build your faith for your current situation.

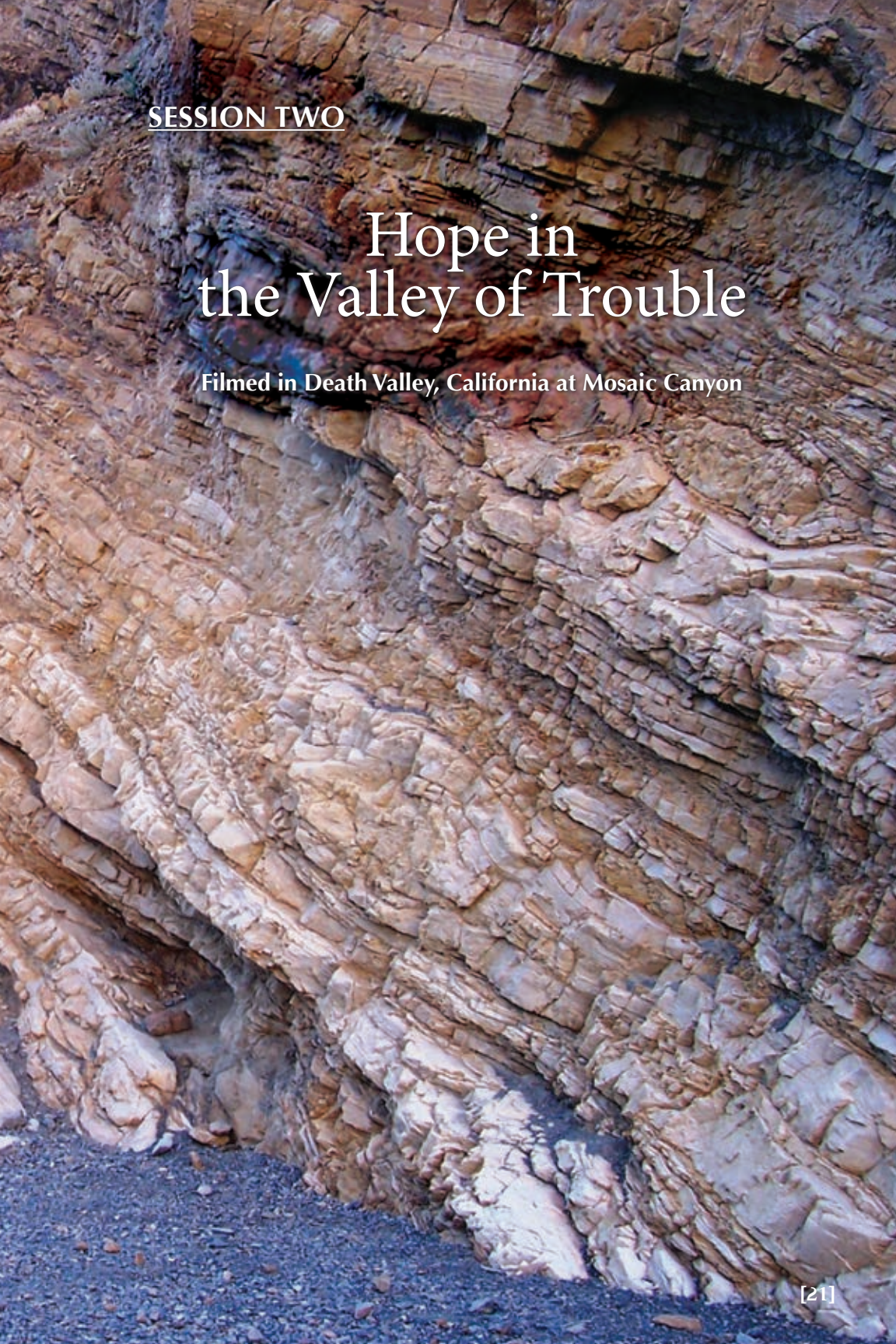




*I will
find you in the desert,
in the barren,
howling wasteland.
I will
surround you
and watch over you;
I will
guard you
as the apple of my eye.*

Deuteronomy 32:10
(author paraphrase)

Mosaic Canyon



SESSION TWO

Hope in the Valley of Trouble

Filmed in Death Valley, California at Mosaic Canyon



Mosaic Canyon

CATCHING UP

- Does anyone have an answer to prayer you would like to share with the group?

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KEY VERSE

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

2 Corinthians 4:17 (NIV)



Watch the video lesson now and take notes in your outline. Refer back to the outline during your group discussion.

*O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you,
in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*

Psalm 63:1 (NIV)

When we think of God leading us, we tend to think of him taking us to greater and greater heights of spiritual accomplishment—always upward, never down, always forward, never backward. But that is simply not the case. Psalm 23 tells us that sometimes the Shepherd leads us right through the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

If you are following Christ and you find yourself in a desert, it's very likely that God led you there, just like he led Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and Jesus into their deserts. It's because he wants to say something to you, and there is no other place you will hear it. The desert is God's way of getting your attention.

“Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her. ¹⁵There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. ¹⁶In that day,” declares the LORD, “you will call me ‘my husband’; you will no longer call me ‘my master.’ ¹⁷I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips; no longer will their names be invoked . . . ²¹In that day I will respond,” declares the LORD. “I will [sing] to the skies, and they will [sing] to the earth; ²²and the earth will [sing] to the grain, the new wine and oil, and they will [sing] to [my people].”

Hosea 2:14–18, 21–22 (NIV)

- **Achor literally means “_____.”**

When God wants to bring you into something new, he first has to bring you out of something old. And very often, the passageway from the old into the new goes through a valley of trouble. It involves sorrow and difficulty. But God says in Hosea 2 that your valley of trouble is not a dead end. It's a doorway into a place of hope, fruitfulness, and restoration.

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9 (NIV)

- **Never put a _____ where God put a _____ !**

Your trouble is not a sentence. It is not the end. It is the beginning of a much greater story.

So which side of the comma are you living on? Are you living on the troubled side or the trusting side?

We do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:16–18 (NIV)

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you.

Ephesians 1:18 (NIV)

- **How you _____ trouble is how you will _____ trouble.**

Don't see it as a dead end. See it as a doorway.

“Do not be afraid, . . . for I myself will help you, . . . ¹⁸I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs.”

Isaiah 41:14, 18 (NIV)

Your desert may seem like a place of desolation, but God will make it a place of restoration. It may seem like a place of barrenness, but God will make it a place of fruitfulness. God will not abandon you in the desert. He will turn your Valley of Achor into a door of hope.

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Subgroup: If there are more than ten people in your group, we suggest you subdivide the group during your discussion time. This will allow everybody to participate in the conversation.

1. **What did you hear?** What point or Bible passage was the most meaningful to you in this session?

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2. **What do you think?** What are your thoughts about what you heard—what does it mean to you and how does it apply to your life?

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3. **What will you do?** The Bible says we are not just to be hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word as well (James 1:22). So what are you going to do about what you heard? Is there a change you need to make in your thinking, your beliefs, or your behavior?

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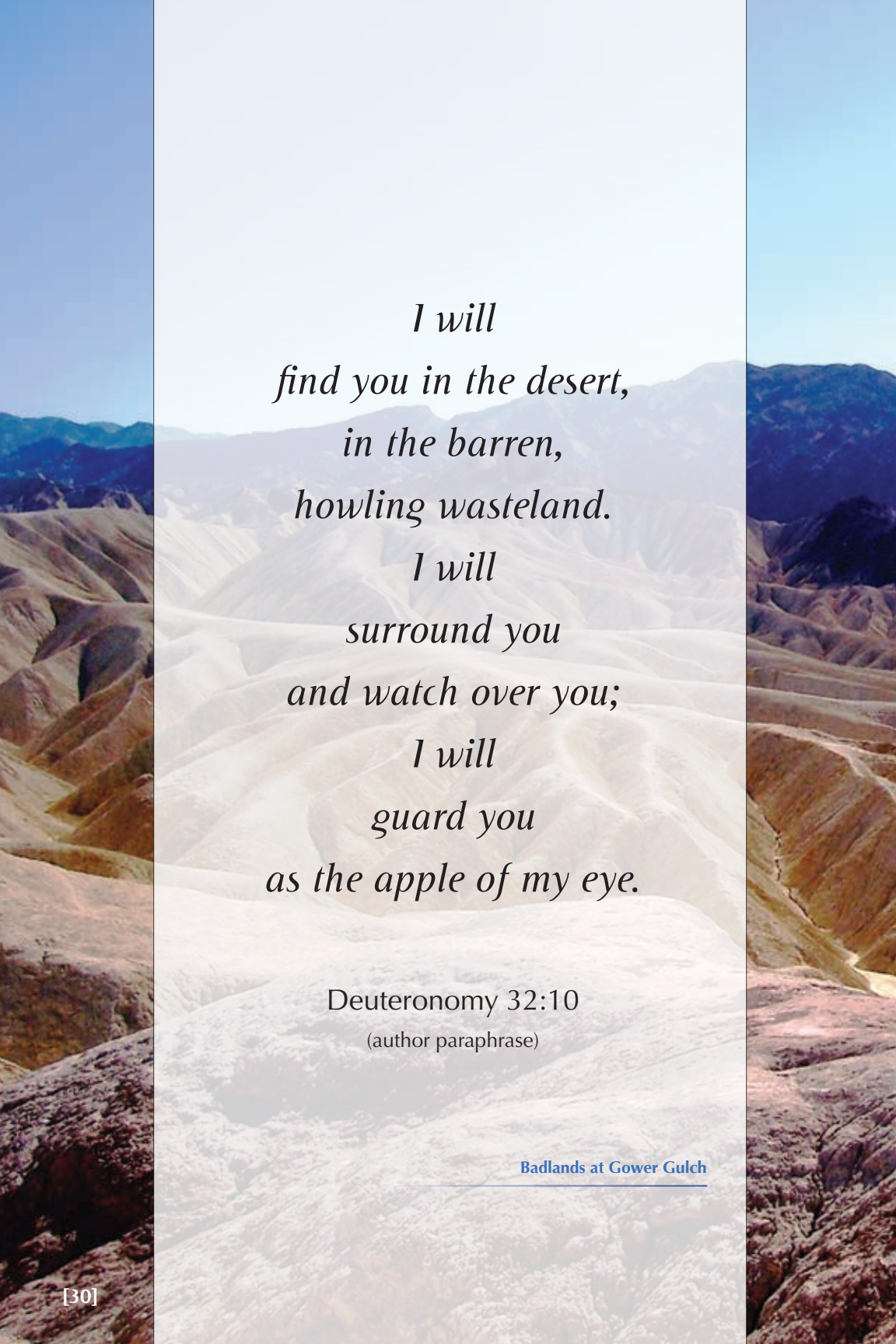
PRAYER DIRECTION

- 1. Begin your prayer time with silent, personal prayer. Think of the biggest challenge you are facing right now. Which side of the comma are you living on? Ask God to help you live on the trusting side.
- 2. Pray for anyone in your group who is currently in a desert of the soul.

PARTING SUGGESTIONS

- Buddy said, “How you see trouble is how you will face trouble.” This week, be aware of your perspective on trouble and hardship. Are you placing a period where God placed a comma? Are you seeing your problem as a dead end or as a doorway for God to come onto the scene? Is it an obstacle or an opportunity for God to display his power in your life?
- Between now and your next small group meeting, memorize the Bible verse that was most meaningful to you in this session, and make it the focal point of your daily devotions this week.





*I will
find you in the desert,
in the barren,
howling wasteland.
I will
surround you
and watch over you;
I will
guard you
as the apple of my eye.*

Deuteronomy 32:10
(author paraphrase)

Badlands at Gower Gulch

SESSION THREE

Prepare the Way for the Lord

Filmed in Death Valley at Zabriskie Point, Gower Gulch,
Twenty Mule Team Canyon, Rhyolite, Artist's Palette



Manly Beacon at Zabriskie Point

CATCHING UP

- How did the message from Session Two help your perspective on your troubles this week?

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KEY VERSE

*In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make
straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.*

Isaiah 40:3 (NIV)



Watch the video lesson now and take notes in your outline. Refer back to the outline during your group discussion.

A voice of one calling: “In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. ⁴Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. ⁵And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Isaiah 40:3–5 (NIV)

God is not waiting for you on the other side of your troubles. He is coming to meet you in the middle of your desert. He will infuse his presence into your situation, but you have to prepare the way for him.

FIVE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE LORD

1. _____ .

Everything we do for God must be done in faith. *“Without faith it is impossible to please God”* (Hebrews 11:6 NIV). You have to take God at his word.

When God seems silent, it’s because he is listening.

Prayer is the language of the heart. Even when you can’t put your thoughts and feelings into words, God understands your deepest groanings.

*Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my
sighing. ²Listen to my cry for help, my King
and my God, for to you I pray. ³In the morning,
O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay
my requests before you and wait in expectation.*

Psalms 5:1–3 (NIV)

2. _____ .

Nothing is going to grow until the seeds are planted. The Bible tells us that the Word of God is like seed that is planted in the soul (see Matthew 13:3–23).

Ask yourself, “**What is the condition of the** _____
_____ **today?**”

Ask the Lord to soften your heart and to break up any hard, unplowed ground. Invite him to plant the seed of his Word deeply into your heart and mind. Ask him to send the rain of the Holy Spirit to water the seed and give it life.

*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the
proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not
give up.*

Galatians 6:9 (NIV)

So don’t give up. Get into the Word of God and get the Word of God into you.

3. _____ .

Clutter, noise, and meaningless activities can be unnecessary distractions. There just might be too much going on in your life—too many yeses, too many commitments—you’re spreading yourself too thin. In the desert seasons you have to carefully parcel out your resources. You must learn to say no. Categorize everything into what’s important and what’s not important. Only do the important things so you can focus more attention on God.

“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

Jeremiah 29:13 (NIV)

4. _____ .

“[In the desert], I will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. ¹⁷I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips; no longer will their names be invoked.”

Hosea 2:15, 17 (NIV)

Just as in the Valley of Achor, you must make a ruthless search for idols—for things in your possession that God has ordered you to destroy.

Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.

Jonah 2:8 (NIV)

Are you holding onto anything that is causing you to forfeit the fullness of God's grace in your life?

“They have cut themselves off from my help by worshiping the idols that they made for themselves from their silver and gold; they have brought about their own destruction.”

Hosea 8:4b (TLB/NLT)

They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless.

2 Kings 17:15b (NIV)

When you feed your passion for God, you starve your passion for worthless idols. When you release your grip on worthless idols, your hands become available to receive more of what God wants for you.

5. _____ .

*With singing lips my mouth will praise you . . .
I sing in the shadow of your wings.*

Psalms 63:5b, 7b (NIV)

“[In the desert] she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt.”

Hosea 2:15b (NIV)

Like a good shepherd hearing the voice of a lost sheep, the Lord will hear your voice and find you in your wilderness. So let songs of praise and worship be the soundtrack of your desert experience. When you fill your world with worship, the Lord will fill your life with his presence.

*“In the desert prepare the way for the LORD . . .
⁵And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and
all mankind together will see it. For the mouth
of the LORD has spoken.”*

Isaiah 40:3, 5 (NIV)

What the mouth of the Lord has spoken, the hand of the Lord will accomplish!

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Subgroup: If there are more than ten people in your group, we suggest you subdivide the group during your discussion time. This will allow everybody to participate in the conversation.

1. **What did you hear?** What point or Bible passage was the most meaningful to you in this session?

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2. **What do you think?** What are your thoughts about what you heard—what does it mean to you and how does it apply to your life?

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3. **What will you do?** The Bible says we are not just to be hearers of the Word, we are to be doers of the Word (James 1:22). So what are you going to do about what you heard? Is there a change you need to make in your thinking, your beliefs, or your behavior?
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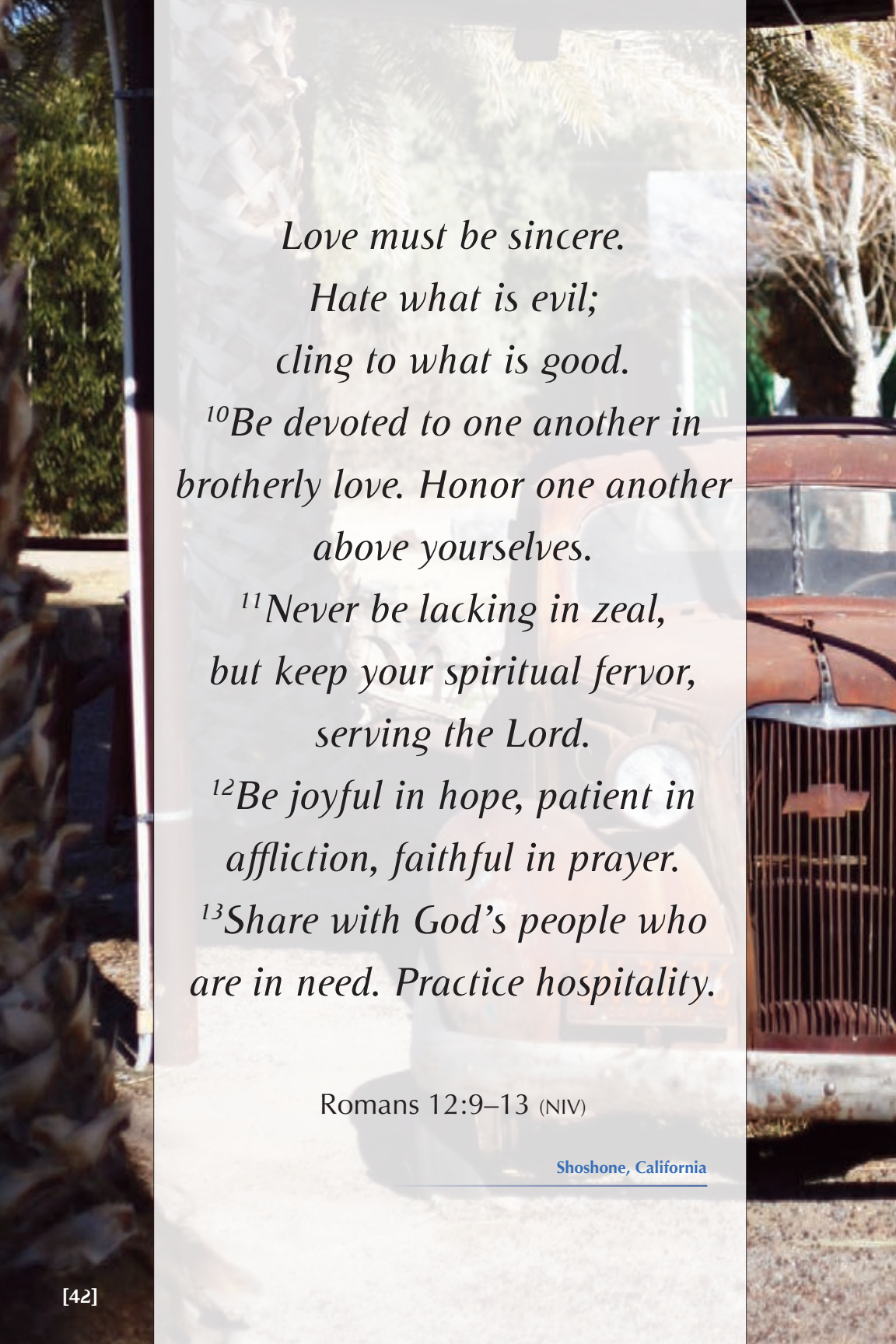
PRAYER DIRECTION

1. Begin your prayer time with two or three minutes in personal, silent prayer. Ask the Lord to show you if there are any idols in your life. If he brings something to mind, confess it to him and ask him to forgive you.
2. Pray for anyone in your group who is currently in a desert of the soul.

PARTING SUGGESTIONS

- Every day between now and your next small group meeting, review the five points of today's message and ask yourself, "Which of these do I need to put into practice today?"
- Memorize the Bible verse that was most meaningful to you in this session, and make it the focal point of your daily devotions this week.





Love must be sincere.

*Hate what is evil;
cling to what is good.*

*¹⁰Be devoted to one another in
brotherly love. Honor one another
above yourselves.*

*¹¹Never be lacking in zeal,
but keep your spiritual fervor,
serving the Lord.*

*¹²Be joyful in hope, patient in
affliction, faithful in prayer.*

*¹³Share with God's people who
are in need. Practice hospitality.*

Romans 12:9–13 (NIV)

[Shoshone, California](#)

A photograph of a junkyard or scrap metal area. In the foreground, there's a rusty, brown car on the left and a blue, industrial-looking machine on the right. A large, rusted metal pipe or wheel is in the center. In the background, a house with white trim and a blue roof is visible through some trees. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

SESSION FOUR

Be Faithful in the
Little Things



Frank Baker (Director) and Buddy Owens

CATCHING UP

- What is the most valuable lesson you have learned in the last three sessions of this study?

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KEY VERSE

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Romans 12:12 (NIV)



Watch the video lesson now and take notes in your outline. Refer back to the outline during your group discussion.

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹²Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Romans 12:9–13 (NIV)

Don't forget the little things. They make a big difference.

“The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

1 Samuel 16:7 (NIV)

God is not looking for great accomplishments. He's looking for Christlike character. Character doesn't develop in leaps and bounds. Character develops one day at a time.

“Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much.”

Matthew 25:21 (ESV)

Before you can be trusted with big things, you have to be faithful in the little things. The overwhelming majority of life is spent doing the little things, because that's where character is built.

“Little” does not mean insignificant. Little things can be extremely significant. The measure of significance is in God's estimation.

Every act of service, no matter how small, can have eternal consequences. The question of significance is not yours to answer. But the question of faithfulness is entirely within your control. Will you be faithful in the little things? One small act of faithfulness can grow into an epic story.

God's greatest gifts are not placed on the highest shelf where they can only be reached through superior acts of spiritual accomplishment or advanced levels of religious education. Indeed, God's greatest gifts are placed on the bottom shelf, and in order to reach them, we must get on our knees.

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹²Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Romans 12:9–13 (NIV)

These are the keys to true spiritual greatness and significance. Let's be faithful in the little things.

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Subgroup: If there are more than ten people in your group, we suggest you subdivide the group during your discussion time. This will allow everybody to participate in the conversation.

1. **What did you hear?** What point or Bible passage was the most meaningful to you in this session?

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2. **What do you think?** What are your thoughts about what you heard—what does it mean to you and how does it apply to your life?

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3. **What will you do?** The Bible says we are not just to be hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word as well (James 1:22). So what are you going to do about what you heard? Is there a change you need to make in your thinking, your beliefs, or your behavior?

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PRAYER DIRECTION

1. Begin your prayer time by thanking God for the lessons you have learned in this study.
2. Pray for anyone in your group who is currently in a desert of the soul.

PARTING SUGGESTIONS

- For your next small group study, we recommend *The Way of a Worshiper*, a four-week, DVD-based study by Buddy Owens. See page 67 in this study guide for details.
- Visit **www.buddyowens.com** to download Buddy's free e-book, *Reading with Your Ears: How to Hear God's Voice in the Bible*.





Badwater Basin
282 feet below sea level

Telescope Peak
11,049 feet above sea level

Small Group Resources

- HELPS FOR HOSTS
- FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
- GROUP GUIDELINES
- CIRCLES OF LIFE
- SMALL GROUP PRAYER AND PRAISE REPORT
- SMALL GROUP CALENDAR
- ANSWER KEY

Helps for Hosts

TOP TEN IDEAS FOR NEW HOSTS

CONGRATULATIONS! As the host of your small group, you have responded to the call to help shepherd Jesus' flock. Few other tasks in the family of God surpass the contribution you will be making. As you prepare to facilitate your group, whether it is one session or the entire series, here are a few thoughts to keep in mind.

Remember you are not alone. God knows everything about you, and he knew you would be asked to facilitate your group. Even though you may not feel ready, this is common for all good hosts. God promises, *"I will never leave you; I will never abandon you"* (Hebrews 13:5b GNT). Whether you are facilitating for one evening, several weeks, or a lifetime, you will be blessed as you serve.

1. **Don't try to do it alone.** Pray right now for God to help you build a healthy team. If you can enlist a co-host to help you shepherd the group, you will find your experience much richer. This is your chance to involve as many people as you can in building a healthy group. All you have to do is ask people to help. You'll be surprised at the response.
2. **Be friendly and be yourself.** God wants to use your unique gifts and temperament. Be sure to greet people at the door with a big smile. This can set the mood for the whole gathering. Remember, they are taking as big a step to show up at your house as you are to host a small group! Don't try

to do things exactly like another host; do them in a way that fits you. Admit when you don't have an answer and apologize when you make a mistake. Your group will love you for it and you'll sleep better at night.

3. **Prepare for your meeting ahead of time.** Preview the session and write down your responses to each question.
4. **Pray for your group members by name.** Before your group arrives, take a few moments and pray for each member by name. You may want to review the **Small Group Prayer and Praise Report** at least once a week. Ask God to use your time together to touch the heart of each person in your group. Expect God to lead you to whomever he wants you to encourage or challenge in a special way. If you listen, God will surely lead.
5. **When you ask a question, be patient.** Someone will eventually respond. Sometimes people need a moment or two of silence to think about the question. If silence doesn't bother you, it won't bother anyone else. After someone responds, affirm the response with a simple "thanks" or "great answer." Then ask, "How about somebody else?" or "Would someone who hasn't shared like to add anything?" Be sensitive to new people or reluctant members who aren't ready to say, pray, or do anything. If you give them a safe setting, they will blossom over time. If someone in your group is a wallflower who sits silently through every session, consider talking to them privately and encouraging them to participate. Let them know how important they are to you—that they are loved and appreciated, and that the group would value their input. Remember, still water often runs deep.

6. **Provide transitions between questions.** Ask if anyone would like to read the paragraph or Bible passage. Don't call on anyone, but ask for a volunteer, and then be patient until someone begins. Be sure to thank the person who reads aloud.
7. **Break into smaller groups occasionally.** With a greater opportunity to talk in a small circle, people will connect more with the study, apply more quickly what they're learning, and ultimately get more out of their small group experience. A small circle also encourages a quiet person to participate and tends to minimize the effects of a more vocal or dominant member.
8. **Small circles are also helpful during prayer time.** People who are unaccustomed to praying aloud will feel more comfortable trying it with just two or three others. Also, prayer requests won't take as much time, so circles will have more time to actually pray. When you gather back with the whole group, you can have one person from each circle briefly update everyone on the prayer requests from their subgroups. The other great aspect of subgrouping is that it fosters leadership development. As you ask people in the group to facilitate discussion or to lead a prayer circle, it gives them a small leadership step that can build their confidence.
9. **Rotate facilitators occasionally.** You may be perfectly capable of hosting each time, but you will help others grow in their faith and gifts if you give them opportunities to host the group.

10. **One final challenge (for new or first-time hosts).** Before your first opportunity to lead, look up each of the six passages listed below. Read each one as a devotional exercise to help prepare you with a shepherd's heart. Trust us on this one. If you do this, you will be more than ready for your first meeting.

Matthew 9:36–38 (NIV)

When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

John 10:14–15 (NIV)

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.

1 Peter 5:2–4 (NIV)

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; ³not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

Philippians 2:1–5 (NIV)

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 10:23–25 (NIV)

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

1 Thessalonians 2:7–8, 11–12 (NIV)

. . . but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. ⁸We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. . . . ¹¹For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, ¹²encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

Frequently Asked Questions

HOW LONG WILL THIS GROUP MEET?

This study is four sessions long. We encourage your group to add a fifth session for a celebration. In your final session, each group member may decide if he or she desires to continue on for another study. At that time, you may also want to do some informal evaluation, discuss your **Group Guidelines** (see page 60), and decide which study you want to do next. We recommend you visit our website at www.saddlebackresources.com for more video-based small group studies.

WHO IS THE HOST?

The host is the person who coordinates and facilitates your group meetings. In addition to a host, we encourage you to select one or more group members to lead your group discussions. Several other responsibilities can be rotated, including refreshments, prayer requests, worship, or keeping up with those who miss a meeting. Shared ownership in the group helps everybody grow.

WHERE DO WE FIND NEW GROUP MEMBERS?

Recruiting new members can be a challenge for groups, especially new groups with just a few people, or existing groups that lose a few people along the way. We encourage you to use the **Circles of Life** diagram on page 62 of this study guide to brainstorm a list of people from your workplace, church, school, neighborhood, family, and so on. Then pray for the people on each member's list. Allow each member to invite several people from their list. Some groups fear that newcomers will interrupt the intimacy that members have built over time. However, groups that welcome newcomers generally gain strength with the infusion of new blood. Remember, the next person you add just might become a friend for eternity. Logistically, groups find different ways to add members. Some groups remain permanently open, while others choose to open periodically, such as at the beginning or end of a study. If your group becomes too large for easy, face-to-face conversations, you can subgroup, forming a second discussion group in another room.

HOW DO WE HANDLE THE CHILDCARE NEEDS IN OUR GROUP?

Childcare needs must be handled very carefully. This is a sensitive issue. We suggest you seek creative solutions as a group. One common solution is to have the adults meet in the living room and share the cost of a baby sitter (or two) who can be with the kids in another part of the house. Another popular option is to have one home for the kids and a second home (close by) for the adults. If desired, the adults could rotate the responsibility of providing a lesson for the kids. This last option is great with school-age kids and can be a huge blessing to families.

Group Guidelines

It's a good idea for every group to put words to their shared values, expectations, and commitments. Such guidelines will help you avoid unspoken agendas and unmet expectations. We recommend you discuss your guidelines during Session One in order to lay the foundation for a healthy group experience. Feel free to modify anything that does not work for your group.

We agree to the following values:

CLEAR PURPOSE	To grow healthy spiritual lives by building a healthy small group community
GROUP ATTENDANCE	To give priority to the group meeting (call if I am absent or late)
SAFE ENVIRONMENT	To create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes)
BE CONFIDENTIAL	To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group
CONFLICT RESOLUTION	To avoid gossip and to immediately resolve any concerns by following the principles of Matthew 18:15–17
SPIRITUAL HEALTH	To give group members permission to speak into my life and help me live a healthy, balanced spiritual life that is pleasing to God

LIMIT OUR FREEDOM To limit our freedom by not serving or consuming alcohol during small group meetings or events so as to avoid causing a weaker brother or sister to stumble (1 Corinthians 8:1–13; Romans 14:19–21)

WELCOME NEWCOMERS To invite friends who might benefit from this study and warmly welcome newcomers

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS To get to know the other members of the group and pray for them regularly

OTHER

We have also discussed and agree on the following items:

CHILDCARE

STARTING TIME

ENDING TIME

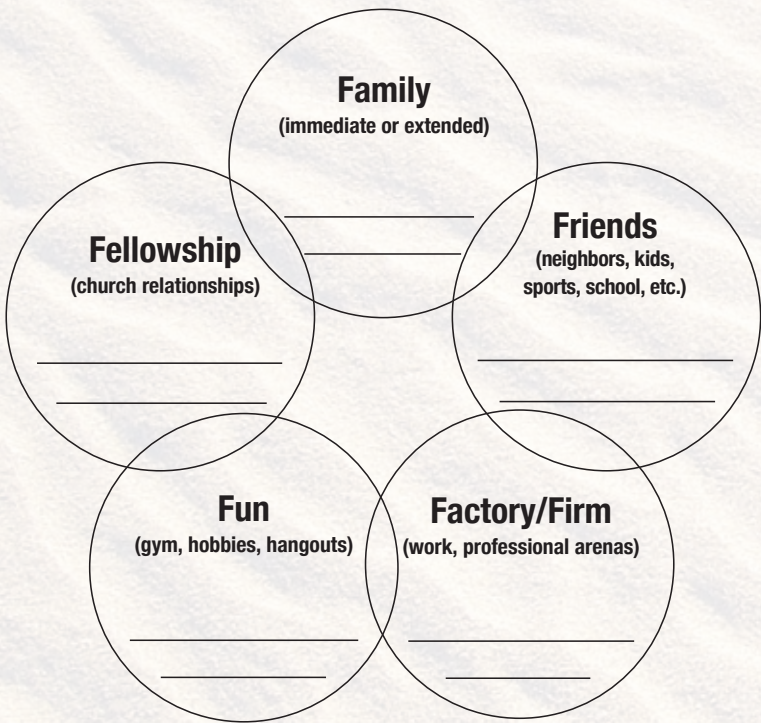
If you haven't already done so, take a few minutes to fill out the **Small Group Calendar** on page 66.

Circles of Life

SMALL GROUP CONNECTIONS

Discover Whom You Can Connect in Community

Use this chart to help carry out one of the values in the **Group Guidelines**, to “Welcome Newcomers.”



Follow this simple three-step process:

1. List one to two people in each circle.
2. Prayerfully select one person or couple from your list and tell your group about them.
3. Give them a call and invite them to your next meeting. Over fifty percent of those invited to a small group say, "Yes!"

Small Group Prayer and Praise Report

This is a place where you can write each other's requests for prayer. You can also make a note when God answers a prayer. Pray for each other's requests. If you're new to group prayer, it's okay to pray silently or to pray by using just one sentence:

“God, please help _____ to _____.”

DATE	PERSON	PRAYER REQUEST	PRAISE REPORT

DATE	PERSON	PRAYER REQUEST	PRAISE REPORT

Small Group Calendar

Healthy groups share responsibilities and group ownership. It might take some time for this to develop. Shared ownership ensures that responsibility for the group doesn't fall on one person. Use the calendar to keep track of social events, mission projects, birthdays, or days off. Complete this calendar at your first or second meeting. Planning ahead will increase attendance and shared ownership.

DATE	LESSON	LOCATION	FACILITATOR	SNACK OR MEAL
	SESSION ONE			
	SESSION TWO			
	SESSION THREE			
	SESSION FOUR			

Small Group Curriculum

THE WAY OF A WORSHIPER

Taught by Buddy Owens

Are you looking for God? The pursuit of God is the chase of a lifetime. This small group study is not about music. It's not even about going to church. It's about living your life as an offering of worship and discovering the secret to friendship with God.

Sessions include:

1. In View of God's Mercy: *How God looks at you*
2. The Great Exchange of Worship: *Why worship is important to God . . . and to you*
3. The Place of His Presence: *Why God wants you to "offer your body as a living sacrifice"*
4. Reading God's Mind: *How to read the Bible and pray with the mind of Christ*



Answer Key

Session One

When the heat is turned up.

When your heart turns cold.

When there is more going out than coming in.

Session Two

Achor literally means “trouble.”

Never put a period where God put a comma!

How you see trouble is how you will face trouble.

Session Three

1. Expect to meet him there.

2. Start planting seeds now.

What is the condition of the soil of my heart today?

3. Eliminate unnecessary distractions.

4. Search your heart for idols.

5. Sing to the Lord.

Finding
GOD *in the*
DESERT
of the **SOUL**

Breath-taking scenery. Life-giving truth.

Filmed on location in Death Valley, California.

*Oh God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you . . . in a dry
and weary land where there is no water.*

Psalm 63:1 (NIV)

We all go through seasons when life seems dry and barren. But the Bible is filled with hope and assurance that God will meet you in the desert of the soul. Come and quench your thirst.



Session One: A Dry and Weary Land Where
There is No Water

Session Two: Hope in the Valley of Trouble

Session Three: Prepare the Way for the Lord

Session Four: Be Faithful in the Little Things

Each session includes three simple questions that will lead your group into some of the deepest conversations you've ever had.

Buddy Owens is a teaching pastor at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California. He is the author of *The Way of a Worshiper: Discover the Secret to Friendship with God*, and the General Editor of *The NIV Worship Bible*.



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ISBN: 978-1-4228-0180-2



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