

# Moses and the Journey of Faith

## Week Four

Monday, March 7<sup>th</sup>

Exodus 33: 1-11

<sup>1</sup> The LORD said to Moses, "Now that you have brought these people out of Egypt, lead them to the land I solemnly promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I told them long ago that I would give this land to their descendants. <sup>2</sup>And I will send an angel before you to drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. <sup>3</sup>There is a land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not travel along with you, for you are a stubborn, unruly people. If I did, I would be tempted to destroy you along the way."

<sup>4</sup>When the people heard these stern words, they went into mourning and refused to wear their jewelry and ornaments. <sup>5</sup>For the LORD had told Moses to tell them, "You are an unruly, stubborn people. If I were there among you for even a moment, I would destroy you. Remove your jewelry and ornaments until I decide what to do with you." <sup>6</sup>So from the time they left Mount Sinai, the Israelites wore no more jewelry.

<sup>7</sup>It was Moses' custom to set up the tent known as the Tent of Meeting far outside the camp. Everyone who wanted to consult with the LORD would go there.

<sup>8</sup>Whenever Moses went out to the Tent of Meeting, all the people would get up and stand in their tent entrances. They would all watch Moses until he disappeared inside. <sup>9</sup>As he went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and hover at the entrance while the LORD spoke with Moses. <sup>10</sup>Then all the people would stand and bow low at their tent entrances. <sup>11</sup>Inside the Tent of Meeting, the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. Afterward Moses would return to the camp, but the young man who assisted him, Joshua son of Nun, stayed behind in the Tent of Meeting.

### Points of Interest:

- 'But I will not travel along with you'—in the first half of chapter 32, Moses reminded the LORD of his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and of his expressed intention to bring the people from Egypt to Canaan. Here God reaffirms his commitment to those promises. Even though the people have broken their part of the agreement so egregiously, God will keep his part. However, you get the impression that his heart isn't quite in it anymore. He's willing to do what it takes to get the Israelites their land, but his own enthusiasm for the project has dried up.

This cooling of God's feelings toward the people and the plan to give them the land is terrible news.

The very thing that makes the Israelites distinct, the magic elixir that Moses had gone to the mountain to get for them, is genuine connection with a powerful and loving God. The Israelites' betrayal of God in the golden calf affair has put that special relationship in real, imminent danger of being lost completely.

The heroic adventure of the Israelites was to be a priestly nation, a showcase for the rest of the world of what it is like to be God's special possession. Now, it looks like that adventure is over, before it had really even begun; the Israelites have failed; their relationship with God is broken; and it appears that there's nothing left to do but to return to ordinary life (the only difference being they'll live in Canaan rather than Egypt).

- 'If I did, I would be tempted to destroy you'—in a way, putting some distance between himself and the people is an act of mercy on God's part. He wants to remove from himself the constant temptation to destroy them. Sadly, this strategy shows just how sick God is of the sight of the Israelites. It's easy to see God's punishment of the people and his removal of his presence from them as a harsh, though just, response to the fact that they broke the rules. But God isn't behaving so much like a judge here as like a lover who's been betrayed. He seems hurt and angry that his people would so quickly and easily decide to have a fling with another god.
- 'the tent known as the Tent of Meeting'—recently, Moses has been meeting God on the mountain. Now that they are moving on, Moses creates a portable place for God and him to meet. Moses doesn't want conversation with God to be only for special occasions; he wants to have daily access to the presence of God.
- 'far outside the camp'—even before the incident of the golden calf, the people asked that God no longer speak to them directly for fear that they would die. In this passage, following the golden calf affair, God agrees: 'If I were among you for even a moment, I would destroy you.' So, in order to meet with God, Moses has to leave the rest of the people and go a safe distance away.

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- 'all the people would get up and stand in their tent entrances'—the last words they heard from God were a bit ominous: 'until I decide what to do with you.' So, each time Moses meets with God, they're eager to know if God has reached a decision. They're like a convicted criminal waiting for sentencing, or like a man waiting to hear if his wife is going to divorce him for cheating on her.
- 'as a man speaks to his friend'—while God's relationship with the rest of the people has grown more distant, his intimacy with Moses only continues to grow. God doesn't treat Moses like a servant or an employee, but like a friend. It seems that their friendship has grown much like any other friendship: they spend a lot of time together; and they have a lot of shared interests and experiences. Moses and God spent 40 days together on the mountain, and they still get together frequently at the tent of meeting. Also, they've worked closely together, defeating Pharaoh and leading the people. God considers Moses to be like a friend because he knows that he can trust Moses and that Moses understands his hopes and the challenges he is facing.

### Taking it home:

- *For you:* Moses builds a friendship with God by spending time with him and by working side-by-side with him. Most of us tend to gravitate toward (at most) one or the other of these things. We focus on either 'being' or 'doing.' We can even look at these two ways of spending time with God as mutually exclusive, but Moses' example shows that it's really the two of these things together that make our relationship with God a potential friendship. Are you a 'being' person or a 'doing' person? Do you like deep conversation with God, or getting out there and doing something together? What would it take to add more strength to your weak hand—without losing what you're already strong in?
- *For your six:* The Israelites experience in this passage an appropriate grief concerning their sin. It's not a neurotic guilt, an attempt to somehow make it up to him, nor a callous disregard of their mistakes. Rather, it's a sort of quiet sadness about their missed opportunity to enjoy a closer relationship with God. Ask the Holy Spirit to give your six the eyes to see and the ability to appropriately mourn any of their own missed opportunities to get to know God.
- *For our church:* It's one of our dreams as a church to be something like the Tent of Meeting, a place where people can always come if they want to meet with God. Ask God to make us into such a place. Particularly pray that God would bring to pass one of our big dreams: the establishment of a 24-hour prayer center. Pray that that prayer center would be filled with Joshuas who love to linger in God's presence.

**Tuesday, March 8<sup>th</sup>**

**Exodus 33: 12-23**

<sup>12</sup>Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Take these people up to the Promised Land.' But you haven't told me whom you will send with me. You call me by name and tell me I have found favor with you. <sup>13</sup>Please, if this is really so, show me your intentions so I will understand you more fully and do exactly what you want me to do. Besides, don't forget that this nation is your very own people."

<sup>14</sup>And the LORD replied, "I will personally go with you, Moses. I will give you rest--everything will be fine for you."

<sup>15</sup>Then Moses said, "If you don't go with us personally, don't let us move a step from this place. <sup>16</sup>If you don't go with us, how will anyone ever know that your people and I have found favor with you? How else will they know we are special and distinct from all other people on the earth?"

<sup>17</sup>And the LORD replied to Moses, "I will indeed do what you have asked, for you have found favor with me, and you are my friend."

<sup>18</sup>Then Moses had one more request. "Please let me see your glorious presence," he said.

<sup>19</sup>The LORD replied, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, 'the LORD,' to you. I will show kindness to anyone I choose, and I will show mercy to anyone I choose. <sup>20</sup>But you may not look directly at my face, for no one may see me and live." <sup>21</sup>The LORD continued, "Stand here on this rock beside me. <sup>22</sup>As my glorious presence passes by, I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed. <sup>23</sup>Then I will remove my hand, and you will see me from behind. But my face will not be seen."

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### Points of Interest:

- 'you haven't told me whom you will send with me'—God has told him that he will send his angel. Perhaps what Moses means is something like, 'You and I are friends, but I hardly know this angel. Do you really intend to send me on this mission with a stranger?'
- 'I will personally go with you, Moses'—apparently, the personal request from Moses convinces God to change his mind about only sending the angel. It seems that it is personal concern for Moses that motivates him to change. When Moses expresses his worries about the angel plan, God quickly responds with comfort and assurance for Moses particularly.
- 'If you don't go with us personally'—God has just said that he will go personally, but Moses wants to be absolutely clear on this point. Whether or not God personally goes with them is a very big deal to Moses. If God doesn't go, neither will Moses. God has promised Moses that he will give them everything they want: they'll get the land, and they'll get help from the angel in driving out the Canaanites and the other nations. But, to Moses, God's blessings are insufficient if they don't come with his presence. Moses would rather be in the desert with God than in the promised land without him. Moses wants the people to be known as God's special people much more than he wants them to be known as the people who live in the promised land.
- 'your people and I have found favor with you'—Moses wants for the whole people what he already has: favor with God.
- 'Moses had one more request'—after having succeeded in his request on behalf of the people, Moses goes on to a more personal one. What he wants is to see God. The previous passage already says that Moses speaks with God face to face, but here God says that no one can survive looking directly at his face. Apparently, there's a whole new level of being able to see God's face that Moses hasn't yet experienced. Perhaps God has kept his face veiled in some way, or perhaps Moses is asking that God would somehow improve his eyesight, allowing for an even deeper or clearer perception. In any case, what Moses has already experienced of God's presence makes him hungry for even more. God can't give him everything he asks for, but he does give him as much as Moses could handle.
- 'I will make all my goodness pass before you'—Moses asks to see God's glory, and God responds that he will show his goodness. God's goodness is his glory. In God's own opinion, what's most glorious about him is his incredible ability to show kindness and mercy.

### Taking it home:

- *For you:* Moses gets a glimpse of God's face, and it only makes him hungry for more. Cultivate that same hunger yourself. Boldly ask God to draw you deeper into his presence than you've ever been before.
- *For your six:* When given the choice between God's provision and God's presence, Moses chooses God's presence. Pray for your six, that the Holy Spirit would awaken in them such a desire to be with God. Pray that God would richly provide for them, but in such a way that it leaves them dissatisfied with mere material provision.
- *For our church:* Moses has a special relationship with God, but it does not cause him to look down on anybody else. In fact, there's nothing he wants more than to see the whole people experience the same special relationship. He doesn't want to be God's favored one at the expense of anyone else: he wants the whole people to be God's favorite. Ask the Holy Spirit to give us the same humility and generosity as Moses demonstrates here. Ask God to protect us from the temptation to compare with others or to think of ourselves more highly than we ought, and pray that we would use whatever intimacy with God we have to bless others.

**Wednesday, March 9<sup>th</sup>**

**Exodus 34: 1-10**

<sup>1</sup>The LORD told Moses, "Prepare two stone tablets like the first ones. I will write on them the same words that were on the tablets you smashed. <sup>2</sup>Be ready in the morning to come up Mount Sinai and present yourself to me there on the top of the mountain. <sup>3</sup>No one else may come with you. In fact, no one is allowed anywhere on the mountain. Do not even let the flocks or herds graze near the mountain."

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<sup>4</sup>So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first ones. Early in the morning he climbed Mount Sinai as the LORD had told him, carrying the two stone tablets in his hands.

<sup>5</sup>Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud and called out his own name, "the LORD," as Moses stood there in his presence. <sup>6</sup>He passed in front of Moses and said, "I am the LORD, I am the LORD, the merciful and gracious God. I am slow to anger and rich in unfailing love and faithfulness. <sup>7</sup>I show this unfailing love to many thousands by forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. Even so I do not leave sin unpunished, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations."

<sup>8</sup>Moses immediately fell to the ground and worshiped. <sup>9</sup>And he said, "If it is true that I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, then please go with us. Yes, this is an unruly and stubborn people, but please pardon our iniquity and our sins. Accept us as your own special possession."

<sup>10</sup>The LORD replied, "All right. This is the covenant I am going to make with you. I will perform wonders that have never been done before anywhere in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people around you will see the power of the LORD--the awesome power I will display through you."

### Points of Interest:

- 'Prepare two stone tablets like the first ones'—after the golden calf, in his anger God proposes a 'do over': he would destroy the people of Israel and form a new nation out of Moses' family. Now, in his mercy, he proposes a different sort of 'do over.' He will start over from the beginning in forming the covenant with Israel, complete with another trip to Mount Sinai, another set of tablets, a repeat of the laws, and a renewal of their agreements with one another. The people were waiting to see what God would do with them. Now they know: he's going to do what he had originally planned, and enter into a covenant with them. The heroic journey to be God's people looked like it was over, but now—through Moses' prayers and God's grace—it has been revived. There's hope that they just might succeed after all.
- 'I am the LORD, I am the LORD, the merciful and gracious God . . . '—when Moses first encountered God at the burning bush, God revealed his name, 'I AM,' or, 'the LORD.' Now, when Moses asks to see God's glorious presence, God says his name again; this time it's as if, now that they know one another better, God is willing to tell Moses his full name, including all of verses 6 and 7. God's full name includes the most important characteristics of who he is: mercy, grace, patience, love, faithfulness, generosity, and justice. These qualities are so much a part of God's identity that they form his very name. Now, if anyone ever asks Moses who this god is whom he serves, he can say, 'It's the LORD, the one who shows mercy and grace.'
- 'slow to anger and rich in unfailing love and faithfulness'—the people are experiencing God's patience, love, and faithfulness very tangibly right now, in his willingness to re-engage in a covenant with them.
- 'then please go with us'—this has been a refrain from Moses recently. Maybe what he's saying here is, 'Now that I've seen you even more clearly, I REALLY want you to go with us.'
- 'Yes, this is an unruly and stubborn people'—Moses' request doesn't rest on the people deserving it; they don't. It rests on the characteristics of mercy, grace, patience, love, and faithfulness which God has so powerfully proclaimed.
- 'that have never been done before'—presumably, this would include the things God has already done for Israel. The power he displayed in rescuing them from Egypt and the mercy he has shown in accepting them despite their rejection of him are small in comparison to both the power and the mercy he will show through them in the future.
- 'I do not leave sin unpunished'—God is not an over-indulgent parent who lets his children get away with anything. He notices and corrects sin. But his love is far more vast than his punishment; in fact, his love sets the context for the punishment. It is out of his love for them that he doesn't allow them to continue to sin.
- 'the third and fourth generations'—this is approximately the number of generations that would be alive at any one time (*Bible Background Commentary* 116). God is acknowledging that sin is not individual; it affects the whole family, and often it is engaged in by the whole family.

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### Taking it home:

- *For you:* Moses breaks out in worship when he understands just how huge God's mercy is. Ask God to give you a new understanding of what it really means that he is merciful. Be prepared to worship him when he shows you.
- *For your six:* the LORD is a God of second chances. Do any of your six feel as if they've made a mistake in their life too big to overcome? Pray that God would give them a chance at a fresh start, and pray that they would have the faith to believe in such a gracious opportunity.
- *For our church:* God isn't satisfied with what he has already done for the Israelites in the past; he has plans for an even greater future for them. Pray that God would show the same generosity toward us, and pray for us that we would always be looking for new and better experiences with God, rather than looking back to some glorious past.

Thursday, March 10<sup>th</sup>

Exodus 34: 11-26

<sup>11</sup>Your responsibility is to obey all the commands I am giving you today. Then I will surely drive out all those who stand in your way--the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites.

<sup>12</sup>"Be very careful never to make treaties with the people in the land where you are going. If you do, you soon will be following their evil ways. <sup>13</sup>Instead, you must break down their pagan altars, smash the sacred pillars they worship, and cut down their carved images. <sup>14</sup>You must worship no other gods, but only the LORD, for he is a God who is passionate about his relationship with you.

<sup>15</sup>"Do not make treaties of any kind with the people living in the land. They are spiritual prostitutes, committing adultery against me by sacrificing to their gods. If you make peace with them, they will invite you to go with them to worship their gods, and you are likely to do it. <sup>16</sup>And you will accept their daughters, who worship other gods, as wives for your sons. Then they will cause your sons to commit adultery against me by worshipping other gods. <sup>17</sup>You must make no gods for yourselves at all.

<sup>18</sup>"Be sure to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days, just as I instructed you, at the appointed time each year in early spring, for that was when you left Egypt.

<sup>19</sup>"Every firstborn male belongs to me--of both cattle and sheep. <sup>20</sup>A firstborn male donkey may be redeemed from the LORD by presenting a lamb in its place. But if you decide not to make the exchange, you must kill the donkey by breaking its neck. However, you must redeem every firstborn son. No one is allowed to appear before me without a gift.

<sup>21</sup>"Six days are set aside for work, but on the Sabbath day you must rest, even during the seasons of plowing and harvest. <sup>22</sup>And you must remember to celebrate the Festival of Harvest with the first crop of the wheat harvest, and celebrate the Festival of the Final Harvest at the end of the harvest season. <sup>23</sup>Three times each year all the men of Israel must appear before the Sovereign LORD, the God of Israel. <sup>24</sup>No one will attack and conquer your land when you go to appear before the LORD your God those three times each year. I will drive out the nations that stand in your way and will enlarge your boundaries.

<sup>25</sup>"You must not offer bread made with yeast as a sacrifice to me. And none of the meat of the Passover lamb may be kept over until the following morning. <sup>26</sup>You must bring the best of the first of each year's crop to the house of the LORD your God.

"You must not cook a young goat in its mother's milk."

### Points of Interest:

- 'Your responsibility is to obey all the commands I am giving you today'—once again, God clearly stipulates what each party is agreeing to do in this covenant: they are to follow his instructions, and he is to drive their enemies out of the land.
- 'make no gods for yourselves at all'—in light of what happened with the golden calf, this second time through the covenant, God elaborates extensively on the subject of idols. He makes abundantly clear that they are not to make them. Instead, they are to break them, smash them, and cut them down; they are also to stay far away from anyone who would tempt them into idol worship. 'Don't even come close to flirting with other gods,' is the LORD's clear message to them.

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Avoiding the worship of idols is the major test they will face on their quest to show the world what it is like to be the LORD's people. They've already failed once, and it nearly doomed the whole mission. Now we will see if that first failure has helped them to learn their lesson.

- 'cause your sons to commit adultery against me by worshiping other gods'—this is, of course, metaphorical. The covenant is like a marriage: once they've covenanted together, God doesn't want the Israelites fooling around with any other gods. It might also be meant literally: prostitution or sex acts may have been part of the worship rituals associated with neighboring fertility goddesses (*Illustrated Bible Dictionary* 1289).
- 'Be sure to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread'—the first time they entered into a covenant with one another, God gave the Ten Commandments to the people. This second time through, God's instructions are based on the Ten Commandments, but they are customized to address more specifically the Israelites' weak points. So, God elaborates on his prohibition of idols. He also highlights the Festival of Unleavened Bread and the redemption of the firstborn, both of which are ways of remembering the night when they escaped from Egypt. When the Israelites worship the golden calf, they say, 'These are your gods, who brought you out of Egypt.' It seems like God is highlighting these celebrations because he wants them to remember how it really happened.
- 'you must rest'—God has to command his people to rest and to party. It will be tempting for them to worry and overwork, particularly during busy times like spring planting and fall harvest—or at times when they think an enemy might attack them. God wants them to know that the abundance they experience in the land will not be because of their own maximum effort or maximum vigilance, but because of his provision and protection. Their job is to worship God, to remember his goodness, and to avoid worshipping idols. God's job is to provide them with an abundant harvest and with protection from their enemies.
- 'You must not cook a young goat in its mother's milk'—this instruction seems a bit out of place with the rest. We don't really know why God says it here. Perhaps he prohibits this mode of cooking because it was used in Canaanite religious rituals, or perhaps he simply considers it inhumane (*Bible Background Commentary* 103).

### Taking it home:

- *For you:* God warns the Israelites that idolatry is their vulnerable spot, the place their enemies will try to exploit. What's your weak point? For almost all of us, there's at least one area of our lives in which we are vulnerable to temptation; perhaps it's an area in which we've repeatedly failed, or an area in which we've failed only once, but spectacularly. The devil will try his hardest to exploit that weakness. Often our weak spots are deeply entrenched and may even involve addictive behaviors; so defending them is no easy task, and it may take some persistent hard work to get the upper hand. But in this passage, God offers two strategies that at least help us begin to defend against attacks at our weak points: knowing what they are, and praising him. When we recognize and admit our weak points, we can do better at avoiding them. And praising God by remembering his goodness gives us the strength to say, 'No!' to temptation.
- *For your six:* God makes clear in this passage that he wants to provide people with true rest: stillness combined with a complete sense of safety, security, and well-being. Pray that God would give your six the gift of a moment of such beautiful rest today.
- *For our church:* The LORD stresses here the importance of holidays as times to remember and celebrate God's faithfulness. Pray that God would make us good at throwing such holy parties. The 40 Days of Faith has become one of these annual festivals for us. Thank God for the testimonies of God's goodness we've heard during these 40 Days, and set aside some time to reflect on ways God has met you during one of our 40 Days of Faith. Also pray that our upcoming Easter service will be an especially fun and worshipful celebration of Jesus' resurrection.

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Friday, March 11<sup>th</sup>

Exodus 34: 27-35

<sup>27</sup>And the LORD said to Moses, "Write down all these instructions, for they represent the terms of my covenant with you and with Israel."

<sup>28</sup>Moses was up on the mountain with the LORD forty days and forty nights. In all that time he neither ate nor drank. At that time he wrote the terms of the covenant--the Ten Commandments--on the stone tablets.

<sup>29</sup>When Moses came down the mountain carrying the stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, he wasn't aware that his face glowed because he had spoken to the LORD face to face. <sup>30</sup>And when Aaron and the people of Israel saw the radiance of Moses' face, they were afraid to come near him.

<sup>31</sup>But Moses called to them and asked Aaron and the community leaders to come over and talk with him.

<sup>32</sup>Then all the people came, and Moses gave them the instructions the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai.

<sup>33</sup>When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. <sup>34</sup>But whenever he went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with the LORD, he removed the veil until he came out again. Then he would give the people whatever instructions the LORD had given him, <sup>35</sup>and the people would see his face aglow. Afterward he would put the veil on again until he returned to speak with the LORD.

### Points of Interest:

- 'up on the mountain with the LORD forty days and forty nights'—this repeat of the covenant even includes a second time of writing the instructions and a second forty day stay on the mountain. Things go much better this time: Moses doesn't come down to a golden calf or to wild, drunken revelry; and the stone tablets survive intact. This second time around, Moses succeeds in his mission to bring the law of God to the people; there is new hope for a happy ending and a prosperous future.
- 'he neither ate nor drank'—Moses fasts for 40 days from both food and drink. Forty days without food is difficult, but not impossible. Forty days without water is a miracle. It's as if Moses is nourished by God's presence and his laws, rather than by food and water. Jesus later undergoes a 40 day fast also, and when Satan tempts him to turn a stone into a loaf of bread, he says something to the same effect: 'One does not live by bread alone' (Luke 4: 4).
- 'his face glowed'—incidentally, something similar to this happened to Jesus also. One time, he went up to a mountain to meet with God, and he ended up having a conversation with God, Moses, and Elijah (the latter two having died hundreds of years ago). As they were talking, 'his face shone like the sun, and his clothing became dazzling white' (Matthew 17:2).
- 'they were afraid to come near him'—do they think he's a ghost? Are they afraid of even this reflected version of God's glory? Or do they just find the glow a little freaky? It must have been a bit strange to see this glowing figure come down the mountain after 40 days. But when Moses calls out to them, it normalizes the situation a bit. Moses' voice assures them that it is the same Moses that they have always known, even if he seems to have changed in some very extraordinary ways.
- 'he put a veil over his face'—Moses' use of the veil is interesting. He leaves his face uncovered while he is delivering God's words; then he puts on the veil. He continues this pattern. When he is with God, he leaves his face uncovered. When he is speaking God's words, he still leaves his face uncovered. When he is done delivering God's message, he puts a veil on. Perhaps Moses is using a similar principle to the one we discussed about using the LORD's name in vain: Moses considers it appropriate to show God's glory on his face while delivering God's words, but he doesn't want to use the glory to add extra weight to his own words later. Basically, when the glory on his face is visible, he is God's messenger; when it is covered by the veil, he is speaking for himself.

### Taking it home:

- *For you:* Moses even looked different because he had been with God and heard his words. Pray that the time you spend with God would so transform you that people would see something different about you just by looking at your face.
- *For your six:* Have any of your six seen any drastic changes in you because of your relationship with God? Are any of them a little freaked out by what they've seen? Ask God to give you the right words to assure them and to explain what has happened to you.

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- *For our church:* Pray for the people in our church who have chosen to fast during these 40 Days of Faith. Pray that God would supernaturally sustain them (and you, if you're one of those people) during this time of fasting, and ask God to give them spiritual nourishment like they've never had before to more than make up for the physical nourishment they are foregoing.

**Saturday, March 12<sup>th</sup>**

**Exodus 35: 4-21**

<sup>4</sup>Then Moses said to all the people, "This is what the LORD has commanded. <sup>5</sup>Everyone is invited to bring these offerings to the LORD: gold, silver, and bronze; <sup>6</sup>blue, purple, and scarlet yarn; fine linen; goat hair for cloth; <sup>7</sup>tanned ram skins and fine goatskin leather; acacia wood; <sup>8</sup>olive oil for the lamps; spices for the anointing oil and the fragrant incense; <sup>9</sup>onyx stones, and other stones to be set in the ephod and the chestpiece.

<sup>10</sup>"Come, all of you who are gifted craftsmen. Construct everything that the LORD has commanded: <sup>11</sup>the entire Tabernacle, including the sacred tent and its coverings, the clasps, frames, crossbars, posts, and bases; <sup>12</sup>the Ark and its poles; the Ark's cover--the place of atonement; the inner curtain to enclose the Ark in the Most Holy Place; <sup>13</sup>the table, its carrying poles, and all of its utensils; the Bread of the Presence; <sup>14</sup>the lampstand and its accessories; the lamp cups and the oil for lighting; <sup>15</sup>the incense altar and its carrying poles; the anointing oil and fragrant incense; the curtain for the entrance of the Tabernacle; <sup>16</sup>the altar of burnt offering; the bronze grating of the altar and its carrying poles and utensils; the large washbasin with its pedestal; <sup>17</sup>the curtains for the walls of the courtyard; the posts and their bases; the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard; <sup>18</sup>the tent pegs of the Tabernacle and courtyard and their cords; <sup>19</sup>the beautifully stitched clothing for the priests to wear while ministering in the Holy Place; the sacred garments for Aaron and his sons to wear while officiating as priests."

<sup>20</sup>So all the people left Moses and went to their tents to prepare their gifts. <sup>21</sup>If their hearts were stirred and they desired to do so, they brought to the LORD their offerings of materials for the Tabernacle and its furnishings and for the holy garments.

### Points of Interest:

- 'everything that the LORD has commanded'—we skipped this part, but God had included very specific plans for the Tabernacle, its furnishings, and the uniforms of the priests during one of the recitals of the law. It's in Exodus, ch. 25 through 30, if you're interested. *Tabernacle* is just an archaic word for 'tent or dwelling' (*Illustrated Bible Dictionary* 1506). The Tabernacle is simply a respectful way of referring to God's tent.
- 'Everyone is invited to bring these offerings to the LORD'—last time Moses went up the mountain, Aaron called a special offering in order to make the golden calf. This time, Moses calls an offering in order to make a tent for God. Rather than making a god to be among them, they are making a place for the LORD God to live among them. They are now getting what they really wanted when they made the golden calf: a visible, accessible way to know that God is with them. It's interesting to note that building this tent for God was always a part of the plan—God had given Moses instructions for the tent during the first 40 days. If the Israelites had just waited a few days more the first time, they would have gotten what they really longed for and saved themselves and God a lot of pain and sorrow.
- 'the sacred garments for Aaron and his sons'—there are even special plans for Aaron, the one who made the golden calf.

### Taking it home:

- *For you:* Aaron has recently made an incredibly horrible mistake as a leader. He contributed to the deaths of 3000 people and very nearly to the loss of God's presence for the entire people. Nonetheless, God continues with his plan to make Aaron his high priest. He even personally designs a special wardrobe with Aaron in mind. God's grace is immense, far larger than any mistake we are capable of making. If you've made a mistake, particularly a mistake in leadership, and you're wondering if it has

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ruined God's plan for you, take heart. Ask God for forgiveness, and don't be surprised if he has restoration in mind for you.

- *For your six:* God knew what the Israelites wanted and needed better than they thought he did. God had a plan to give them the opportunity to express their love of art and to provide them with the kind of physical representation of his presence for which they really yearned. But, before he could share his plan with them, they devised their own, one that didn't work out nearly as well. Pray that your six would grow in their trust that God knows what they want and need. Also pray that they would grow in their patience with him to provide it.
- *For our church:* In the past couple of years, God has stirred the hearts of many of us to give our money, our time, and our skills toward buying and renovating a building in Cambridge. God willing, that building will be complete very soon. Pray that God would give us energy for the final stages of this construction project, and that moving into the building will be a time of joyful celebration.

**Sunday, March 13<sup>th</sup>**

**Exodus 35: 30-36: 7**

<sup>30</sup>And Moses told them, "The LORD has chosen Bezalel son of Uri, grandson of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. <sup>31</sup>The LORD has filled Bezalel with the Spirit of God, giving him great wisdom, intelligence, and skill in all kinds of crafts. <sup>32</sup>He is able to create beautiful objects from gold, silver, and bronze. <sup>33</sup>He is skilled in cutting and setting gemstones and in carving wood. In fact, he has every necessary skill. <sup>34</sup>And the LORD has given both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach their skills to others. <sup>35</sup>The LORD has given them special skills as jewelers, designers, weavers, and embroiderers in blue, purple, and scarlet yarn on fine linen cloth. They excel in all the crafts needed for the work.

<sup>1</sup> "Bezalel, Oholiab, and the other craftsmen whom the LORD has gifted with wisdom, skill, and intelligence will construct and furnish the Tabernacle, just as the LORD has commanded."

<sup>2</sup>So Moses told Bezalel and Oholiab to begin the work, along with all those who were specially gifted by the LORD. <sup>3</sup>Moses gave them the materials donated by the people for the completion of the sanctuary. Additional gifts were brought each morning. <sup>4</sup>But finally the craftsmen left their work to meet with Moses. <sup>5</sup>"We have more than enough materials on hand now to complete the job the LORD has given us to do!" they exclaimed.

<sup>6</sup>So Moses gave the command, and this message was sent throughout the camp: "Bring no more materials! You have already given more than enough." So the people stopped bringing their offerings. <sup>7</sup>Their contributions were more than enough to complete the whole project.

### Points of Interest:

- 'The LORD has filled Bezalel with the Spirit of God'—we talk of artists being inspired. Well, Bezalel is literally inspired: he is filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives him a supernatural ability to create beautiful art.
- 'the ability to teach their skills to others'—Bezalel and Oholiab aren't the stereotypical temperamental artists who just want to be left alone with their art. Part of their job, and part of their inspiration, is training others to follow in their craft.
- 'You have already given more than enough'—who ever heard of such a thing? The people respond so enthusiastically to Moses' invitation to give that—rather than having to go back to them and ask for more—he has to go to them and ask them to stop. And the workers, rather than saying that they need a little bit more material than originally budgeted, are coming to Moses to say that they have more than enough. This is unlike any construction project I have ever heard of. It's like the Big Dig being completed under-budget, and like WGBH's telethon ending early because they met their goals. It seems like God's supernatural abundance is being poured out on this project. It also seems like building this tent is the kind of thing the Israelites like to do and are really quite good at.

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### Taking it home:

- *For you:* God loves to give out and to work with a phenomenal diversity of skills and talents. Do you have something you do well and love to do? If you haven't already, ask God to give you an idea of how to use it in worship of him. Is there a skill you want or need in order to do what God has called you to do? Ask God to give it to you.
- *For your six:* The people of Israel have a special affinity for artistic projects. This same interest led them to the disaster of the golden calf and to the amazing success of building God's tent. Each of your six also has unique gifts, abilities, and interests. Like the Israelites, these things could lead them into big trouble or into the most amazingly good experiences of their lives. Pray for them, that the very best would come out of their tastes and talents.
- *For our church:* One of our hopes for our church is to be a center of God-inspired art. Pray for the artists in our midst, and for the artists still to come. Ask God to bless them like he did Bezalel and Oholiab. Pray that they would be filled with inspiration from the Holy Spirit, and that they would have a supernatural ability to raise up other artists.