

Read Joshua 1: 1-9 and 3: 7- 17

Joshua is very confident in his first act as leader.

- ◆ What grounds does he have for this confidence?

Another demonstration of power and authority over the order of creation. Note the purpose (verse 10) 'you will know that the living God is among you'. God again went before them and they remained in his protection on the crossing.

- ◆ How was this conveyed?

A 'time in the wilderness' has come to mean a time when God is seemingly absent, but, as we have seen, it was actually a time when God was not absent but very much present. A time when God 'refines' his people.

### Prayer

As the rain hides the stars, as the autumn mist hides the hills, as the clouds veil the blue of the sky, so the dark happenings of my lot hide the shining of thy face from me. Yet, if I may hold thy hand in the darkness, it is enough. Since I know that, though I may stumble in my going, thou dost not fall.

(source unknown – Celtic)

### Thought to carry into the week ahead:-

In so far as the Old Testament tells the history of the people of God, it is our history as well.

## God's one big plan - In the wilderness, crossing the river

### Unit 5



Most of us have experienced times in the 'wilderness', when living becomes difficult, seemingly without purpose; and we experience (praise God!) 'crossing the river' when things take a significant turn for the better. Do you remember what happened to make this happen? Was it a difficult decision finally taken, good advice received, an apparent random event made all the difference, or something else? Perhaps one or two could share their experience with the group.

This week we will both go back to the first part of the journey, and examine the consequences for Israel of breaking the Commandments within a few weeks of first receiving them. We take up the story with the Egyptian army destroyed and the Israelites trekking to Mount Sinai.

Read Exodus 15: 22 to 16: 36 (a long passage but informative).

From the start of the journey God begins to provide their needs.

- ◆ Which needs does God meet here?

The Manna had amazing properties.

- ◆ What were these? (see Numbers 11: 7-9 for fuller detail).
- ◆ When did the supply of Manna stop?

Read Numbers 20: 2-13 (although this account is in Exodus 17: 1-7, there is important information only in the account in Numbers).

It would appear that Moses' actions were the result of loss of temper following more grumbling, for which God punished him. This must have been a huge disappointment to Moses.

- ◆ How challenged would you be in similar circumstances?
- ◆ God's punishment of Moses seems harsh. With the benefit of hindsight and giving consideration of God outworking his plan, think through / discuss why it might be that this punishment was necessary.

Read Exodus 31: 18 to 32: 20

It would seem that the people wanted to be the same as other peoples – to have a 'visible' god. Yesterday and today God's people are called to be different from other people, to enjoy and demonstrate life in relationship with God the Creator.

- ◆ How do those who choose not be in relationship with God feel about those who are?

The breaking of the Covenant (symbolically the breaking of the two tablets) has consequences. This is a critical moment in the history of this young nation. Notice God disowns them (verse 7) and considers their destruction; however God relents following the prayer of Moses.

- ◆ What can we learn from this?

Read Exodus 34: 1-16

God forgives, the Covenant is renewed, the two tablets are rewritten which will be placed in the Ark and now taken wherever the Israelites go.

Read Numbers 13: 26-33 and 14: 1-23, 26-35

Another sad episode, failing to trust God. Note the punishment fits exactly what the Israelites said they would have preferred (verse 14: 2) and the children will survive (the children the people said God would allow to die in the desert – verse 3). Our faith and trust in God is often challenged.

- ◆ Is there anyone in the group who would recount an example where God, following prayer, has brought good out of a seemingly impossible situation?

Moses now leads the people back into the dessert and it will be 40 years before they cross the river Jordan into the 'land of milk and honey'. The journey is marked by a cycle of complaints and judgements. A journey where God continued to lead the people despite the ongoing complaints and failures, and where his care supersedes his displeasure.

So as the people at last are standing, overlooking the Promised Land, Moses gives his final address.

Read Deuteronomy 30: 11-20

Clear instructions and a clear choice, yesterday and today.