

AN INTERACTIVE
BIBLE STUDY

Includes Six-Session
Video Series

LINA
ABUJAMRA

A Table in the Wilderness

A STUDY ON GOD'S
GOODNESS



MAPPING THE FOOTSTEPS OF GOD SERIES

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Books for Courageous Women
from David C Cook

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Session 1: Introduction

Why a Table in the Wilderness?

Psalm 23

**Watch the
session 1 video now.
The video is available at
DavidCCook.org/access,
with access code
TABLE.**

1. A table in the wilderness is a daily reminder that God created us with the need to be _____.
2. A table in the wilderness is God's _____ for our most basic needs in our most difficult places.
3. A table in the wilderness is a picture of God's _____ to us in our most unexpected places.
4. A table in the wilderness is a resting stop for _____ and _____ as we make our way home.

Video Group Discussion Questions

After watching the video, discuss the following questions in your group.

- 📍 What comes to your mind when you think about a table in the wilderness?

- 📍 Why did you sign up for this Bible study? What do you hope to get out of it?

- 📍 In Psalm 23:5, David wrote, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.” Think about the places in your life where you long for God’s overflowing blessing in the presence of your enemies. Share one of these difficult places with your group.

- 📍 God created food to remind us of our need to be filled. Spiritually speaking, what are you most hungry for in your Christian life?

- 📍 If you could have a meal with any two to four people in the world, who would you choose, and why?

Goodness

good·ness | ˈɡʊd-nəs

Definition of *God's goodness*

Goodness of God

a perfection of his character which he exercises toward his creatures according to their various circumstances and relations (Ps. 145:8, 9; 103:8; 1 John 4:8). Viewed generally, it is benevolence; as exercised with respect to the miseries of his creatures it is mercy, pity, compassion, and in the case of impenitent sinners, long-suffering patience; as exercised in communicating favour on the unworthy it is grace. "Goodness and justice are the several aspects of one unchangeable, infinitely wise, and sovereign moral perfection. God is not sometimes merciful and sometimes just, but he is eternally infinitely just and merciful." God is infinitely and unchangeably good (Zeph. 3:17), and his goodness is incomprehensible by the finite mind (Rom. 11:35, 36). "God's goodness appears in two things, giving and forgiving."⁴

Most often God's goodness is His faithfulness shown in the covenant: redemption from Egypt and care in the wilderness (Ex. 18:9); the gift of the land (Josh. 24:20); teaching and law (Jer. 6:16); the temple (Ezra 3:11); forgiveness (Hos. 3:5); care for the needy (Ps. 68:10); strength in time of trouble (Hab. 1:7); and the promise of restoration and a new covenant (Zech. 8:15), now fulfilled gloriously in Jesus Christ (Titus 3:4).⁵

Week 1: The Table of Salvation— When I Need to Be Rescued

Psalm 34:8

“Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!”

Introduction

I was invited to speak to a group of singles in Colorado in the middle of ski season some time ago. I was looking forward to the event and had finally made my way to the lodge when I decided to make a quick run to the store for some necessities. Being from Green Bay, Wisconsin, I considered myself an expert at driving in the snow and didn't think twice about the winter weather when I took off in the rented vehicle.

I was about a mile away from the lodge when the most unexpected thing happened to me: I got stuck in a snowbank. I tried to get myself out of my mess but couldn't. The harder I tried, the more stuck I got. I looked for my phone to call for help when I, again unexpectedly, noticed that I had not brought my phone with me on this quick trip to the store. I was in trouble. The event would be starting in a couple of hours, and all I had was the hope that someone might come driving by and help me out.

The longer I waited, the more it dawned on me that I was on a fairly remote road without much traffic. I thought about walking back to the lodge, but the very idea was daunting. I was too far away from the lodge to walk, and it was too cold outside to risk it anyway.

So I prayed. I cried out to God with increasing desperation. What other options did I have out there in the snowy wilderness? I pictured every worst-case scenario. I hoped that

eventually the folks at the conference might notice my absence from the evening session and send out a search party for me. I prayed I wouldn't freeze before they showed up.

I'll spare you the drama and tell you that, eventually, someone did show up. Luckily, that person had a phone, and it was only a matter of time before I moved past the fear of dying to the embarrassment of having gotten stuck in the snowbank in the first place. Needless to say, I had a good story to tell that night at my speaking event.

The thing about life is that most of us don't realize we're stuck until it's too late to notice that we have no way out of the mess. Whether it's a snowbank or a relationship, most of us don't plan on getting stuck. We start out excited and hopeful. We look forward to the adventure ahead. We barely think about the fact that we might need help until we realize that we do.

Yet almost every situation in life is an invitation for us to cry out for help. We are living in the wilderness, but we notice that fact only when disaster strikes. And when it does, we figure we can get ourselves out of our own messes—until we can't!

The thing about life is that most of us don't realize we're stuck until it's too late to notice that we have no way out of the mess.

It's when we run out of options that we finally cry out for help. It's when the waiting goes on and the rescue is delayed that our cries become more desperate and serious. These are the cries that move the heart of God.

These are the places where God invites us to the first of His tables we're going to look at: the table of salvation.

God loves to save His people. The harder our situation becomes, the more His goodness abounds. The more desperate our cry, the more His heart is moved toward us in mercy. I love that about God. We serve a God who doesn't take joy in our pain but sits with us in our pain ... and then redeems it for His purposes and our good. We serve a God who not only *can* save us but wants to.

This week, we'll spend time at the table of salvation. Here, we will get to know this God who invites His people to be rescued. It's one of the most important tables in the Old Testament—the Passover table. This table has been commemorated by the Jewish people every year from the Old Testament period right on through to today. The story behind the Passover table is one of a people who needed rescuing but didn't cry for help until they were extremely desperate.

Perhaps you're in a desperate place right now. You're stuck in the wilderness season of your life, except yours feels more like a Chicago winter—never ending! You feel like you have no hope of rescue. Perhaps like me, you've metaphorically misplaced your phone. The only thing left to do is pray.

If that's you, you're in the perfect place to witness God's goodness. His goodness shines best in our most unexpected places. God's invitation is for us to sit at His table of salvation. His promise is rescue. My prayer for you this week is that you will let God's Word lead you where His Spirit longs to take you. Receive all He has for you as you seek His freedom and joy.

Like the people of Israel received, this week is your invitation to sit at God's table and feast on His goodness in the places where you need to be rescued.

Day 1: The People's Plight

Reading: Exodus 1 and 2:23–25

Theme: God always hears our cries for help and saves us.

I've spent the bulk of my medical practice in emergency care, and if I've learned one thing in that line of work, it's that you can't dream about fixing a problem until you know what the problem is.

The Bible is the story of God saving His people from death and hell. From the beginning of Genesis until the last pages of Revelation, the entire story is one of redemption. Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden in what is referred to as the fall of mankind. They needed a Savior. That's when God initiated the story of redemption.

The Bible tells the story of God's love and His plan to get His people out of trouble. Though the Bible spans thousands of years and tells of many individuals, the overarching storyline remains the same: redemption—God restoring His people to Himself.

In the Old Testament, the redemption thread is woven through the chosen people of God: Israel. That part of the story started when God called Abraham to follow Him. By the time we get to Exodus 1, Abraham's family has grown quite a bit—and boy, do they need to be rescued! This week's homework will focus on the plight of the people of Israel at a time when they were stuck in a place they needed to be delivered from.

Despite God's promise to give Abraham's descendants a land of their own, Egypt didn't feel anything like the Promised Land the people of Israel had dreamed of. When we meet them in Exodus 1, the people of Israel were at their wits' end. It will become evident as we study our passage today that the more desperate the people felt, the more glory would be given to God when He would rescue them. Let's fill in the details by focusing on our text for today.

📍 Read Exodus 1 and summarize what sort of trouble the people of Israel were facing.

📍 Why did the king of Egypt hate the people of Israel?

The people of Israel were hated because they were thriving. They didn't deserve to be punished for being successful, but the cultural context they were living in made them a threat to the Egyptians. The result was disastrous for them.

📍 Read Exodus 1:15–16. How bad did things get for the people of Israel?

📍 Have you ever been treated unfairly because of your background or race? How did that impact you and make you feel?

The pushback the people of Israel faced in that time was substantial, but it wasn't surprising. In fact, God had predicted that this would happen hundreds of years before it did.

📍 Read Genesis 15:12–16. What did God prophetically tell Abraham about his descendants?

📍 Does it bother you to know that God knew ahead of time that the people of Israel would be mistreated? Why, or why not?

📍 Why do you think God didn't save His people from pain when He could have done so?

God is never unaware of the pain we're enduring. He not only knows about it but in His sovereignty, He allows it. He has a purpose for every painful thing we experience. The challenge for us is that we don't clearly understand why. The people of Israel certainly didn't. They were hurting. They eventually hurt so badly that they cried out for help.

📍 Read Exodus 2:23–25. Describe the emotions the people of Israel were feeling.

📍 Who did the people of Israel cry out for help to?

Whether the people of Israel were crying out to God or not is hard to know, but what God's Word tells us *for sure* is that God heard their cry for help. God *heard*. God *saw*. God *knew* their pain. And God had a plan to rescue them.

📍 Read Exodus 3:6–10. Write down the ways God described Himself in verse 6. Why was that relevant here?

📍 Simply put, what was God's plan for His people?

For four hundred years, the people of God suffered in Egypt. Their pain became progressively more unbearable. It took the people four hundred years to finally cry out to God in desperation. Four hundred years is a long time. Most of us get tired of waiting after forty minutes, let alone four hundred years!

📍 Do you ever wonder why God takes His time in answering us? Why do you think He does?

📍 Are you in a place of waiting right now? How does knowing that God heard the people of Israel give you the hope to go on?

The Christian life is a life of waiting ... because waiting is about trust. The more we wait on God for rescue, the more our trust in Him is stretched and the stronger our faith becomes. While we might think that God has forgotten about us in the waiting, the truth is that God is just getting started with us when we reach our point of desperation. God's goodness is best seen when our pain is most palpable.

God's goodness is best seen when
our pain is most palpable.

Our focus today has been on the people's plight. Life had gotten hard for the people of Israel, and they needed rescuing. The good news was that rescue was on the way. In the remainder of this week, we're going to study exactly how God planned to rescue His people. He ended up doing it in the most unexpected way, through a table in the wilderness.

Let's Make This Personal

📍 Where in your life right now do you need to be rescued? What situation are you facing that you can't get yourself out of? Where has the waiting lingered? Write down your heart's cry to God as you face the unknown.

Today's Take Home Point

Just because God hasn't acted on your behalf yet doesn't mean He is unaware of your pain.

Final Thought

- 📍 As you feel the weight of your current suffering, what might God be inviting you to in your present painful places?

Celebrate Good

- 📍 As you consider our time in God's Word, write down one good thing you can celebrate in your life today.

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