

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

DISCUSS: Draw attention to the picture on **PSG page 26** and ask **Question #1:**

When have you admired a restoration project?

GUIDE: Direct attention to **The Bible Meets Life** on **PSG page 27** to the examples of works of art that others tried to restore but that covered up the original design.

SAY: “Today, we recognize that we are broken and need restoration. But our best efforts at self-help and self-improvement tend to be vain attempts to change our appearance that are cover-ups that hide the truth.”

Reinforce **The Point** on **PSG page 27: God is the only one who can restore us and make us whole.**

PRAY: Begin the Bible study with prayer. Ask God to do His work of restoration and make something beautiful of the mess we have made.

SESSION 2

OUR HEALER



The Point

God is the only one who can restore us and make us whole.

The Bible Meets Life

We are broken people. We may be broken by our circumstances or surroundings, or we may be broken by our sin and failures. Regardless of our best efforts, we remain broken

people. But God steps in. He heals our brokenness and restores us when we trust in Him. The Israelites were continually called to trust and obey God. In so doing, they would experience His healing and wholeness.

The Passage

Exodus 14:29-31; 15:22-27

The Setting

The Israelites had known nothing but slavery for centuries. But that changed when Yahweh, the one true God, sent His spokesman Moses to the Egyptian Pharaoh demanding that the Israelites be released from their captivity. As God displayed His might and mercy both in the Israelites' exodus from Egypt and their time of wandering in the wilderness, He called the Israelites into covenant relationship with Himself, a relationship demanding both trust in and obedience to Yahweh.

Exodus 14:29-31

29 But the Israelites had walked through the sea on dry ground, with the waters like a wall to them on their right and their left.

30 That day the Lord saved Israel from the power of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.

31 When Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and believed in him and in his servant Moses.

1 ▶ **Verse 29.** God worked powerfully on behalf of the Israelites in delivering them from slavery in Egypt. God had called Moses to lead His people to freedom (Ex. 3–4). Moses obeyed and went to Pharaoh, demanding that he allow God’s people to leave (7:1-13). When Pharaoh refused, God sent a series of ten plagues upon the Egyptians. The tenth plague resulted in the death of the firstborn males (both human and animal) of the Egyptians (11:4-7; 12:29). That very night Pharaoh ordered Moses and the Israelites to leave Egypt (vv. 31-32). After 430 years in Egypt, the Israelites were free, free to go back to the land God had promised to Abraham.

As God led the Israelites on their journey out of Egypt toward the promised land, He did not guide them by the shortest route, since they would have encountered the armies of the Philistines. God knew they were not ready for such a test (Ex. 13:17). Instead, “he led the people around toward the Red Sea along the road of the wilderness” (v. 18). But Pharaoh soon changed his mind about allowing the Israelites to go free, and he ordered his army to prepare to go after them and bring them back (14:5-9). The best equipped soldiers in Pharaoh’s army were in hot pursuit of the Israelites (v. 7), which may have included over 1000 chariots.¹

When the Israelites saw that the Egyptian army was overtaking them on the shore of the Red Sea, they panicked. “The Israelites were terrified and cried out to the LORD for help” (v. 10). Rather than remembering and taking confidence in the fact that God, who had won their freedom through inflicting the ten plagues upon the Egyptians, was with them, the Israelites saw only the large, well-armed force of Egyptians in chariots closing in on them. Although they

STUDY THE BIBLE

Exodus 14:29-31



10 minutes

LEADER PACK: Refer group members to **Pack Item 1: “God Is ...” Overview** to introduce the major theme of this session, God is Our Healer.

GOD IS ...

- ▶ **OUR PROVIDER**
Genesis 22:1-14
- ▶ **OUR HEALER**
Exodus 14:29-31; 15:22-27
- ▶ **OUR BANNER**
Exodus 17:8-16
- ▶ **OUR PEACE**
Judges 6:11-16, 22-24
- ▶ **OUR SHEPHERD**
Psalm 23:1-6
- ▶ **OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**
Jeremiah 33:3-8, 14-16

SUMMARIZE: Before reading the passage, set the context by summarizing the information in **The Setting** on page 32

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 1** on this page and page 34 to provide background information about the events leading up to the exodus and crossing of the Red Sea.

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read Exodus 14:10-12 and ask group members to describe the emotions the Israelites felt at that moment.

READ: Read or ask a volunteer to read Exodus 14:29-31.

GUIDE: Refer members to **PSG page 29**, and ask a volunteer to read Isaiah 51:10-11.

GUIDE: Refer group members to **PSG page 29**, and note the range of emotions expressed by the Israelites, from fear to celebration (Ex. 15:1-18).

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 2** on this page and page 35 to provide an explanation to the phrase, the Israelites *feared the Lord*.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: To make a connection regarding ways we express emotions, ask if any group members use Emojis®. What are some of your favorite Emojis to use? What are the purpose of Emojis? How do they help you express emotions on social media?

cried out to the Lord, they quickly turned on the Lord's chosen representative Moses, saying, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Isn't this what we told you in Egypt: Leave us alone so that we may serve the Egyptians? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness" (vv. 11-12).

Moses responded by telling the Israelites, "Don't be afraid. Stand firm and see the LORD's salvation that he will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians you see today, you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you must be quiet" (vv. 13-14). God told Moses to stretch his staff in his hand over the sea. When Moses obeyed, the waters parted and all the Israelites **walked through the sea on dry ground** between the two walls of water to the other side of the sea (vv. 21-22). When the Egyptians came after them, God told Moses to stretch out his hand over the sea again. After Moses obeyed, the waters came back together and the entire Egyptian army drowned (vv. 26-28). ◀

Verse 30. Moses had encouraged the Israelites to trust in the Lord for their salvation from the Egyptians and God had delivered them: **That day the LORD saved Israel from the power of the Egyptians.** The limited power of the elite Egyptian army had been no match for the omnipotent power of God. At daybreak, as the Israelites looked back toward the sea, they saw that **the Egyptians were dead on the seashore.** The mighty Egyptian army that had so terrified the Israelites had been decimated!

2 ▶ Verse 31. Whereas the Lord had brought ruin and death upon Pharaoh's army, God had brought deliverance to the Israelites. While the Israelites had been terrified at the sight of the Egyptian army headed toward them, Moses had told them to keep trusting in God and they would see "the LORD's salvation" (v. 13). Now, having seen the demonstration of the **great power** of the Lord in delivering them from the Egyptians, the Israelites **feared the LORD.** The Hebrew term for *feared (yare)* is the same word used to describe the terror the Israelites had felt at the approach of the Egyptian army (v. 10). Depending on the context, the term can be used to express fear and terror or it can be used to express respect and awe. At this stage in the Israelites' relationship with God, their response to God's demonstration of His

power was probably a lot closer to fear in the sense of fright than it was to awe.² Through the drowning of the Egyptian army, as well as the ten plagues God had brought upon the entire nation of Egypt, the Israelites had seen with their own eyes what God did to those who stand against Him and oppose His will. Their response in fearing the Lord showed great wisdom (Prov. 9:10).

God's act in saving the Israelites caused them to believe in the Lord as well. Fear of the Lord was accompanied by faith in the Lord. The Israelites **believed in** God and **in his servant Moses**. "They believed his [God's] promises and sang his praise" (Ps. 106:12). ◀

Exodus 15:22-24

22 Then Moses led Israel on from the Red Sea, and they went out to the Wilderness of Shur. They journeyed for three days in the wilderness without finding water.

23 They came to Marah, but they could not drink the water at Marah because it was bitter—that is why it was named Marah.

24 The people grumbled to Moses, "What are we going to drink?"

Verses 22-23. Although the Israelites had believed in God after He delivered them from the Egyptians at the Red Sea, it did not take long for the Israelites to lose their focus on God and fall back into complaining about the difficulties they were facing. After Moses and his sister Miriam led the people in songs of praise to God for the deliverance He had provided from the Egyptian army (Ex. 15:1-21), Moses led the people toward the east into the **Wilderness of Shur**. The Wilderness of Shur is a desert region located in what is today the northeastern part of Egypt in the Sinai Peninsula and stretches to the east as far as the Negev in Israel. The typical terrain is rocky and barren though enough springs and oases exist for travelers and nomads. The Israelites were probably headed south along a caravan route toward Mount Sinai.

3 ▶ The Israelites had traveled for three days without finding any sources of water. Finding water to supply such a large group would have been problematic to begin with, but to make matters worse they had not found any water at all. They

DISCUSS: Question #2

(PSG, p. 29): What have you learned about God from firsthand experience?

(Alternate: In what specific ways have you experienced the mighty hand of the Lord in your life?)

TRANSITION: "In the next

verses we will see how the Israelites responded when they encountered difficulties on the other side of the Red Sea."

STUDY THE BIBLE

Exodus 15:22-24



10 minutes

READ: Read or ask a volunteer to read Exodus 15:22-24.

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible**

Commentary 3 on this page and page 36, and information on **PSG page 30** to provide an explanation to the term *Marah*, which means bitter.

Many artesian wells are bitter and unpleasant because of mineral salts. This one was not simply unpleasant; it may have been dangerous to their health.

GUIDE: Refer group members to **PSG page 31**, to highlight these points:

- *When we grumble, it is a clear indication that we are focusing on our circumstances and not on God.*
- *The issue behind grumbling is one of the heart.*
- *When we allow anxiety to rule our lives, we are focusing on circumstances rather than God's provision.*

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 4** to provide an explanation to the problem of grumbling and complaining and how this can be an issue for us today.

DISCUSS: Question #3 (PSG, p. 31): How does complaining impact our connection with God?

(Alternate: When we complain, which characteristics of God are we calling into question?)

TRANSITION: "In the next verses we will again see God's provision for His people."

finally came upon a oasis; but when they tasted the water, they found that it was too bitter to drink. The oasis itself was named **Marah**, which means "bitter." ◀

4 ▶ Verse 24. The people began to complain to their leader, Moses. Remember that this is the same group of people who had witnessed firsthand God's judgment on the Egyptians through the ten plagues and then were given their freedom by Pharaoh after the tenth plague. These are the same people who only days before had trusted God enough to walk through the Red Sea between two huge walls of water and then seen the dead bodies of their enemies on the shore after the opening in the sea had closed. If any group ever had reason to trust beyond question the providential care of the one true God they knew as Yahweh, it was the Israelites. But when they grew desperate for water, how did they respond? They **grumbled**, asking Moses, "**What are we going to drink?**" Instead of remembering the powerful ways God had provided for them, they thought only about their immediate need for water. Instead of relying on the constant presence of their faithful, awesome God, they complained to the one who had led them to freedom. Though their complaint was directed at Moses, in reality they were also complaining to the One who had called Moses as leader: they were grumbling to God. Sadly, this pattern continued throughout Israel's journey through the wilderness (see Ex. 16:1-2; 17:1-2; Num. 14:1-4; 16:41; and Josh. 9:16-18).

So what was their real problem? While the need for water was a legitimate concern, the real issue for the Israelites wasn't a lack of water but a lack of trust. They had enough knowledge. They had seen what God could do. They weren't relying on stories handed down from past generations. They had been there and experienced God's deliverance and mercy for themselves. Despite what they knew firsthand, despite all the logical reasons they had to keep trusting, they refused.

Let's be careful about condemning the Israelites. If we're honest with ourselves, we have to admit that we've all been guilty of the same kind of sin. We may not always openly complain as the people in the wilderness did, but inwardly we're too afraid to keep trusting. We're in too big of a hurry to wait on God's provision, so we give in to our doubts. Our memories of God's powerful grace should sustain us, but sometimes, like the Israelites, we allow our problems to pull our focus away from our only hope. That leads us to stop trusting and obeying. ◀

Exodus 15:25-27

25 So he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree. When he threw it into the water, the water became drinkable.

The Lord made a statute and ordinance for them at Marah, and he tested them there.

26 He said, "If you will carefully obey the Lord your God, do what is right in his sight, pay attention to his commands, and keep all his statutes, I will not inflict any illnesses on you that I inflicted on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you."

27 Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy date palms, and they camped there by the water.

KEY WORDS: **The LORD who heals** (15:26)—The Hebrew term, *Jehovah-Rapha*, refers to God's merciful intervention and includes the meanings of healing, forgiveness, and restoration.

5 ▶ **Verses 25-26.** Faced with this crisis, Moses **cried out to the LORD**. Despite the people's grumbling, God responded to Moses' call for help. God immediately answered with a strange command: He showed Moses a nearby tree and told him to throw it into the water. Moses didn't complain or question but simply obeyed. Moses acted in faith without knowing the how or why behind God's command. Instantly, the water was no longer bitter and became fit for drinking. God used the tree as a visual aid in the same way He had told Moses to raise his staff and stretch out his hand to part the Red Sea and then close the waters upon the pursuing Egyptian army (Ex. 14:16,26-27). The power wasn't in Moses' hand and staff or the tree but in God's word of authority.

God **tested** the Israelites when He commanded them to perform the ritual of smearing the blood of the sacrificial lambs on their door posts as a protection against the tenth plague (12:1-28) and when He told them to walk between the two walls of water of the divided sea (14:21-22). Now God tested them again when they followed Moses through the desert for three days without water. Sadly, they had failed this test when they stopped trusting and started complaining. But because of His faithful love, God had answered Moses' plea by providing the needed water.

STUDY THE BIBLE Exodus 15:25-27



15 minutes

READ: Read Exodus 15:25-27.

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible**

Commentary 5 to explain the significance of the key ideas in verses 25-26:

- *Moses cried out to the Lord.*
- *God tested the Israelites.*
- *God established a statute and ordinance with Israel that required obedience.*
- *God is the Lord who heals.*

GUIDE: Use **KEY WORDS**

on this page (**PSG, p. 32**) to explain the name *The LORD who heals*.

LEADER PACK: Display **Item 2:**

Restoration to show one way restoration happens. Lead members to think of other examples.



God is the only one who can restore us and make us whole.

GUIDE: Refer members to the following paragraph on **PSG page 33:**

“The word *rapha* occurs about sixty times in the Old Testament; it always refers to restoring, healing, or curing. It is frequently used to relate to physical healing, but it also can relate to moral and spiritual healing. . . . When trying circumstances came, Israel now knew they could look to Him as a God who heals. Israel had failed the test, but God dealt gently with them, revealing even more of His character and power.”

DISCUSS: Question #4
(PSG, p. 33): **What are some different ways God heals and restores His people?**

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 6** to show how God abundantly provided for His people at Elim. Make the connection that God does the same for us today.

After God satisfied the people’s need for water, He **made a statute and ordinance** for the Israelites. The use of the two terms does not point to two separate commands, but rather is a Hebrew literary device whereby repetition is used to emphasize a single concept. The overall framework for this one command was God’s requirement that the Israelites were to **carefully obey** Him. Specifically, they were to do what He said was **right in his sight, to pay attention to his commands, and to keep all his statutes**. At this point God had not yet made a formal covenant with the Israelites. That would happen later at Mount Sinai, where God would give the Israelites the Ten Commandments and the other laws. This statement established the general basis for maintaining the relationship He had with the Israelites. God required their complete loyalty and obedience. If they would trust and obey Him and follow Moses’ direction, then God would not punish them by afflicting them with the kinds of **illnesses** which He had sent on the Egyptians. When God gave the Israelites the entire Law at Sinai, He spelled out the many ways He would bless them for their trust and faithful obedience (Deut. 28:1-14). However, He also identified a long list of judgments that He would send upon them if they were unfaithful and disobedient (vv. 15-68).

God then concluded His instruction with another revelation about His divine nature. He is **the LORD who heals** (*Jehovah-Rapha* or *Yahweh-Rapha*). The Hebrew word for *heals* is found over fifty times in the Old Testament. Often it refers to physical healing (Gen. 20:17; Lev. 13:18); but, it is also used in the sense of to forgive (2 Chron. 30:20), or to restore (7:14). All of these meanings can be found in relation to God’s merciful intervention as *Jehovah-Rapha*. ◀

6 ▶ Verse 27. The Lord demonstrated that He is indeed “the LORD who heals” as He brought the people to Elim. The exact location of Elim is not known, the term means “trees.” The name was appropriate, as Elim had seventy date palm trees as well as twelve springs of water. Whereas at Marah they had initially lacked even the essentials (drinkable water), at Elim the Lord provided for the Israelites an abundance! ◀

Just as God tested the Israelites on their journey to the promised land, He also tests us. He did not test them so that they would fail but so that He could strengthen their faith. As Jesus’ followers we are on a similar journey. Like the Israelites, we are traveling through difficulties that God intends to use for our good and so that He can demonstrate

His power and show His glory through us (Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 12:9). However, unlike the Israelites in the wilderness, who had not yet experienced the promised land, we have been given a taste of our future home through the power of God's Spirit who lives in us (1 Cor. 6:19). And we have an amazing picture of the full glory that awaits us (Rev. 21–22).

Until Jesus returns, we will continue to suffer the effects of sin, and sometimes it is our sin that brings the suffering. However, not all suffering is because of specific sins we have committed. Sometimes God allows us to suffer in order to help us grow and to let His light in us shine more brightly. As God leads us through tests and struggles, our hope and our faith can remain strong (Rom. 5:1-5; Heb. 11:1). We have the benefit of God's more complete revelation—Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the entire Bible. This fuller revelation better enables us to trust *Jehovah-Rapha* to guide us through our journey. Because we focus on Jesus (Heb. 12:1-2) and are certain that “by his wounds [we] have been healed” (1 Pet. 2:24), we continue to trust and obey. However, we must guard against the false teaching that God will do whatever you ask if you just have *enough* faith. The lie often expressed is that, if God hasn't healed you, you're not believing hard enough. Such a misguided view leads to confusion and even anger and despair. The reality is that we either trust and believe God or we don't. Jesus spoke of faith the size of a mustard seed as being sufficient to move mountains (Matt. 17:20). Suffering is not an indication of a lack of faith, as seen in the life of Job, a righteous man who endured great suffering. While God does indeed answer prayers for healing and we should pray to Him for healing, in some cases God might choose not to bring such healing. God may allow us to suffer, to experience sickness, disease, hardship, and so forth for His purposes, both for our good and His glory as He conforms us into the image of Christ (Rom. 8:28-30). Even so, we may not understand His purposes as to why some things happen to us until we are with God in heaven.

Isaiah 53:5, quoted in 1 Peter 2:24, accurately portrays Jesus as our ultimate Healer. However, our greatest need is not physical but spiritual healing. Jesus, and He alone, provides that solution. Yes, for those who have put their faith in Jesus one day there will be no more pain, sickness, or death (Rev. 21:4). But Jesus has not saved us so that we will never have to suffer in this life but so that we can experience His peace throughout our journey, even through the inevitable trials and tribulations we will face (John 16:33).

1. Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 333–34.
2. *Ibid.*, 346.

GUIDE: Refer members to the last two paragraphs on **PSG page 34** to the truth that Jesus is our *Jehovah-Rapha*. Ask a volunteer to read 1 Peter 2:24.

DISCUSS: Question #5 (PSG, p. 34): How can our actions and attitudes demonstrate that we follow the God who heals and restores?

(Alternate: How have you experienced God's healing and restoration?)

DO: Encourage group members to take a few minutes to complete the activity “**Thrill of Victory, Agony of Defeat**” on **PSG page 34**.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Display a wedding photo album. If you had a photo album to show future generations stories of how God worked powerfully on your behalf during your life, what spiritual memories would be pictured in your album?

LIVE IT OUT

5 minutes

GUIDE: Emphasize **The Point:** **God is the only one who can restore us and make us whole.**

REVIEW: Review **Live It Out (PSG, p. 35)**; (see text to the right). Encourage each group member to follow through this week with at least one of the applications.

WRAP IT UP

GUIDE: Encourage group members to remember their spiritual stories—the defeats as well as the victories—that impact their lives to this day. Remind group members that the God who heals can still bring healing in our lives and in the lives of our loved ones.

PRAY: “Father, thank You for being the God who heals. Thanks for Your physical, emotional and spiritual healing in our lives.”

LIVE IT OUT

It’s never too late to learn and change. How should you respond when you find yourself drinking from the bitter wells of Marah?

- ▶ **Listen.** Listen earnestly to the voice of God. What is God trying to teach you in your present circumstances? What can you learn about God from these events? Change your perspective by seeing what God is doing on your behalf.
- ▶ **Obey.** When you are drinking from bitter wells, look to see if there are areas of disobedience in your life. Repent and turn from any disobedient actions or attitudes. Turn to the One who desires to heal you. Obedience flows from the understanding of God’s character.
- ▶ **Encourage.** Encourage someone you know who is drinking from bitter waters. Point them to Christ who offers healing, hope, and abundance.



BIBLICAL
ILLUSTRATOR



Recorded on the interior walls of the first hall of the Ramesses II Temple at Abu Simbel, Egypt, the massive Egyptian army maneuvers their horses and chariots in preparation for invading Kadesh.

The Egyptian war chariot was a two-horse war chariot had two wheels and had a crew of two, a driver and a shield-bearer. The driver approached the enemy and then fired arrows; he might use a javelin or sword at closer quarters. The chariot was of light wicker-work and designed for speed; it was not armored. The massed chariot attack was meant to terrify the lightly armed foot soldiers who opposed it.

Egyptians did not use a cavalry, but employed mounted troops as scouts. Exodus 14:5 suggests

such scouts were shadowing the Israelites as they departed. The Bible also indicates that Egyptian infantry set out with the chariot corps in pursuit of the Hebrews (v. 6), but no infantry appear to have been present when the chariots were destroyed at the sea (v. 23).

The Egyptian military's preferred tactic was to make a rapid strike with their chariot forces. They never developed the slow and methodical art of siege warfare, and they could be bold to the point of recklessness. This is consonant with what we see in Exodus 14, where they rush into the sea without pausing to ask whether this was a sound idea. The Israelites would have been no match for the Egyptian chariots. Being untrained peasants who only days before had been working as slaves, the Hebrews would have scattered before a properly executed Egyptian attack.

The excerpt above is from the article "Pharaoh's Army" (Spring 2010), which relates to this session. More *Biblical Illustrator* articles are available that relate to this session. See page 7 about *Biblical Illustrator*.

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

God is our healer and Jesus is the Great Physician who removes our sin and frees us from death. We receive the greatest healing when we trust Christ as Savior and Lord.

Each week, make yourself available either before or after the session to speak privately with anyone in your group who wants to know more about becoming a Christian. See the article, "Leading Someone to the Greatest Decision of All," on page 2 for guidance in leading a person to Christ.

Remind group members that **page 2** in the **PSG** offers guidance in how to become a Christian. Encourage believers to consider using this article as they have opportunities to lead others to Christ.

**GROUPS
MATTER.**

Grow with other group leaders at the [Groups Ministry blog](#).

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