

Scary
GROSS &
Weird
STORIES

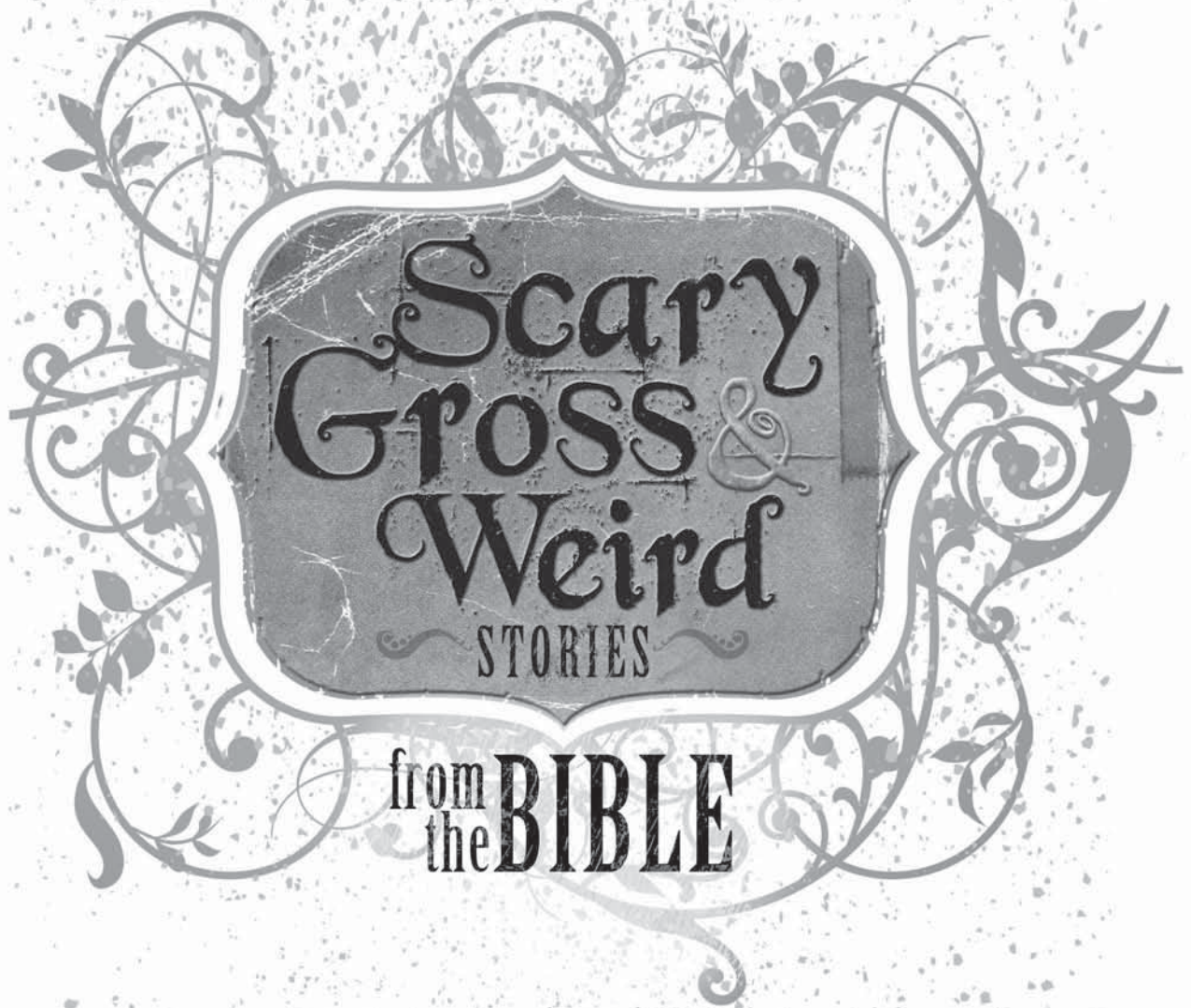
from
the **BIBLE**

Bloody tent pegs, disembodied fingers, suicidal pigs



The truths buried in the bizzare





Bloody Tent Pegs, Disembodied Fingers, and Suicidal Pigs...



the Truths Buried in the Bizarre

13 BIBLE LESSONS FOR TEENAGERS

Group

Loveland, Colorado
www.group.com





Scary
GROSS &
Weird
STORIES

from
the **BIBLE**



Group resources actually work!

This Group resource helps you focus on **"The 1 Thing"**—a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ. "The 1 Thing" incorporates our **R.E.A.L.** approach to ministry. It reinforces a growing friendship with Jesus, encourages long-term learning, and results in life transformation, because it's:

Relational

Learner-to-learner interaction enhances learning and builds Christian friendships.

Experiential

What learners experience through discussion and action sticks with them up to 9 times longer than what they simply hear or read.

Applicable

The aim of Christian education is to equip learners to be both hearers and doers of God's Word.

Learner-based

Learners understand and retain more when the learning process takes into consideration how they learn best.

Group

Scary, Gross & Weird Stories from the Bible

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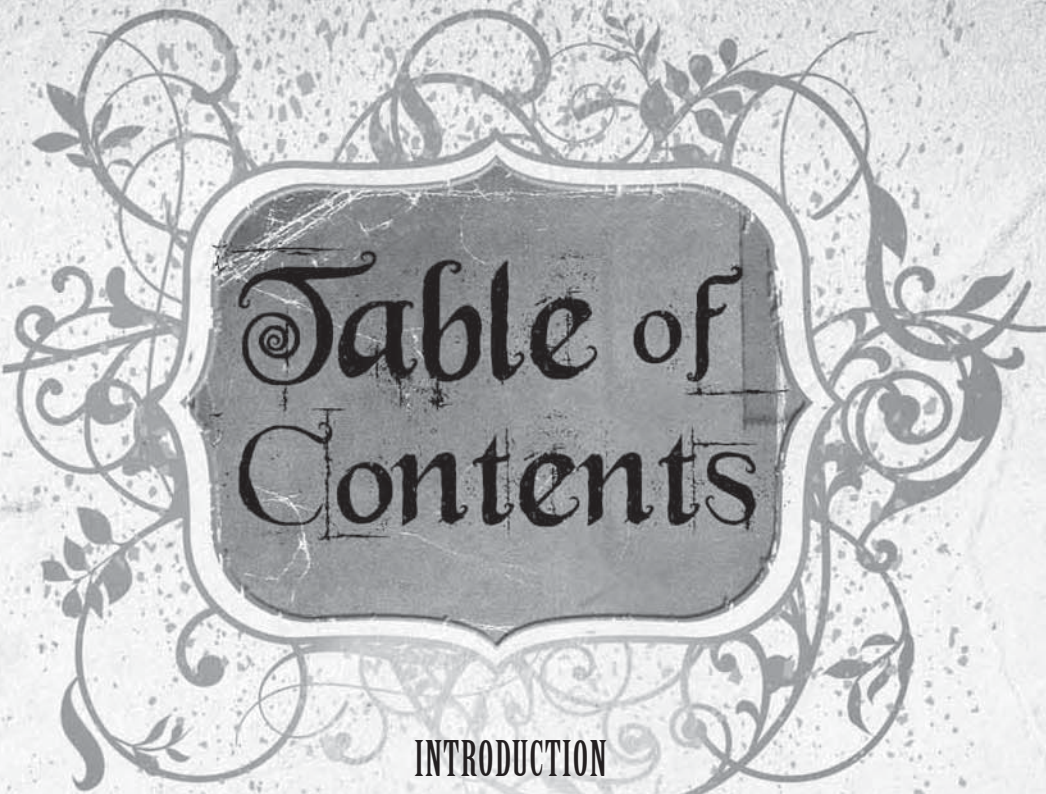


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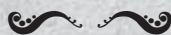
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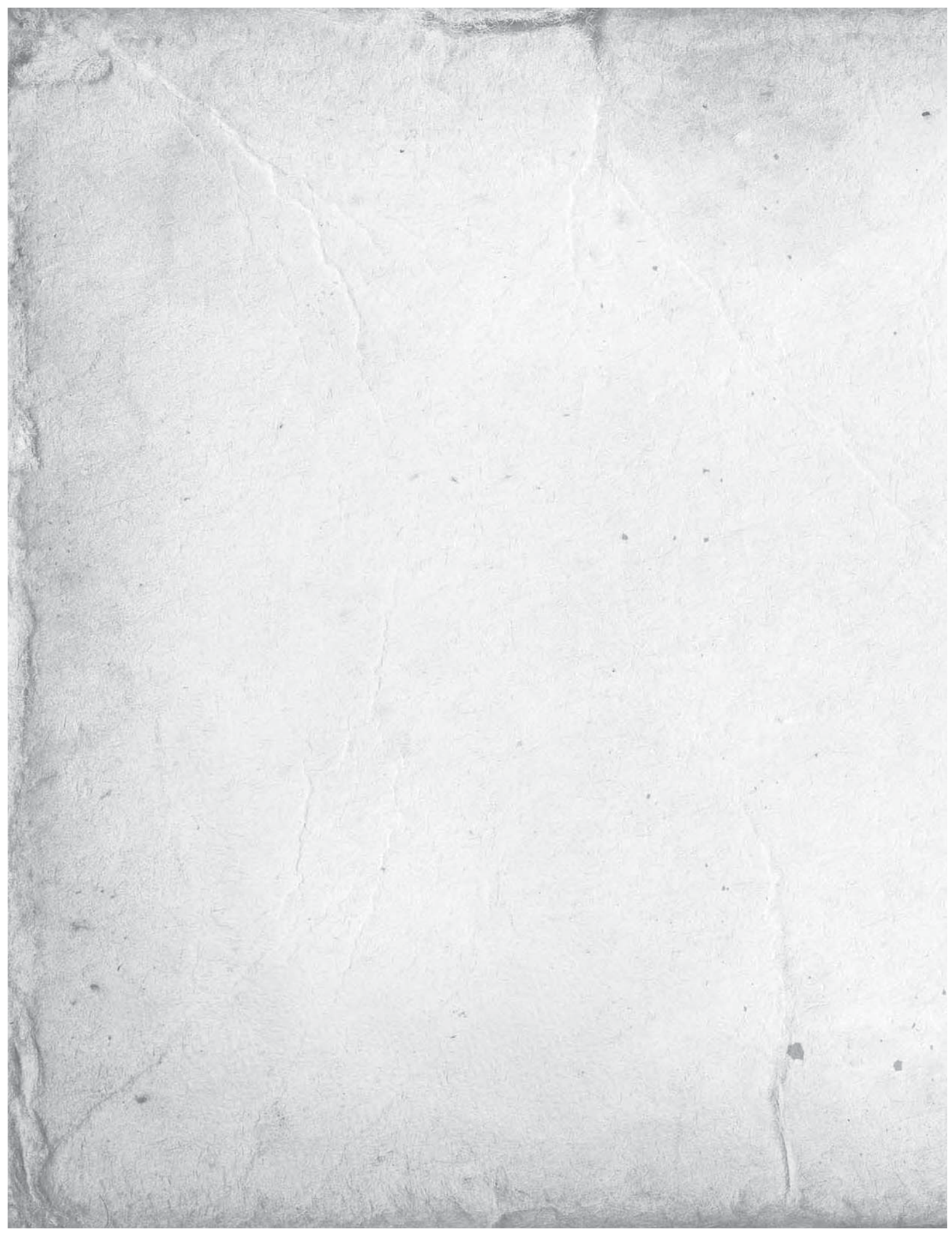
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Scary Gross & Weird STORIES

from
the **BIBLE**

Introduction

Most of the youth in your ministry undoubtedly know the familiar, likely Bible accounts. They've read them dozens of times. Adam and Eve in Eden, God calling Samuel, Esther's courage, Saul's transformation into Paul. Of course, these are amazing highlights from the story of God's loving relationship with his people. But what about the unfamiliar characters? The unlikely accounts? Do your students know just how offbeat and uncomfortable some parts of the Bible can be? How terrifying? How...dare we say it...**weird?**

Scary, Gross, & Weird Stories from the Bible explores 13 bizarre true stories with a can't-look-away approach. Now, we understand very well that your teenagers probably won't be shocked by what they find in these passages; they've become immune to drama and gore and the grotesque like no generation before. However, they may have never before associated any of that with God's Word. In fact, their view of the Bible might run more along these lines: sterilized, predictable, safe, dull. So here's your opportunity to surprise them, shake the faith dialogue up a bit, and guide them through some provocative, life-transforming experiences. Think of these 13 decidedly non-safe stories as the back-alley accounts of the Bible...where God's light often shines the brightest.

Your students will be surprised and intrigued by the strange things (and people) in these passages—but keep in mind that strangeness isn't the focus. We're not helping your students encounter weirdness for weirdness' sake (or grossness for grossness' sake—you get the picture). Instead, the goal of these unique encounters with unexpected, unsettling stories is *solely* to show your teenagers more of who God is. And, well, God is pretty unexpected and unsettling. Not to mention utterly creative. So creative, in fact, that he included a lot of head-scratching, cringe-inducing, and downright disturbing stories in his Word. And each one reveals something about God and what it means to be in an intimate, redeeming relationship with Jesus Christ.

We've designed each of the 13 studies in this resource to achieve that very purpose: to equip your students to *really* dig into fresh, startling Scripture passages...so they'll be astounded by our extraordinary Creator and Savior, and moved to love and serve him with their lives.

To that end, here's a full breakdown of how we've built this resource.



Each fun, practical, and peculiar study centers around one **main theme** that is highlighted through every experience and discussion. This main theme helps teenagers grow spiritually and live in ways that glorify God. A detailed **supply list** and **preparation and setup** guide give you everything you need to get ready. The materials are generally easy-to-find, but consider borrowing from congregation members whatever you don't already have.

✿ **THE GOO...** The study starts with a bang: something both active and interest-capturing to pull teenagers into the study's tone—and introduce the main theme.

✿ **THE GUTS...** Here's the meat of the study: a fascinating, in-depth exploration of the Bible study. The storytelling is dramatic and innovative, emphasizing the scary, gross, or weird aspects of the story (think story time around the campfire). You'll also explore the theme and dig into Scripture for context and other supporting passages.

✿ **THE GRIT...** In this final part of the study, you'll help guide students to a personal connection with the theme. This might involve an on-the-edge challenge, an interactive experience, or a simple contemplative response. Whatever the activity, it will lead naturally to...

✿ **THE GEL...** Where students are given a clear opportunity to make practical commitments for living out what they've discovered. These application steps are relevant, doable, and meaningful.

IN EACH STUDY, YOU'LL ALSO FIND:


✿ **pit•tip.** Scattered throughout, these tips give you helpful hints and suggestions for specific activities or situations.


✿ **Cleaning Up.** This is an additional collection of open-ended, thought-provoking questions. Use all or some of them to complement—or even replace—the debriefing questions for each activity. You can guide students through this section all together or form smaller discussion groups for more intimate dialogue.


✿ One **photocopiable piece.** Your students will interact with this handout in some way during the study, whether as script, guide, map, journal, or list.


✿ A **creative prayer.** In perhaps the most profound moments of the session, teenagers will connect with God through a unique prayer practice.

✿ An **interesting quote.** Share this funny, strange, or informative blurb with your students—or just store it away for later.

 **Media Infusion.** Here's a brief optional activity for watching a movie clip, listening to a song, or mining the Internet for a surprising spiritual link. You can fit this serious, offbeat, or poignant idea into the study wherever you'd like an added punch.

 **Believe It or Not.** Check out this real-life gross, weird, or scary story that relates to the Bible story your group is exploring. Share it with your students as a fun bonus before, during, or after the study. Or, better yet, have a volunteer read it aloud.

 **Mixing It Up.** This box highlights two or three other Bible stories that contain a similar “weirdness” or touch on the same theme. You can plan to read these together as a group or suggest that your students explore them on their own.

 **Bizarre Bonus.** Here's a powerful, take-it-to-the-next-level idea for students—either to do outside of the group or together if you have time. This is an over-the-top experience that relates to the Bible story and theme you're exploring. Consider it a cool-but-weird challenge (that should take more time and prep work) to drive the discovery home.



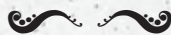
REMEMBER: You know your teenagers best, so please use this resource in ways that fit your group, space, time, and individual needs. The activities, statements, and questions are simply tools to help you facilitate meaningful experiences—so feel free to follow them word-for-word, adapt liberally, or springboard to your own ideas.

While we don't really know (though we eagerly anticipate) what will come from your teenagers' encounters with these stories, this resource does come with a few guarantees. First, it will be relevant for students of various ages, backgrounds, and faith levels. Second, it will work with groups of three, 100, and anywhere in between. Third, it will challenge teenagers to a deeper, more mature relationship with Jesus Christ. These things we promise—the rest is up to you and your students. Our prayer is you'll undergo a weird, wild, and wonderful adventure...



(Lot's Wife Turns to Salt)

BIBLE STORY: GENESIS 18:16-33



THEME: THE PERFECT CHARACTER OF GOD

Subtopics: Obedience, Justice, Perseverance, Following Through, Family

Students will learn how God did what he said he would do when Lot's wife disobeyed, but also how God rescued Lot and his children. Students will discover that God graciously rescues and justly does what he says he will do. They'll also be challenged to obey God fully, even when they don't understand his plan.

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- a new toothbrush for everyone
- a can of vegetable shortening
- a foam cup for everyone
- water

- paper towels
- a small prize for everyone (piece of candy, soda, dollar bill, etc.)
- pencils
- Bibles

- 10 pieces of paper
- mirror (the biggest you can find)
- glass cleaner
- (optional) salty snacks
- (optional) computer(s) with an Internet connection

PREPARATION AND SETUP:

- Fill a big bowl with the prizes you've designated. Label it "The Big Bowl of Fabulous Prizes."
- Photocopy a "Mad Lib" handout (p. 8) for every two or three students.



**Greet everybody as they arrive.
Start with an ultimate challenge.**

SAY Anyone who competes in this toothbrushing contest will receive an awesome prize from The Big Bowl of Fabulous Prizes. Everybody participating will load their brushes up with some of this shortening and brush their teeth as long as they can. The person lasting the longest can choose two prizes out of the Big Bowl of Fabulous Prizes and will be considered to be *double* fabulous. Let's do it!

Help volunteers load their brushes (or fingers) up with the lardy goop, give the signal to start, and see who can last the longest. Distribute foam cups everyone can spit into when they are done. When it comes time to reward those who participated and proclaim a winner, do something surprising: award the fabulous prizes to those who didn't participate. Cheerfully grant the top prize to the biggest no-funner of the bunch. Give students a moment to protest, and then:

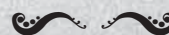
ASK • How mad are you that I didn't follow through with what I promised?

• Why is it a big deal to be trustworthy?

• What would the world be like without justice?

➔ *At this point, you might want to distribute prizes to everyone before full-on anarchy erupts.*

SAY I can't begin to imagine what it would be like if God didn't do the stuff he said he would do—good stuff and punishment stuff. We couldn't trust anything in the Bible. We'd be left to guess about everything—could we trust him to save us when we die? It's a great thing to see his mercy woven through the pages of the Bible, but it's also pretty comforting to see how he kept his promises time and again, and did what he said he would, even at times when it must have grieved him. Today's story is a good example of both God's mercy and his justice.



pit•tip

Buy cheap toothbrushes in bulk or look for deals in dollar stores. If your group is too large or you just can't swing the expense, have students use the "finger-brushing" method.



BELIEVE IT OR NOT

In Oregon, a seventh grade long-distance runner was chased by a deer who began using him as a human salt lick. Kevin Cox told reporters that the incident was "funny...but a little scary," too.



Bizarre Bonus

Here's a crazy idea to do together after the study. Load up a table in the room with all kinds of salty junk food. Have everyone partner up. While one person keeps their eyes shut, the other one should chew a mouthful of food, then see if their partner can identify it by looking at the mush in their partner's mouth. Take it a step further with two- or three-food-combo challenges. Use the goofy salt-connection to segue into a discussion about what it means to follow Jesus.



Distribute the photocopies of the "Mad Lib" handout (p. 8). Have everybody form pairs or trios. One person in the group should fill in the mad lib using their partners' suggestions. Then, when all the blanks have been filled,

groups can read the goofy story together.

Once everyone has finished, ask the groups to find Genesis 18:16-33. Give them enough time to read the verses among themselves, then prompt them with these questions to talk about in their groups.

- ASK**
- What surprised you most when you read this?
 - What did you learn about God's mercy in these verses?

SAY Unfortunately, there weren't even ten good people in the town of Sodom. Instead, God found only Lot and his family. He told them he would lead them out of the city so they wouldn't get barbecued with the others. Let's pick up the story there. Keep reading at Genesis 19:15-29.

→ Give students a few minutes to finish reading the Bible story. Then:

MEDIA INFUSION (optional)

Search news Web sites, magazines, or newspapers for examples of famous people who faced indictment or were sentenced for breaking the law. Discuss the punishment they received or didn't receive, and talk about whether or not it was fair. (If you need ideas, here are some names your teenagers might be familiar with: Paris Hilton, O.J. Simpson, Martha Stewart, Scooter Libby.)

pit-tip

If you don't have access to a big mirror, or if your group is just too big, give each student a piece of aluminum foil they can smear up with Crisco and write on. (Faster clean-up, too.)

ASK · What do you think caused Lot's wife to turn back?

· How would you label her punishment: appropriate, too harsh, just plain weird, or something else?

Explain your answer.

· What can you know about God based on this story's ending?



Use your can of vegetable shortening from earlier to smear up a large mirror. Spread it evenly until the whole surface is covered.

This can be done quickly, right in front of students as you talk.

SAY Mercy is a great thing when we are the ones getting off easy. But something inside us stirs when justice isn't served. It is that quality of justice within God that required a punishment for sin: we all mess up and disobey him—a capital offense punishable by death. The mercy of God came by way of his perfect son, Jesus, who made payment on our behalf by dying a terrible death to save us from hell. If you don't fully understand what Jesus did for you on the cross, please come and talk with me after our study.

SAY I want you guys to think about God's perfect character. Write some qualities that describe him with your finger onto this glass. Let's start by writing two we've talked about today.

➔ *Use your finger to write "just" and "merciful" into the grease, then give students a chance to crowd around the mirror and write their thoughts in the shortening. Provide paper towels for clean-up.*

Read 1 Corinthians 13:12 aloud:

"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."

SAY It is a challenge to love and serve God when we can't see him, hear him, or touch him. We can only see bits and glimpses of his character in Scripture and in the things around us. God's faithfulness and consistency are crucial to our understanding of who he is. He has to do what he promises, even if it breaks his heart and ours. It is also obvious through Scripture and his plan for saving us that he has tremendous mercy and compassion on us. This verse we read has a neat promise. One day, we are going to see God face to face and know him the way he knows us, through and through.

➔ *(At this point, use the glass cleaner to clean the mirror off, showing a distinction between making out only a fuzzy description of God, to seeing clearly.)*

SAY Until that time, it is important to read his Word and learn what we can about who he is. Just think about these questions silently—you don't need to answer them out loud.

- ASK**
- How does God's character differ from your own?
 - In what ways has God been merciful to you?
 - How has he proved to you that he means what he says?
 - How does this change the way you think, feel, and connect with Jesus?



The Gel...

Offer your teenagers three challenges to help them better know and understand God's character:

- Keep a running list of every example you find in your Bible reading of God's justice and of his mercy.

- **Identify one God-like characteristic you will focus on every day of the coming week.**
- **Spend five minutes before bed just being quiet with God, and see if you learn anything about him during that time.**

➔ *Ask students to pray with a partner by simply naming aloud different aspects of God's character and thanking him for who he is. Here are a few to get them started: God is merciful. God is just. God is kind. God is holy. God is good...*

After several moments, close your meeting with a prayer.

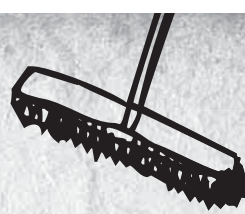
SAY God, thank you for taking the guesswork out of things. Because you consistently do what you say, we know we can trust your words to be true. That gives us hope because we are counting on your mercy and holding onto your promise of help and salvation. Thanks for being faithful and reliable and, above all, merciful toward us. Amen.



**Don't Pee on
My Leg
and Tell Me
It's Raining**

—Title of book by Judge
Judy Sheindlin





CLEANING UP

Here are some additional open-ended, thought-provoking questions. Use all or some of them to complement—or even replace—the debriefing questions for any of the activities in this study. You can guide students through this section all together, or form smaller discussion groups for more intimate dialogue.

- **How would you rate today's story on a weirdness scale of 1 to 10?**
- **Sum today's Bible story up in one sentence.**
- **How would you define justice?**
- **How would you define mercy?**
- **Why is it frustrating when someone doesn't get what they deserve?**
- **Name a time you were relieved that you didn't get something you deserved.**
- **How would the world be different if God wasn't merciful?**
- **How would the world be different if God wasn't just?**
- **Name one thing you can do, starting today, to be a more merciful person.**
- **Tell God thanks, in your own words, for his flawless character.**



pit·tip

Consider writing the "Cleaning Up" questions onto pieces of paper, one question per page. Beforehand, tape the pages to the wall or onto the table. At this point in the study, distribute pencils and have teenagers walk around to all the different questions and write their answers on the paper.

For huge groups, write the questions onto ten pieces of poster board so there is more room for writing. For really huge groups, make two or three posters for every question so students aren't all bunched up trying to write on the same ten boards.

Mixing It Up

Judges 11:21-40

(Jephthah makes a vow)

1 Samuel 24:1-10

(Saul uses a public potty)

2 Kings 2:23-25

(bears eat bullies)

The town of Sodom was a [_____], [_____] town. People
WORD FOR BAD WORD FOR **REALLY** BAD
there were [_____]-ing constantly. They ignored God and
A SIN
broke the most important rule: [_____]. God was fed up.
A RULE
Abraham pleaded with God to spare Sodom. If God could find some good guys
there, perhaps he could rain down [_____] instead of fire
SOMETHING FLUFFY AND NICE
and brimstone.

“God, if you find 50, or 40, or 30, or 20, or 10 guys half as good as [_____],
A NICE PERSON IN YOUR GROUP
would you please not wipe out Sodom with a big fireball?” God agreed. Unfortunately, God
only found one good guy there. Only Lot and his family would be spared.

They were given special instructions: Pack the [_____] and the
A NECESSITY ITEM
[_____]. Don't forget the [_____]
A BREAKFAST CEREAL
[_____].
SOMETHING YOU'D WISH YOU HAD IF YOU WERE ON THE SHOW **LOST**

They would be led out of their hometown by angels, and then,
“[_____]!” Total destruction! “[_____]!”
A LOUD SOUND AN EXCLAMATION

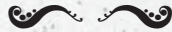
“Whatever you do, don't turn back,” Lot's family was sternly warned. But Lot's
wife didn't listen. Did she go back to turn off the [_____]?
AN ELECTRICAL APPLIANCE

Only God knows. The moment she looked back, she was turned to a pile of salt. God keeps
his promises—the ones we want kept, and those we choose to ignore.

The Sky Is Falling

(God Sends Plagues to Egypt)

BIBLE STORY: EXODUS 7:14–12:30



THEME: ULTIMATE TRUST

Subtopics: Justice, Freedom, God's Sovereignty, God's Children

Students will study the story of the plagues of Egypt and learn that they can trust God even in the midst of huge obstacles.

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- a fine-tipped marker for each person
- (optional) a live frog in a portable container
- a few handfuls of the kinds of rubber spiders or insects that are available at toy stores, discount stores, party supply stores, and online (such as www.orientaltrading.com)
- sealable bags
- water
- yellow food coloring
- (optional) There may also be a photo on the Web of a plague of locusts flying in front of the pyramids of Giza. Search for "plague of locusts, Giza" and see if you can find it.
- a can of alphabet soup and a can opener for every five students
- a lot of newspaper
- several rolls of paper towels (or a nearby sink)
- (optional) a DVD of the movie *The Prince of Egypt*, DVD player, and TV

(continued on next page)

SUPPLIES NEEDED *(continued)*:

- 10 images either in a computer slide presentation or printed out (you can find all of these by typing them into an Internet search engine):

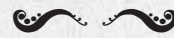
1. a picture of the Nile river
2. a picture of a frog (or a lot of frogs)
3. a picture of a louse (close-up)
4. a picture of a swarm of flies

PREPARATION AND SETUP:

- Make a copy of the handout (p. 18) for every student.
- Put several rubber spiders or insects in resealable bags filled with water. For added effect, put yellow food coloring in the water.
- Print out hard copies of the ten images above or make them into a slide show. Depending on the size of your group, you can present these via a TV, projector, or computer screen.

5. a picture of a dead cow (yes, they're online, and no, it doesn't have to be too graphic)
6. a picture of boiling water (boils, get it?)
7. a picture of hail
8. a picture of a swarm of locusts
9. a picture of dark clouds
10. a picture of a tombstone

- Lay the newspapers down on the floor for students to pour soup onto, and keep paper towels close at hand for clean up.
- (optional) Have a clip of *The Prince of Egypt* cued to show the scene beginning in scene twenty-three at 73:00 (or, 1 hour, 13 minutes). You'll end the clip at 76:10 (or, 1 hour, 16 minutes, 10 seconds).



pit-tip

You can really spice up this activity with a real, live frog. You can often buy these inexpensively at pet stores (if you don't live in a location that is frog-infested). Bring the frog in a container to keep it safe. Remind students to be gentle as they touch the frog. Carefully pass the frog around the room so each student can hold it.

Make sure you keep the frog in a safe container, but keep it in sight of the group through the rest of the study.



Begin with the lights out or dimmed so that students won't be able to clearly see what's in the sealed bags. Do your best to imply that the bugs in the water are very, very real. You can also have a towel or cloth wrapped around the water-filled bags to further obscure the view.

SAY I've collected a few samples of local animal life, now sealed in formaldehyde. If you think you're up to it, go ahead and stick a finger in the bags to figure out what's in them.

➔ *Unseal the bags with great drama. Then, gingerly holding the bags, you and a couple volunteers should pass by the students. Slow down long enough for the braver students to stick a finger in the water (not knowing what's in it), but don't linger.*

Without revealing what was actually in the bags, discuss.

ASK · What does it feel like to be close to critters like these?

· On a scale of one to ten, how much did you trust me during this activity?

· If you were to see a bug or frog on the ground somewhere, would you be inclined to pick it up?

Why or why not?

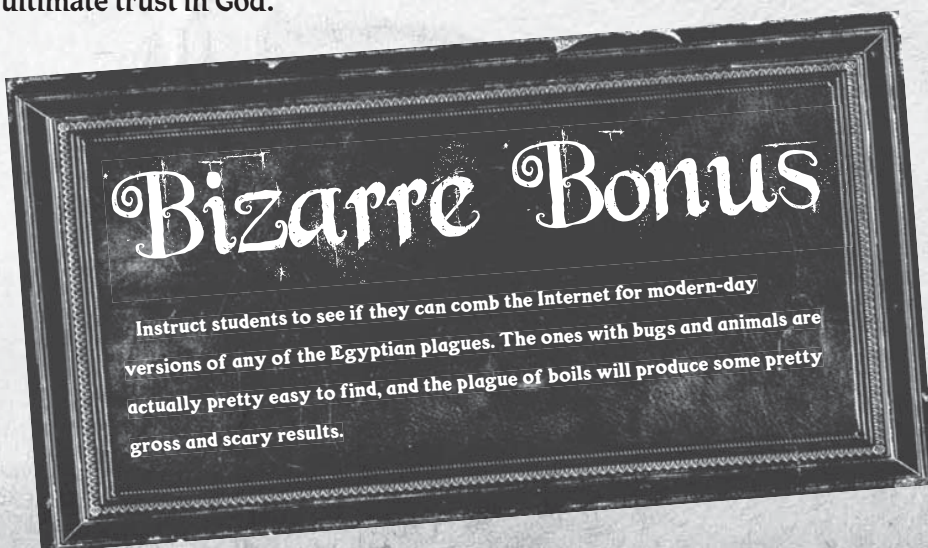
· What are your biggest fears of the insect, reptile, natural-disaster, or just-plain-gross variety? How do you react to the very thought of it?

SAY Today we're going to look at a text in the Bible where the Egyptians got up close and personal with a wide variety of these kinds of things... and more.

ASK · When do you ever think about God being in control of nature? What does that show you about how we can trust God?

· What do you already know about the story of the plagues? What questions do you have about the plagues?

SAY Let's try to answer those questions as we dig into this fascinating—and, let's be honest, pretty out-there—story. As we learn about the plagues that affected Egypt, we'll learn more about why we can have ultimate trust in God.



BELIEVE IT OR NOT

Talk about weird...and gross. A junior high teacher on a school field trip once discovered a pond full of hundreds of frogs, all of which had missing or deformed legs. Some of them had pairs of legs where there was only supposed to be one. Some had feet that were pointing in the wrong direction. Some had legs that wouldn't bend or that bent too much. Scientists still debate about whether it was caused by pesticides, parasites, or something else.





You'll display (of course) ten images: a picture of the Nile river, a picture of a frog, a picture of a louse, a picture of a swarm of flies, a picture of a dead cow, a picture of boiling

water, a picture of hail, a picture of a swarm of locusts, a picture of dark clouds, and a picture of a tombstone. Prepare these to be shown one at a time as you describe the plagues.

SAY Many of us grew up in Sunday school learning the cute stories of the Bible: Noah and the cute animals, Daniel and the cute lions, and so on. We may learn bits and pieces about the life of Moses along the way, but usually only in a G-rated kind of way.

ASK · What do you know about Moses off the top of your head?

SAY Well, there is a dark side to the story of the Exodus. The ten plagues were not cute. How cute can lice be? Or imagine that you happen to be the poor soul going for a swim in the Nile the day it turned to blood? Can you say, "Everyone out of the pool?"

Moses told Pharaoh to let his people go. You don't want to say "No" to God's messenger. I want to show you what actually went on in Egypt way back when. This isn't the Sunday school-approved version, but here goes.

➔ *Show the images in turn as you talk about each plague.*

SAY The first was a plague of blood. The rivers literally turned to blood...can you imagine? Think for a moment about an entire river of blood—not just looking red. How would it look, smell, feel?

You would think that the tainting of the water that you depend on every day for drinking, washing, and bathing might change the mind of a dictator like the Pharaoh. But Pharaoh's magicians pulled out packages of Kool-Aid and dropped them in their own water, which, I guess, made the miracle look less impressive. Pharaoh wouldn't budge.

The second was a plague of frogs. A day after the Nile is turned to blood,

the amphibians come crawling out, all over the city. This time Moses prayed that the plague would stop, and dead frogs were left in gigantic piles all over the countryside. But since the frogs were dead, Pharaoh wouldn't budge.

The third was a plague of lice (or gnats). Pharaoh's magicians couldn't do the same trick, and this time Pharaoh just chose to scratch—a lot—and wouldn't budge.

The fourth was a plague of flies. You know how bad it is when there's one fly circling your head. Well, picture swarming, buzzing, annoying, gross flies...everywhere. The plague came only to the Egyptian households, and finally Pharaoh caved. He told Moses to leave town for a few days to worship his God, but at the last minute, Pharaoh reneged, and wouldn't budge.

The fifth plague killed the livestock of the Egyptians. These animals were crucial to the people's livelihood, so this was an enormous loss. But, beyond that, envision what this looked like: the dead, bloated, rotted bodies of livestock scattered everywhere. There are probably too many dead animals to figure out what to do with them, since it's not like they could burn or bury them all in record-time. This was a truly awful, devastating blow. But still, amazingly, Pharaoh wouldn't budge.

The sixth plague was one of boils.

➔ *Here is where you show the slide of boiling water, which is a little more tasteful than showing an image of a skin disease. Of course, if you want to...*

Moses threw a little dust in the air, and in a little while the entire population of Egyptians and animals broke out in skin sores. How creepy is this one—their bodies covered in painful, oozing boils. Gross! Still, Pharaoh would not budge.

The seventh was a plague of hail. We're talking hail like bullets, hail that even ripped the trees down. Bear in mind, these are people who live in the desert. These are people who were used to wearing headgear to keep the sun off of their necks all the time. On top of that, this was a few thousand years before refrigerators were invented. No one had even heard of ice falling from the sky that close to the equator. You have to have some concerns about whether or not your gods are mad at you when ice, which you've never seen, starts falling out of the sky, which never happens. Pharaoh must have been hit on the head by one of those chunks of ice,

because still he wouldn't budge.

The eighth plague was one of locusts. What little of their crops that wasn't destroyed by the hail was eaten by the aggressive, loud, scary locusts. Pharaoh started to bargain with Moses about letting a few people go, but changed his mind after God swept the locusts away, and would not budge.

The ninth plague was a day of darkness. Not a single shred of light. Close your eyes to better imagine this. In a land of sun and deserts, this total darkness was not a good sign. The people already felt discouraged and terrified—this overwhelming darkness probably eliminated any leftover hope. And Pharaoh finally told Moses not to bother him with any more plagues, but still he wouldn't budge.

The 10th plague is one of the darkest points in the Bible. The Spirit of God passed through Egypt, actually killing the firstborn son of every household...except those that had smeared the blood of a lamb over their doorway. Now, think what it would be like if every household lost a child today. Can you picture just how terrible the desolation in Egypt was at this point? There was no food, no water, no livestock, many buildings were destroyed, everyone was sick with boils—and now every house was mourning the death of a child. This is worse than war in the awful level of terror and hopelessness and pain.

And yes...the Israelites were unharmed.

Finally Pharaoh's will was broken and the people fled.

MEDIA INFUSION (optional)

The movie *The Prince of Egypt* captures the plagues in a tasteful way that does not avoid their horror.

SAY As you know, I have been alive since the time of the plagues, and I happened to have my video camera with me when they occurred.

Here's what I caught on film.

Show the clip of the plagues beginning in scene twenty-three at 73:00 (or, 1 hour, 13 minutes) when the mist begins to cover the city. End the clip at 76:10 (or, 1 hour, 16 minutes, 10 seconds), when Pharaoh stands over his son.

ASK • How does this version of the story compare to the way you've imagined it?

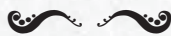
ASK • What would it have felt like to be a poor Egyptian citizen living during these events?

• Why do you think Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go?

• What kind of trust would Moses have to have had in order to follow God's commands? How did God prove to be trustworthy?

• Why do you think Jesus is sometimes called the "Lamb of God?" considering what you know about the tenth plague?

- Does the story of the plagues raise questions for you about God?
- How does the story of the plagues affect or change the way you think about God? the way you might trust God? Explain.



Distribute the photocopied handout (p. 18) to every student in the room.

SAY In ancient Egypt, there was a whole pantheon of gods. There was a god of the sun, a god of the sea, a god of the rivers, and so on. It has been suggested that each of the plagues of Egypt is related to one of the gods of Egypt. For instance, the first plague, in which rivers turn to blood, would correspond to the Egyptian god of rivers. The fact that Moses could have power over the things that the Egyptian gods were supposed to have control over would be pretty embarrassing for those gods. Look at the sheets I've handed you to see what gods the plagues might correspond to.

➔ *Have students form pairs.*

SAY With your partner, think of at least five things that get in the way of people trusting God. Imagine each of these things as a god, and give that god a name. For instance, unhealthy dating relationships can distract us from trusting God to provide us with a good relationship—or the courage to be alone. So, we might say that the false god of dating relationships is called Cupid or Valentine. Think of five of them right now.

➔ *Give them a few minutes to do so.*

SAY Now imagine we're back in the days of Egypt. What kind of

“It [Egypt] has more wonders in it than any other country in the world and provides more works that defy description than any other place.”

—Herodotus,
Greek historian

plague might correspond to that false god? Would the false god Valentine be embarrassed by a plague of wilted flowers and stale chocolates? Think of a plague for each one.

➔ *Again, give them a few minutes for this.*

pit·tip

Whenever dividing students into groups, be mindful of students who may get left out and take it personally. It's best to tell them when they split into pairs that "three is OK," so a stray person doesn't feel omitted. If you notice a regular habit of students pairing up with their close friends and ignoring newcomers, pull your more mature students aside and ask them to be conscious of people who are sometimes left out.

- ASK**
- What might God really do to free us from the things that distract us from completely trusting him?
 - How are the false gods working the hardest to distract you from a personal relationship with Jesus?
 - What can we do to avoid being distracted from trusting God by these things?

➔ *Distribute fine tipped markers to the group.*

SAY Use your ten fingers to create ten things you want to remember in prayer. Pharaoh wouldn't listen despite God's many warnings. Perhaps we can remember God's goodness so we can be more open to trusting him.

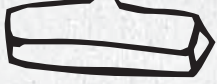


The Gel...

On each finger, write one thing that makes you trust God. It might be a single word like "Jesus" or a phrase like "his protection" or "answered prayer." You can use the front or back of your fingers, as long as there is one on each.

➔ *Divide students into pairs and tell them to share what they wrote and why.*

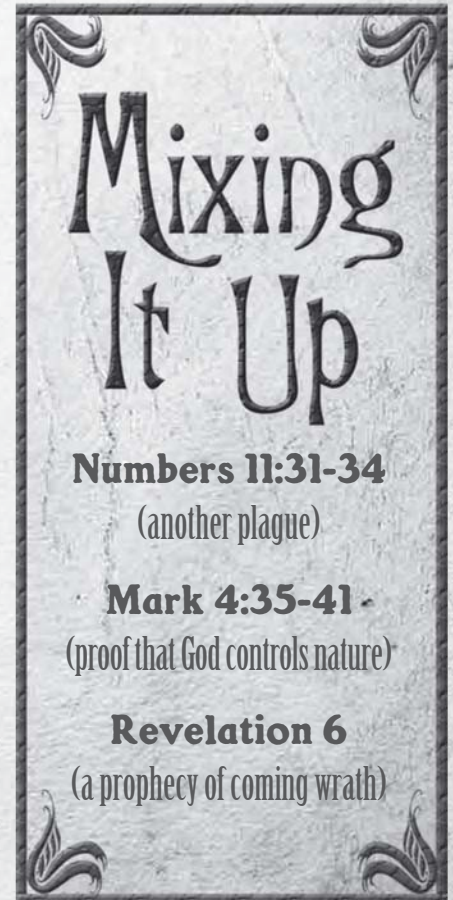




CLEANING UP

Here are some additional open-ended, thought-provoking questions. Use all or some of them to complement—or even replace—the debriefing questions for any of the activities in this study. You can guide students through this section all together or form smaller discussion groups for more intimate dialogue.

- **What makes it easy or difficult to trust God?**
- **What events might occur in your life to make it easier to trust God?**
- **How does it feel to trust someone and find out that they are, in fact, trustworthy?**
- **Why might God have had to use such extreme measures as the plagues to communicate his will?**
- **What effect did the plagues have on the Israelites who survived them and fled?**
- **After having witnessed the plagues, why do you think the Israelites would later complain to Moses for having led them into the desert? How does God's trustworthiness in the past help us trust him now and in the future?**
- **What biblical stories can you think of in which someone trusted God?**
- **Do you think God always provides justice for people who are oppressed? Why or why not?**
- **How might the story of the plagues still have the power to affect our faith today?**
- **How might our faith be different if we did not have the story of the plagues?**



ONE GOD PER PLAGUE?

Here is a list of Egyptian gods that *may* have corresponded to the plagues, suggesting that God was intentionally showing Pharaoh that his gods had no power.

The rivers of blood

Frogs

Lice

Flies

Livestock

Boils

Hail

Locusts

Darkness

First born

Hapi (the god of the Nile)

Heqt (a fertility goddess who appeared as a frog)

Kheper (god of beetles and flies)

Kheper

Apis (the sacred bull)

Imhotep (physician god)

Nut (goddess of the sky)

Seth (god of crops)

Ra (the sun god)

Pharaoh



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