

ADULT STUDY GUIDE

Unit 5: God Leads His Nation



ADULT STUDY GUIDE

This is the adult component of the Enduring Faith Bible Curriculum. This piece follows the **same scope and sequence** as the other levels: **Early Childhood, Elementary, and Youth**. This alignment presents some amazing opportunities.

- First of all, it helps all ages speak a **common theological language**.
- Second, it helps God's people build an understanding of the **lifelong nature of learning God's Word**—that we don't just learn the narratives once or twice before moving on to other matters.
- Third, and critical to this curriculum, it helps **equip households** to teach the faith at home.

If parents and other adults spend time meditating and discussing the narratives of the Bible while the younger generations in the congregation study the same narratives, then there will be greater opportunity throughout the week to **reflect together** upon what the narrative says and what it means. In other words, studying the narratives of the Bible as adults is a blessing in and of itself, but it also helps **equip parents and faith leaders** to be more confident and to feel empowered to extend those conversations into the household.

FEATURES OF THIS STUDY

This study guide is meant to provide some guidelines and springboards for discussion in your Bible study groups.

- The **first page** of each lesson provides the central focus statements, not only for the Adult level, but also for the other levels. Use this as a way to orient yourself to the **main themes and goals** of the lessons across all levels. You'll also find helpful **tips for preparation**.
- The **middle two pages** begin with an introductory "**Launch**" section, which provides prompts for beginning the study and an open-ended reflection question to kick off group discussion. The following "**Learn & Live**" section breaks down the text into three to five narrative sections. Each one of these sections has some additional commentary, a reflection question, and some helps to better understand possible answers to the reflection question. The "**Leave**" section provides prompts for a final reflection question and some other considerations to close the lesson. The **sidebars** include leader tips and bonus activities to help you think through options for extending the lesson.
- The **final page** of each lesson is the student piece. Copy one lesson handout per learner, and distribute this at the beginning of class.

TIPS FOR USE

This study guide is designed primarily to help give you, the leader, some thoughts and prompts to help guide and assist facilitation of the class. Below are some tips for how to use it.

- This is meant to be a Bible study, so each learner will need access to a Bible. Encourage your learners to bring their own to class.
- Don't neglect the lesson handout. The primary reason for this page is to create some space for each learner to reflect and engage the questions on his or her own. Often, any given group will have one or two vocal learners and others who may not speak up. Consider finding ways to help engage all learners in the process, such as having each learner write down his or her reflection privately before sharing, having each learner share with a partner before opening up discussion, or changing the seating arrangements to create small groups.
- Use the opening reflection question as a time to build community. Adult learners, generally speaking, desire to share their experience with one another, and this lesson starter provides an opportunity for this.
- For each narrative section, ask volunteers to read the text aloud while the rest follow along. Don't force anyone; adults, like children and youth, may be self-conscious about their reading or public speaking ability.

Download the Enduring Faith Page from the online digital resource center and hand out copies to your learners. Near the end of the lesson, talk through the prompts, which help the learners extend the lessons in their households throughout the week. Encourage learners to take this page home along with the lesson handout to be used throughout the week.

THE IDLE IDOL

The Golden Calf
Exodus 31:18–32:35
1446 BC

BIBLE TRUTH

God wants us to worship Him alone.

LEARNER GOAL

I can describe how God's jealousy toward His people in the narrative is demonstrated both in His punishment and in His mercy.

BIBLE VERSE

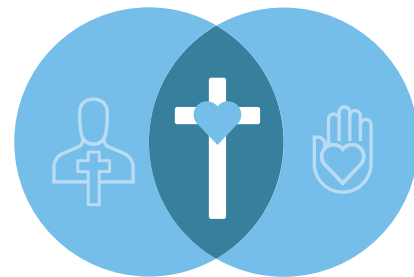
You shall have no other gods before Me. Exodus 20:3

LAW & GOSPEL

I place possessions, people, and relationships ahead of the true God. **Through Christ's sacrifice on the cross, God restores my relationship with Himself.**

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

Atop Mount Sinai, Moses receives the Law from God. Meanwhile, the Israelites grow impatient and convince Aaron to create a golden idol. When God sends Moses down from the mountain, Moses sees the people's wanton worship and smashes the stone tablets. The people are punished for their idolatry. Moses returns to Sinai to plead God's mercy for the people.



CONNECTING IDENTITY & CALLING

IDENTITY: WHO AM I?

Our God is a jealous God who demands that we worship Him alone.

CALLING: WHY AM I HERE?

I can worship God, giving Him thanks for all He has done for me in this life and the next.

GROWING IN FAITH FOR LIFE

See how this lesson builds on previous learning for each age.

ADULT

I can describe how God's jealousy toward His people in the narrative is demonstrated both in His punishment and in His mercy.

YOUTH

I can explain what it means to worship God alone.

ELEMENTARY

I understand that God wants us to worship Him alone.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

I know God wants me to put Him first.

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read the narrative and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

MORE TIME Read the entry "relent" in *The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1079–80.

IN DEPTH Read the article "No Graven Images?" in *The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 141.



LEADER NOTE

The different ways we use the word *jealous* can often lead to confusion. Today, we tend to use it somewhat synonymously with the word *envy*, or wanting something that is not your own. Instead, jealousy in a biblical sense is not wanting to share something you own with anything else. God is jealous for His people. He has called us to be His through His promise. In Christ, God sacrificed much to make us His own.



BONUS ACTIVITY

The concept of God relenting from inflicting wrath, or changing His mind, is a difficult one to grasp, as it may make God appear fickle. The theme, however, runs throughout Scripture, where God relents from His wrath for the sake of His promises. Always, God is unchangeable in His nature and consistent to His covenant promises. Consider referencing the note on the word *relent* in *The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1079–80.

LAUNCH

WELCOME

Welcome the group, and open in prayer. It may be a good time to take prayer requests and pray, either now or at the conclusion.

REVIEW

Review the Bible Truth, Bible Verse, and Learner Goal. Then, begin with the opening question.

OPENING REFLECTION

The traditional definition of the word *jealous* has to do with being vigilant in guarding something you possess. How is this different from how we use the word today?

LEARN & LIVE

EXODUS 31:18–32:6

BIBLE COMMENTARY

After three months of travel, Moses had led God's people to Mount Sinai. There, God had met with Moses, Aaron and his sons, and other elders of the people several times during several ascents. On what is likely the fourth ascent, Moses, with his assistant Joshua waiting near the bottom, spent forty days and forty nights there. During this time, God had given many instructions, including the two tablets of the Commandments, to Moses. Now, while Moses is away, the Hebrews request Aaron to make them an idol to worship. Aaron, displaying cowardice and skill, collects the golden jewelry plundered from the Egyptians and crafts an idol of a calf, likely representing a false god of fertility. In doing this, the Hebrews demonstrate their idolatrous hearts. Though God had called the people to be His own, they still chose to worship the created rather than the Creator.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Why, do you suppose, was it so important for the people to have a physical idol to worship? How can we fall into a similar trap today?

REFLECTION HELPS

Though not explicit in the text, visible idol worship was what they had experienced while enslaved in Egypt, and when left alone they fell back to pagan worship, including using idols to try to manipulate the favor of the gods. We, too, can fall into the trap of worshiping or idolizing visible, created things rather than the Creator.

EXODUS 32:7–14

BIBLE COMMENTARY

God commands Moses to go down the mountain, as He knows what His people are doing and how He intends to consume them with fire. Moses intervenes, recalling God's promise to preserve His people and ultimately bless the world through them. God relents, demonstrating His character for Moses, for the people, and for us today. He is both just, righteously punishing sin, but also faithful to His promises. Moses' intervening foreshadows how Christ will one day intervene for God's people before the Father. Jesus will Himself suffer God's wrath in the place of His people, fulfilling God's promises.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Summarize what God says and how Moses responds. What does this reveal about God's jealousy for His people?

REFLECTION HELPS

God says He will consume the people for their idolatry, but Moses recalls God's promise to His people. Here, God demonstrates how He is just, but also how He is merciful and faithful to His promises.

EXODUS 32:15–20

BIBLE COMMENTARY

After interceding for the people before God, Moses heads down the mountain, carrying the two tablets of the Ten Commandments. On the way, he gathers his assistant Joshua, who is unaware of what's going on in the camp and assumes a battle is raging. When Moses and Joshua see the idol worship, likely involving pagan fertility rituals, Moses is enraged. He breaks the two stone tablets, throwing them down the mountain. He then takes the idol, burns it, grinds it down to powder, scatters it on the water, and makes the people drink it. Idolatry, false-god worship, and sin have polluted and corrupted the camp, and the Hebrews must now bear the consequences.

REFLECTION QUESTION

What do you make of Moses' reaction to seeing the scene? What is an insight you can take from this about the nature of our sins?

REFLECTION HELPS

Moses broke the tablets containing the Ten Commandments, showing how God's people had broken God's covenant. At the same time, this also likely demonstrated Moses' hasty anger as God later required Moses to carve new tablets himself. Moses' burning and grinding down the idol, then making the people drink water polluted by it, also symbolized how the sin of idolatry had polluted and corrupted God's people.

EXODUS 32:21–35

BIBLE COMMENTARY

When questioned, Aaron does not take responsibility or ownership for his part in the sin. Though God had promised to not destroy the entirety of the camp, many are still punished for their sins. Their letting loose, likely with their nakedness exposed during the fertility worship at the base of the mountain, will be a point of derision for God's people throughout the nations. At Moses' command, the people divide between those who had been faithful to God, including the Levites, and those who had disobeyed during Moses' absence. The faithful then walk through the camp of the unfaithful with swords, inflicting three thousand deaths. God later sends a plague to punish more of the unfaithful. Overall the punishment on the people is surprisingly small compared to their sins. God is just, but shows mercy for the sake of His promises.

REFLECTION QUESTION

List all the different consequences of the sins of God's people here. Despite the punishments, how does God also show His mercy?

REFLECTION HELPS

Aaron did not take responsibility, the people brought shame on themselves, three thousand men were slaughtered, and God sent a plague. Despite all this, the number of deaths is relatively small compared to the gravity of many of the people turning their backs on God. God promises to lead His people by His angel.

LEAVE

FINAL REFLECTION

Describe how God's jealousy toward His people in the narrative is demonstrated by both His punishment and His mercy.

TAKE HOME

Equip your learners with ideas for taking the lesson into their households by giving them access to the Enduring Faith Pages.

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

If you haven't yet, take prayer requests, or encourage a volunteer from the class to pray as you prepare to leave.



BONUS ACTIVITY

Moses broke the two stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments, acting as a symbolic representation of God's people breaking God's covenant. Consider looking up and reading **Exodus 34:1**, seeing what God asks Moses to do next. Hint that God's emphasis on Moses cutting the two tablets of stone (instead of God like the first time) may show how God was using this as a teachable moment for Moses.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Moses interceded for God's people at Sinai. Jesus interceded for all people on the cross, bearing the punishment for our sins.



LEADER NOTE

God cannot tolerate sharing His people with idols, and His wrath comes against them. Yet, for the sake of His covenant and His plan of salvation, He relents from destroying them.

THE IDLE IDOL

BIBLE TRUTH

God wants us to worship Him alone.

LEARNER GOAL

I can describe how God's jealousy toward His people in the narrative is demonstrated both in His punishment and in His mercy.

BIBLE VERSE

You shall have no other gods before Me. Exodus 20:3

ADULT
Unit 5
LESSON HANDOUT
Lesson 1

The Golden Calf

Exodus 31:18–32:35

REFLECTIONS

OPENING REFLECTION The traditional definition of the word *jealous* has to do with being vigilant in guarding something you possess. How is this different from how we use the word today?

EXODUS 31:18–32:6 Why, do you suppose, was it so important for the people to have a physical idol to worship? How can we fall into a similar trap today?

EXODUS 32:7–14 Summarize what God says and how Moses responds. What does this reveal about God's jealousy for His people?

EXODUS 32:15–20 What do you make of Moses' reaction to seeing the scene? What is an insight you can take from this about the nature of our sins?

EXODUS 32:21–35 List all the different consequences of the sins of God’s people here. Despite the punishments, how does God also show His mercy?

FINAL REFLECTION Describe how God's jealousy toward His people in the narrative is demonstrated by both His punishment and His mercy.

NOTES

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A TENT FOR GOD

God with His People
Exodus 25:1–19;
40:1–8, 34–38
1445 BC

BIBLE TRUTH

God dwells with His people.

LEARNER GOAL

I can connect God's presence among His people in the tabernacle with His presence among His people today.

BIBLE VERSE

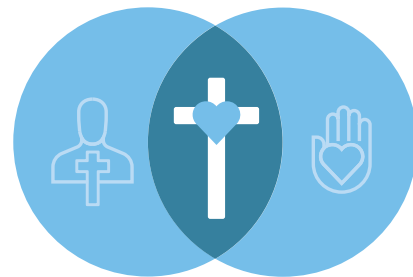
The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. John 1:14

LAW & GOSPEL

My sin makes me unholy; I am unworthy to stand in God's presence. **God cleanses me, makes me holy, and dwells in me through the sacrifice of Christ.**

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

Moses begins the process of building a portable house for the Lord by gathering offerings from the Israelites. God provides detailed instruction for the creation of the ark of the covenant as well as the other fixtures of the tabernacle. When the tabernacle is finally assembled, the glory of the Lord descends on the tabernacle in the form of a cloud. As long as the presence remains, the people remain in that place.



CONNECTING IDENTITY & CALLING

IDENTITY: WHO AM I?

God demonstrates His desire to dwell with me through His Word and Sacraments.

CALLING: WHY AM I HERE?

I can experience the presence of God as I study His Word and partake of the Sacrament of the Altar.

GROWING IN FAITH FOR LIFE

See how this lesson builds on previous learning for each age.

ADULT

I can connect God's presence among His people in the tabernacle with His presence among His people today.

YOUTH

I can describe how God dwells with me just as He dwelled with the Israelites.

ELEMENTARY

I understand that God is here among us.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

I know God is with me.

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read the narrative and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

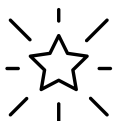
MORE TIME Read the articles "The Tabernacle" and "The Materials of the Tabernacle" in *The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 139–41.

IN DEPTH Read the article "Construction of the Ark" in *The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 159.



LEADER NOTE

It's easy in our congregations or worship locations to get so used to a space that we miss actually opening our eyes to see it. In reality, where we worship, with the atmosphere, lighting, seating, and so on, has a major impact on how we conduct ourselves and what we think about in worship. Lead a brief discussion, encouraging your learners to really think through how the visuals and/or the environment contribute to worship in your context. This should lead you into the topic of the construction of the tabernacle and why it mattered so much to the worship of God's people.



BONUS ACTIVITY

If you have time, look up how God chose Bezalel and Oholiab to lead the construction of the tabernacle. Read **Exodus 31:1–11**, and discuss why God chose these men, and make connections to how God uses us today with our different strengths to do His work in our congregations.

LAUNCH

WELCOME

Welcome the group, and open in prayer. It may be a good time to take prayer requests and pray, either now or at the conclusion.

REVIEW

Review the Bible Truth, Bible Verse, and Learner Goal. Then, begin with the opening question.

OPENING REFLECTION

Why is your worship space arranged the way it is? How does that contribute overall to how you worship?

LEARN & LIVE

EXODUS 25:1–9

BIBLE COMMENTARY

While on Mount Sinai (before instructing Moses to confront the people about the idol of the golden calf), God begins giving instructions on the building of the tabernacle. The specific instructions on the construction of this special tent complex, with all the trappings within and without, will dominate much of the remainder of the Book of Exodus. God begins, however, in an unexpected way. God exhorts Moses to command the people to give a free-will contribution of what they have to the construction of the tabernacle, including gold and silver, but other precious materials as well. God will now make a dwelling among His people in a special way in His sanctuary, and though the construction will be planned by God in meticulous detail, the resources for building the tabernacle will be given by God's people as a joyous response to God's grace upon them.

REFLECTION QUESTION

What is one detail that strikes you about God's command to build the tabernacle or the materials used? Why is that?

REFLECTION HELPS

Responses will vary, but may include the fact that the materials are a free-will donation and there are many different contributions needed. Refer to "The Materials of the Tabernacle" in *The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 141, for specific symbolic significance. A major theme is that this was a free-will offering of the best of God's people to create the tent in which God would dwell with them in the wilderness.

EXODUS 25:10–22

BIBLE COMMENTARY

At the heart of this tabernacle is the ark of the covenant. In the ark, God places the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, reminding us of His Law. On the ark, between golden figures of angelic creatures named cherubim, is God's Mercy Seat, where the sprinkling of the blood of animals will make atonement for God's people. This reminds us of the Gospel. From this earthly throne, God will speak with Moses and His people, speaking both Law and Gospel as they await the fulfillment of God's promises.

REFLECTION QUESTION

God dwells everywhere, so why do you suppose He would choose a special seat on the ark of the covenant? What might that reveal about who He is and how He chooses to work for His people?

REFLECTION HELPS

Though omnipresent, God still chooses to be among His people in a special way, speaking His commands to Moses as they travel. God takes care of His people, out of His love for them, choosing to dwell in their midst. We ultimately see this in a greater way in Jesus.

EXODUS 40:1–8

BIBLE COMMENTARY

After much explanation as to the specific furnishings of the tabernacle, God commands Moses to erect the tabernacle complex. This comes nearly one calendar year after the Passover. God establishes a specific pattern of worship for His people reflected in the lush tabernacle furnishings. The holy God chooses to sit on His throne, the Mercy Seat, while the sacrificial system administered by the priests outside the veils acts as a means for God's mercy and forgiveness to be delivered to His people. God uses both Law and Gospel, reflected in the construction of the tabernacle, to create and sustain faith, as He still does today. Likewise, our holy God still uses means in worship, the Word and the Sacrament, to deliver His holy gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation to His people today.

REFLECTION QUESTION

What might the arrangement of the tabernacle reveal about how God desires to be worshiped?

REFLECTION HELPS

For more specific visual detail, look at the diagram on page 139 of *The Lutheran Study Bible*. Possible answers include how God is holy, with the ark of the covenant screened behind multiple veils in the Holy Place in the tabernacle, yet God still provides an altar outside the tabernacle for atoning sacrifices. The high priest goes in to intercede for the people, foreshadowing Christ, who intercedes for all people before the holy throne of the Father.

EXODUS 40:34–38

BIBLE COMMENTARY

At the end of the Book of Exodus, the tabernacle is finally constructed. God's special presence in the cloud fills the tabernacle with His glory. From here on out, for the forty years, God's glory will reside with the people in their wilderness wanderings, both by night and by day. As we today worship the Lord, we, too, are to remember God's presence among us. The Holy Spirit works through the Means of Grace, bringing forgiveness, life, and salvation to us as we reside in the wilderness of the world, journeying toward the promised land of the new creation, promised to us by Christ.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Imagine what the presence of God in the cloud and fire must have looked like among God's people those forty years. What are the signs of God's presence among His people today?

REFLECTION HELPS

Though it would have been striking to see the special presence of God in the wilderness, God is no less among His people today. The Holy Spirit—working through the spoken, heard, and read Word, along with the Sacrament of Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar—works faith and life in God's people here and now.

LEAVE

FINAL REFLECTION

Connect God's presence among His people in the tabernacle with His presence among His people today.

TAKE HOME

Equip your learners with ideas for taking the lesson into their households by giving them access to the Enduring Faith Page.

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

If you haven't yet, take prayer requests, or encourage a volunteer from the class to pray before you leave.



BONUS ACTIVITY

Read or point your learners to **John 1:1–18**, where John uses parallel language to connect the tabernacle and God's glory to how Jesus dwelt (literally "tabernacled") among His people, revealing God's glory to the world. Discuss how this passage adds to our understanding of the tabernacle.



CHRIST CONNECTION

God made His dwelling among His people in the tabernacle, revealing God's justice and His mercy. Jesus, the fulfillment of God's promises, made His dwelling among us and continues to provide mercy and grace for us.



LEADER NOTE

Answers may include God's visible Means of Grace, the Law and the Gospel, and the centrality of God revealing Himself to us in worship, focusing on the saving work of Christ and the atonement He made for our sins.

A TENT FOR GOD

BIBLE TRUTH

God dwells with His people.

LEARNER GOAL

I can connect God's presence among His people in the tabernacle with His presence among His people today.

BIBLE VERSE

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. John 1:14

ADULT
Unit 5
LESSON HANDOUT
Lesson 2

God with His People
Exodus 25:1–19; 40:1–8, 34–38

REFLECTIONS

OPENING REFLECTION Why is your worship space arranged the way it is? How does that contribute overall to how you worship?

EXODUS 25:1–9 What is one detail that strikes you about God’s command to build the tabernacle or the materials used? Why is that?

EXODUS 25:10-22 God dwells everywhere, so why do you suppose He would choose a special seat on the ark of the covenant? What might that reveal about who He is and how He chooses to work for His people?

EXODUS 40:1–8 What might the arrangement of the tabernacle reveal about how God desires to be worshiped?

EXODUS 40:34–38 Imagine what the presence of God in the cloud and fire must have looked like among God's people those forty years. What are the signs of God's presence among His people today?

FINAL REFLECTION Connect God's presence among His people in the tabernacle with His presence among His people today.

NOTES

This image shows a full page of dot grid paper. The background is a very light blue color. Overlaid on this background is a grid of small, evenly spaced dots in a slightly darker shade of blue. The dots are arranged in straight horizontal and vertical rows, creating a guide for writing or drawing. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.