

WEEK 4
LESSON GUIDE

**BEYOND
BELIEF**

BIG IDEA

When you doubt, God still takes care of you.

BIBLE

Exodus 16:2–15; Psalm 77:11–12.

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

ACTIVITY | Three-Legged Mario Kart

- Welcome to our final week of *Beyond Belief*. Throughout this series, we have discovered that doubt and questions are invitations to grow spiritually and deepen our relationship with God. We have seen how God can use us even when we doubt our abilities. And last week, we learned that even when we feel lost or doubt where God is leading us, God still offers us guidance.
- For the last three weeks, we've been looking at the story of Moses leading God's people out of captivity in Egypt. All of this desert talk has reminded me of one of my favorite maps in Mario Kart: Dry Dry Desert. Let's see if we can re-create that today.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you will need a space decorated with desert-themed obstacles. In addition, you will need water blasters, glitter, sand, blue shirts, and a pool noodle. Prepare a racing course throughout your area using cones and other objects to line the pathway – place leaders around the room with various items that serve as hazards. Have students gather into pairs. Each pair will stand next to the other, and their inner legs will be tied together, giving the appearance of three legs. All racing pairs will line up at the starting line. When the game leader says "go," racers will attempt to be the first to complete the course by avoiding the obstacles and blue shell group.*
- **Hazard Ideas:**
 - *Water Trap: Leaders armed with water blasters or spray bottles of water*
 - *Sand Trap: Leaders with small bags of sand*
 - *Glitter Bombs: Leaders with bags of glitter*
 - *Pedestrians: Leaders placed strategically who walk across the racing area and bump into the racers*
 - *Blue Shell: One or two leaders who wear blue and are given a foam noodle; they get to bombard the first-place driver with noodle attacks*
- You may have noticed that our usually trustworthy and caring volunteers were anything but helpful! I bet you feel betrayed by people who are supposed to play a caring role in your life.

ACTIVITY | What's In The Box?

- We all know that lying isn't okay, but for just a moment, let's forget that for this next game.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you will need a few wild items similar to the ones on the list below and boxes to put them in. To play, select two volunteers. Put a divider between them to prevent them from seeing their opponent's box. Decide which player will go first. The first player will open their box and describe what's in it.*

They can tell the truth, or they can choose to lie. The opponent must guess if they are telling the truth or lying. If they are correct, they earn a point. If they are wrong, the other player gets the point. After the round is finished, the players switch roles. Play as many rounds as you want, and the player with the most points wins. Suggested items: a cactus with a cowboy hat, a rubber snake inside of a boot, a small oasis of palm trees with SpongeBob sunbathing, a pile of rocks, toy bugs devouring a Twinkie, a whole pineapple between two slices of bread, a baby doll applying sunscreen.

- This game is built on the mistrust of others, and while that makes it fun, it would be a terrible way to be friends. Imagine what it would feel like if your relationships included mistrust like this.
- Sometimes, we feel betrayed by people who play significant roles in our lives. Have you ever been a fan of a celebrity who turned out to be a jerk? The more often this happens in our earthly relationships, the easier it is to wonder if that's how our relationship with God works. We may even question God's desire and willingness to care for and walk with us.
- What can we do when having doubts about God's character and heart for us? Let's look at a story from Moses' life that might give us some insight.

DISCUSSION

- Who is the most trustworthy person that you know? What have they done to earn your trust?
- *How do you know someone can be trusted?
- Have you ever felt like someone betrayed your trust? How did it impact you? What did you learn? What do you wish had happened differently?

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

ACTIVITY | Sweaty, Hungry, And Free

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, you'll need four poster boards with these phrases written on them: "I am free," "I am hungry," "I am sweaty," and "When we doubt, God still takes care of us!" Consider pairing an emoji with each phrase that will resonate with your students. Divide the room into three sections. These sections will shout specific phrases and interact with the message. Create cue cards that correspond with each section's phrase. One section will shout, "I am free," another will shout, "I am sweaty," and the third will shout, "I am hungry!" Before beginning the program, find three volunteers to hold up the signs for their section when you point at them (any time you hear the words "free," "hungry," or "sweaty"). Note that if you use the teaching as written, the words are underlined in the message. At the end of the message, all three groups will shout this week's theme: "When we doubt, God still takes care of us!"

SCRIPTURE | Exodus 16:2-3

- The Israelites were officially free. After years of slavery, the plagues, being chased by an army, following the pillars of smoke and fire, and walking through the Red Sea, they found themselves wandering in the desert.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Exodus 16:2-3.
- God's people were upset with Moses and Aaron because they weren't providing them with the necessities to survive in the wilderness. They were looking back to Egypt and wondering if they should have left because at least they had food. They were hungry.
- In a short period, they went from feeling like God protected and guided them to feeling like God had completely forgotten about them and abandoned them to wander alone in a hot desert.
- Being hungry and knowing you are in a horribly hot situation is tough to face on its own, and it would be doubly hard if you felt like the reason you were there was that God forgot about or misled you.
- They probably thought what some of us think in difficult situations:

- Does God even care about us?
- Is God going to come through for us?
- Am I an inconvenience to God?

POLL | Fair Or Not Fair?

- At this point, all the Israelites saw was that they were stuck in a scorching, *sweaty desert with horrible food and water*, and they were complaining about it.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Poll your students' responses to the following statements by having them raise their hands or by using a service like [Slido](#). Give a few students an opportunity to share the reason for their response.*
 - **God's people had a right to complain about their situation.**
 - **God's people didn't have a right to complain about their situation.**
- The point of the story is that both ideas are right and for us to see, and Scripture intends them to be that way.
 - On the one hand, we might think there was no reason for the Israelites to doubt God or complain. After all, they had been *rescued from slavery*. But then they were out in the wilderness, confused about where God was taking them, and I can imagine they were frustrated. They had lost the belief that God was actually leading them somewhere.
 - But on the other hand, how often has God miraculously brought us through a tough time only for us to worry and whine when the next difficulty comes? The Israelites complained for the same reasons we all do. Our problems cloud our remembrance of all the times God has been faithful in the past, so we doubt God will be faithful in the future.
- This story shows us our own humanity in the Israelites. All of us are guilty of complaining to God while forgetting everything God has done for us.

SCRIPTURE | Exodus 16:4–15

- Scripture invites us to empathize with the Israelites' desire to return to Egypt. And if we're honest, many of us would have done the same thing. And because of that, I am thankful for what God did next.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Exodus 16:4–15.*
- God moved toward his people with compassion. God told Moses he had heard their frustrations and would once again provide for them.
- God gave them food that they called manna, which was a strange but delicious bread they had never seen before. It tasted like spice and honey — flavors that, as enslaved people in Egypt, they would have rarely had access to. Manna showed the people of Israel that God saw and cared for them and desired them to have good things.
- This provision bolstered the faith of God's people, encouraging them once again that they could trust God to come through. It might not look like how we expect or happen when we want, but God always keeps God's promises — even if we doubt.
- God heard and cared for God's people. God saw the Israelites' pain, confusion, complaints, and doubt, and God sees you in yours.
 - When you grumble in doubt, God takes care of you by listening.
 - When you are mad, hurt, or confused, God hears you and does not turn away from you.
 - When you feel distant from God, God moves to you.
 - When you feel lost, God still guides you.

DISCUSSION

- **What surprised you in the story about how God fed the people of Israel with manna and quail?**
- ***What do you think about the idea that God may answer our prayer but that it may not be in the way we expect? What questions do you have about that?**

SCRIPTURE | Psalm 77:11–12

- God's people ended up being in the desert for 40 years, so they had plenty of time to learn to trust and remember that God was taking care of them, even in times of doubt and uncertainty.
- God's provision wasn't determined by how much faith the Israelites had in God. God provided no matter what. And this experience of God's provision inspired poems like this one.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Psalm 77:11–12. When you say the Big Idea, prepare to point at the last volunteer to raise the poster board.
- When we're in the midst of pain, confusion, and doubt, it is easy to forget what is helpful to remember. And God doesn't hold that against you. God's people found that the best way to see that God was still working was to remember how God showed up for them in the past. This helped them believe, even when they couldn't see God working. The Psalm invites us to reflect on how God has moved and been faithful in our lives before, and as we do that, our faith will rise, and we will start to believe again that God will be faithful.
- In light of walking through the book of Exodus for four weeks, pause and remember what God has done for you. God will never fail to provide for you. You have seen that God's faithfulness isn't dependent on your faith. **Even when you doubt, God still takes care of you.**

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

DISCUSSION

- *The next time you doubt, what would it look like for you to remember what God has done in your life?
- Read Psalm 62:8. What stops you from trusting that God takes care of you in the midst of your doubt? What would support look like for you as you learn to trust God this way?

STORY | Tell about a time God provided.

- We've gotten a front-row seat to see how God's people handle difficult things. While they definitely had some moments of frustration and complaining that they probably aren't proud of, they also allowed their faith to grow as they saw God provide for them time and time again despite their doubts.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story about when you experienced God's provision in the middle of your doubt. What was happening in your life? Where was your relationship with God? What were your doubts, and how did God come through? How did that make you feel? How did it change your relationship with God?
- Like the people of Israel, I need to learn to take a new, more trusting perspective on how God cares for and leads me through difficult seasons that feel like aimless wandering. So, here are a few ways the Exodus story can help remind us that God provides even in times of doubt or uncertainty:
 - **REMEMBER WHERE YOU'VE BEEN:** You didn't suddenly arrive at this point in your life. A whole series of decisions have brought you here. Some of those were in your control, and some of those were not. When we compare where we've been with where we are, we can open our eyes to the hand of God in our lives. When you doubt God will provide, spend a few minutes writing down ways God has provided in your past.
 - **REMEMBER, YOU DON'T KNOW THE FUTURE:** Many more decisions and opportunities await each of us. Talk to God about where the Spirit is guiding you and how this moment may prepare you for what is ahead.
 - **RELY ON YOUR COMMUNITY:** God's people had wise leaders like Moses, Aaron, and Miriam who wanted the best for them. People love and care for us as we are, not because we can do things for them or have earned their love. Even when you doubt, God won't stop providing for you. God may even provide guidance through the people God has placed in your life to help you navigate those

doubts. We should all have people who can help us in difficult moments. If you don't feel like you have someone like that, please talk to one of our volunteers or a trusted adult about that today.

DISCUSSION

- Which of these action steps feel difficult for you to do when you are doubting? Why?
 - Remember where you've been.
 - Remember, you don't know the future.
 - Rely on your community.
- *What is one place in your life you want to begin trusting that God still takes care of you? What steps do you need to take to allow God into that place?

RESPONSE | Pizza Key Chains

- God gave the people of Israel manna in the morning as a daily reminder of God's faithfulness. God provided something portable that the Israelites could easily access and use to care for their needs. So, while you may never have had manna in your life, maybe you can think of something else that checks off those boxes. Something like pizza.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this response, you'll need Sharpies and [pizza key chains](#) (or a key chain of some other food) that will resonate with your group. Before your program, give the key chains to a few volunteers to hand out while you teach. Give students a few moments to write a place for which they are hoping God provides. Consider playing some reflective music while they respond.*
- Although pizza didn't exist until long after this story took place, manna was something that was readily available to God's people and a symbol of God's care for them.
- Take one of these pizza key chains as a reminder that God provides and cares. When the people of Israel doubted, God showed he cared by giving manna. Put this key chain somewhere you can see every day as a reminder that **when you doubt, God still takes care of you.**