

**ECC Growth Groups – Term 4, 2014**  
**Behold our God – Study 3: God is Glorious (Exodus 33-34)**<sup>1</sup>

**Big Idea:** God’s glory can be seen in his revelation of himself to Moses and ultimately in his revelation to us through his Son, Jesus.

**Study Aim:** That group members will: (i) grasp the magnitude of what it means for God to be glorious; (ii) recognise the great privilege that comes with being part of the new covenant in Christ; and (iii) respond in appropriate worship of this God.

**Discussion Starter:**

*Option 1*

What are some things that we might describe as being “glorious”?

*Option 2*

Split your group into pairs/triplets. Provide each sub-group with a sheet of paper and some coloured pencils/crayons/textas. Instruct each group to draw things that come to mind when they hear the word “glorious”.

**Prayer**

Spend some time praying together before you look at God’s Word.

**Bible Reading**<sup>2</sup>

Our main Bible passages for this study come from towards the end of the Old Testament book of Exodus. To set the scene, God has rescued his people from slavery in Egypt through the event of the exodus (Chapter 12). He is in the process of leading and guiding his rescued people to the Promised Land. Along the way he has brought them to Mt Sinai to instruct them in how they are to live as his rescued people (Chapter 19). Despite God’s constant and gracious provision, the Israelites have shown themselves to be a discontent and rebellious people, culminating in the incident of the Golden Calf (Chapter 32).

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<sup>1</sup> This series of studies is loosely based on the booklet ‘Meeting God’ by J. I. Packer in the *Lifeguide Bible Study* series (1986, IVP).

<sup>2</sup> In a topical/doctrinal series of studies such as this, where we are regularly moving from one part of the Bible to another, it is imperative that we provide people with the biblical-theological framework of the Bible. Omitting the context in which particular biblical texts are located can easily lead to erroneous interpretation and application. Setting the context can be done by way of question and answer. Another way, such as has been adopted here, is simply for the leader to briefly provide an outline of the context. If you would like to do further reading in biblical theology, Graeme Goldsworthy’s *Gospel and Kingdom* and Vaughn Roberts’ *God’s Big Picture* are both very helpful.

Read Exodus 33:12-23.

### Passage Questions

What is Moses' request in verse 18?

*Moses asks for God to show him his glory.*

What are some of the different ways in which God *could* have shown Moses his glory?

*In the biblical account thus far, there has been the creation itself, the flood, the exodus, a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire, the provision of manna and quail and water from a rock, Mt Sinai etc. Given God's wisdom, greatness and power there are any number of possible suggestions that could be made here<sup>3</sup>.*

What is interesting about God's response in verse 19?

*Not many of us would have expected God to respond in the way he does. God shows his glory verbally – he speaks. More specifically: (i) He directly links his “glory” with his “goodness”. (ii) He promises to proclaim his name, the LORD (Yahweh) – the promise making, promise keeping God. (iii) In terms of his character, he promises to act in sovereign mercy and compassion. Even the very fact that God is prepared to assent to Moses' request in any way, especially given the recent incident with the Golden Calf, could be seen as a surprising expression of his goodness and grace.*

Why do you think God places a restriction on his display of glory?

*If Moses were to see God's face, God indicates that he would die – hence the necessity for him to hide Moses in the rock.*

### Bible Reading

Read Exodus 34:1-8 and 34:29-35.

### Passage Questions

In verses 5-7 God makes good on his earlier promise to show Moses his glory. How does he do that?

*God comes down in the cloud, stands with Moses and proclaims his name – the LORD. He passes in front of Moses (cf 33:22) and makes various statements and assertions about his character. That is, his glory is seen in the fact that he is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, forgiving wickedness and rebellion and sin, and punishing those who are guilty.*

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<sup>3</sup> The aim of the question is not for people to provide the 'correct' answer as such but rather to simply get them to think through the hypothetical possibilities of how God *could* have responded to Moses' request.

What effect does this display of glory have on Moses?

*Moses bows down to the ground and worships God (v 8).*

What other effect is emphasised at the end of the chapter?

*Moses' face is so radiant from his contact with God that he needs to veil his face in the presence of others (v 29, 30, 35).*

How have these passages challenged you to think differently about God's glory?<sup>4</sup>

### **Activity**

Split your group into three smaller groups. Have them reflect on one of the following three passages and the related questions<sup>5</sup>.

*Group 1 – John 1:14, 18*

Read John 1:14 and John 1:18. What is John's claim concerning Jesus? Why is this so significant, given what we have seen from Exodus?

*In the Word become flesh (Jesus) John claims that he, and the other disciples, have seen the glory of the One and Only (v 14). Jesus has made the unseen God known (v 18).*

*Jesus' coming is explicitly linked with glory. Moses was only permitted to see 'the back' of God because of the warning that no one could see God and live. In Jesus he is seen face to face.*

*Group 2 – John 14:8-9*

Last week in Study 2 we read some of Jesus' words in John 14. Have a look again at John 14:8-9. Given what we have seen from Exodus, what is so significant about what Jesus says here?

*Note that there are some similarities between Philip's request of Jesus and Moses' request of God. Stunningly Jesus says that anyone who has seen him has seen the Father!*

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<sup>4</sup> This summary question serves an important purpose. It could be possible for group members to have got to this point in the study (the end of the readings and questions related to the Old Testament passages) and still not have a very clear picture of what God's glory actually is. The question causes all group members to pause and process what they have seen so far in a way that will hopefully consolidate the information that they have been receiving, before moving into the New Testament passages that point us to Christ, and the final section which seeks to make some application to our lives. If, on occasion, you get the feeling that some group members might be getting 'left behind' or that the group seems to be struggling to grasp a particular concept, summary questions such as this one can be useful.

<sup>5</sup> If you would like to provide handouts for these smaller groups, please see Appendix 1.

### Group 3 – Hebrews 1:1-4

Read Hebrews 1:1-4. How is the Son, Jesus, spoken of in these verses? What is the significance of what is said here, given what we have seen in Exodus?

*God has spoken to us in these last days through his Son. The Son is the heir of all things. God made the universe through him. The Son is the radiance of God's glory. The Son is the exact representation of God's being. The Son sustains all things by his powerful word. The Son provided purification for sins. The Son has sat down at the right hand of God.*

*The particular significance of this passage in relation to Exodus is that in the Son we have "the radiance of God's glory".*

Bring the groups back together to briefly share with each other what they discovered.

### Application Question

Sometimes as Christians we can look at spectacular passages like Exodus 33-34 and feel like we have missed out. Together, read 2 Corinthians 3:7-18. How does this passage speak into those feelings?<sup>6</sup>

*This passage outlines a series of contrasts between the old and new covenants. Moses – and the Israelites – were part of the old covenant. Through Jesus, Christians are part of the new covenant.*

*The ministry of the Spirit is more glorious than the ministry of death (v 8). The ministry that brings righteousness is more glorious than the ministry that condemns (v 9). The glory of that which lasts is much greater than the glory of that which was fading away (v 11). By comparison to the surpassing glory of the new covenant, the old can even be spoken of as having no glory (v 10)! Unlike Moses we are able to be very bold because in Christ the veil has been taken away (vv 12-14). We now, having unveiled faces, reflect/contemplate the Lord's glory (v 18). We are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord (v 18).*

### Close + Prayer

See Appendix 2 – 'Theology to Doxology' and then close the study with a time of prayer.

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<sup>6</sup> Given that there is only one application question in this study, and given that this passage from 2 Corinthians 3 is so rich, make sure that you allocate enough time in your study for your group to really engage with what is being said here.

**Appendix 1***Group 1 – John 1:14, 18*

Read John 1:14 and John 1:18.

What is John's claim concerning Jesus?

Why is this so significant, given what we have seen from Exodus?

*Group 2 – John 14:8-9*

Last week in Study 2 we read some of Jesus' words in John 14. Have a look again at John 14:8-9.

Given what we have seen from Exodus, what is so significant about what Jesus says here?

*Group 3 – Hebrews 1:1-4*

Read Hebrews 1:1-4.

How is the Son, Jesus, spoken of in these verses?

What is the significance of what is said here, given what we have seen in Exodus?

## Appendix 2 – Theology to Doxology<sup>7</sup>

For our *'Theology to Doxology'* in this study, Geoff Bullock's song *'Oh the mercy of God'* has been selected. If you would like to listen to a version online, you can use the URL below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZX12Iw502A>

If you would like to sing together or simply read out the lyrics, they are included below:

### Verse 1

Oh the mercy of God, The glory of grace  
That You chose to redeem us, To forgive and restore  
And You call us Your children, Chosen in Him  
To be holy and blameless, To the glory of God

### Chorus

To the praise of His glorious grace  
To the praise of His glory and power  
To Him be all glory, honour and praise  
Forever and ever and ever, Amen

### Verse 2

Oh the richness of grace, The depths of His love  
In Him is redemption, The forgiveness of sin  
You called us as righteous, Predestined in Him  
For the praise of His glory, Included in Christ

### Chorus

### Verse 3

Oh the glory of God, Expressed in His Son  
His image and likeness, Revealed to us all  
The plan of the ages, Completed in Christ  
That we be presented, Perfected in Him

### Chorus

CCLI Song # 1930937

Geoff Bullock

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<sup>7</sup> Theology – literally 'a word of/about God' is to lead to Doxology – literally 'a word of praise/glory'. Please see the introductory notes to this section in Study 1 – Appendix 1 if you need to recall the rationale behind its inclusion.