

WEEK 3 - Generosity: Lessons of the Desert

Canopy Guide // Fall Focus 2026

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Use the questions below to kickstart a community building, all-play conversation that connects to our weekly topic. If your group meets for dinner, these might be great questions to share around a table.

- Share a story about a time of need. Did anyone step up to help?

[VIDEO INTRO: WEEK 3](#)

STUDY GUIDE

One of the most potent images throughout Scripture is the desert.

You probably know the story: YHWH (God) delivers the Hebrew people from slavery under Pharaoh and leads them toward a new home. Their journey to the Promised Land—a land described in rich poetry as “flowing with milk and honey” (Ex. 3:7–8)—was a long, long journey through the desert. Along the way, God brought them to the holy mountain and gave them the Torah, a covenant of relationship meant to shape them into a holy community.

The desert wanderings were deeply formative. Here, the people learned what it meant to live as a people of love, generosity, and harmony. At the heart of the Law was *shalom*—peace, wholeness, and right relationship. In the midst of a difficult desert, they were learning the way of life God intended for them, following the voice of their Shepherd. The hope was that when they finally entered the land flowing with milk and honey, they would know how to rightly receive and steward its abundance.

Perhaps there is some irony in that description. The Hebrews were, by and large, not very good at trusting or following their Shepherd. They grumbled, they mutinied, and they frequently wanted to return to Egypt. And the desert was not hospitable to life. It meant walking day after day under a blistering sun, often with little water and no clear end in sight.

We all have our proverbial deserts—seasons when it feels like life itself is beating us down. When there is more month than money. When we wonder where the next meal will come from. When a loved one is sick and the strain ripples through the whole family. Our lives are full of seasons of desert and seasons of milk and honey, and sometimes each season feels like it could last forever.

There is nothing “peachy” about the desert.

And yet, throughout the ages, the people of God have found a certain wisdom in the desert. Not because suffering is inherently good, or because every difficult circumstance is something God intended for us. The desert is often simply the desert. But it can also become a place of deep formation. What happens to us there can shape us, and we can choose the posture with which we walk through it.

Perhaps the desert is where we learn to trust in spite of our worry (Mt. 6:25–34). Jesus acknowledges that our needs are real—our heavenly Father is not oblivious to them (v. 32). And still, Jesus calls us to seek the kingdom, to open our eyes to the ways heaven is breaking in all around us.

Jesus was no stranger to the desert himself. He grew up as a refugee (Mt. 2:13–15) and an immigrant (Mt. 2:22), and he spent his final years homeless (Mt. 8:20). Many of the people listening to him had themselves experienced physically and economically devastating circumstances (Mt. 4:23–5:2). Jesus was not speaking to people living in perpetual milk and honey. He was speaking to people who knew the desert.

And still, he called them—and calls us—to a life marked by abundant *shalom* and generosity.

The desert is not easy. Sometimes the desert is exactly where we are. But even there, God can form in us a different way of seeing, trusting, receiving, and giving. This week, reflect on what it means to practice generosity in a time of need—and what the desert might be forming in you.

Scripture to Read:

- Exodus 19:4-6
- Deuteronomy 8
- Matthew 6:25-34

Discussion Questions: *(feel free to pick & choose the questions your group wants to tackle together)*

- If we believe Jesus brought the rule and reign of God from heaven to earth, how should that shape the way we see the world and our place in it?

- Think about a season when you were in need. How did you experience God's provision, and how did that season shape the way you think about having enough?
- What does it look like to practice generosity when we are also trying to care wisely for ourselves and the people entrusted to us? How do we discern the difference between faithful stewardship and holding too tightly to what we have?
- If the desert can be a place of formation, what might God be forming in you in your current season—and how might that shape the way you receive, use, and share what you have?

PRAYER

Something to pray for: that God would give us eyes to see the world as it really is, full of his goodness, and flowing with milk and honey.

EXTRA RESOURCES/ARTICLES/RESEARCH

- The Bible Project: [The Wilderness](#)
- [*The Drama of Scripture: Finding our Place in the Biblical Story*](#) by Bartholomew, C. G., & Goheen, M. W. This is a great book discussing the interconnected big story of Scripture.
- Reflections on the spiritual experience of the desert:
<https://beingbenedictine.com/2019/04/20/the-desert-experience/>