

Dare to Draw Near

RESPONDING TO GOD'S INVITATION

Lesson One Reflection: "Why Draw Near"

Welcome to Prepare for Life's Dare to Draw Near Bible Study

Our prayers for you during this study are that our teaching, guidance and testimonies of how we have drawn nearer to the Lord will encourage and inspire you to draw nearer.

But the bottom line: YOU have to do it yourself. YOU have to pursue Him and seek Him -- it's not all about study and learning. It's about developing a relationship!

In Exodus, God invites all the Israelites to come up on the mountain to meet with Him, but the people are afraid and refuse to go. They want Moses to go for them.

Exodus 20:18-21

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ All the people, experiencing the thunder and lightning, the trumpet blast and the smoking mountain, were afraid—they pulled back and stood at a distance. They said to Moses, "You speak to us and we'll listen, but don't have God speak to us or we'll die."

²⁰ Moses spoke to the people: "Don't be afraid. God has come to test you and instill a deep and reverent awe within you so that you won't sin."

²¹ The people kept their distance while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.

Our hope for you - Don't be an Israelite --- be a Moses!!

The invitation to draw near to God is the heart of the gospel. Because of what Jesus did, we *can* draw near. We are invited to draw near to a God whose desire has always been our nearness.

We see God's desire to draw man to Himself (and for man to draw near to God) all throughout Scripture. One primary way that we see it is in God's plan for the Tabernacle, which was included in the Old Testament Law. In this study we will refer to the items in the Tabernacle as a framework for our drawing nearer to the Lord. However, it's just an interesting model, not a perfect pattern. Remember, drawing near to the Lord is about a relationship - and each of us will develop that relationship differently!

The Tabernacle was a literal, physical place during the time of the Old Covenant or Testament. However, it is also a picture of our spiritual relationship with the Lord. Each article of furniture as well as the Tabernacle structure itself paints an image of an aspect of our walk with God. As we continue through the study, we will consider what these elements were for the Israelites as well as what they symbolize for us as New Covenant believers.

The primary purpose of the Tabernacle was to be a meeting place for God and His people. The Israelites came to the Tabernacle to draw near to the Lord whose very presence dwelt within the innermost room of the Tabernacle. The innermost, holy room was called the Holy of Holies, and inside of it was the Ark of the Testimony (or Ark of the Covenant). The Lord Himself said about that Ark:

"There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel." (Exodus 25:22)

The Holy of Holies was separated from the Holy Place by a veil. Only the High Priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies, and He was only allowed to enter it once a year with sufficient sacrifices. God granted His people access to His presence and to His holiness, but that access was limited under the Old Covenant.

When the Temple was later constructed as a permanent structure to replace the Tabernacle, there was still a thick veil separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. But change was coming.

On a splintered cross one hot and holy day in Jerusalem, Jesus Christ hung on a splintered cross and declared: "It is finished" (John 19:30), and then He bowed His head and gave up His life. At the time of His crucifixion, the curtain in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51).

By the perfect sacrifice of the spotless Lamb of God, all are welcome to enter into the Holy of Holies. Covered by the blood of the sinless Son of God, we all are invited into a personal relationship with our Creator.

As we begin this study together, may we approach our God with the boldness of Moses, with our confidence in the cross of Christ. As we step into the Holy Place and find the curtain torn, let's step with grateful hearts into the very presence of the Living God.

For a more complete discussion of the Tabernacle and the progression from outer court to the inner courts, watch or listen to Lesson One at www.prepareforlifebiblestudy.com.

Next week we will delve further into the first item encountered in the outer court of the Tabernacle – the Bronze Altar. Special guest Lil de Fin will share her story and teach about the necessity of a saving faith in Jesus – don't miss it!!

Prayer Exercises: (don't skip this part!!)

Here's an exercise to help you draw you closer to the Lord.

1. Start with confession -- You may need to repent of ways you have silenced the Lord in the past, of ways you have pushed Him away or hesitated to draw near. Just tell Him you're sorry and then move on. He loves you and forgives you for all those times!!

2. Now close your eyes quietly before Him and ask Him where you are in relation to Him. You may see a picture or a video, you may hear something deep inside of you, or you may just know something you didn't know before – be open to however He wants to “speak” to you.

Then, when you have an idea of where you are with Him -- respond to Him. Thank Him! Laugh with Him! Cry with Him! Hug Him! Do what comes naturally to you.

3. Then ask Him to draw you even nearer to Himself. There is always room to get closer. Remember -- “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” is the promise of James 4:8. Dare to draw near. The Father rejoices as you do.

Homework:

Spend some time this week digging into God's Word.

Read Psalm 34 over and over again.

You may even want to write it out word or word in your journal – paying attention to each phrase.

Then make yourself a list of all the things that happen to those who seek and follow the Lord.

And then, be an overachiever and turn that list into a prayer for yourself!

Lecture Notes:

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