

M O S E S
AND THE JOURNEY OF FAITH
DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Bronze Serpent

Numbers 21.4-9; John 3.7-15

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Share plans for future Community Group gatherings and the following happening in the life of the church:

- **Flying Pig Weekend** is THIS WEEKEND, **April 30th-May 1st!** Each year we *celebrate Christ* with a worship service and “pig out” dinner on Saturday evening and then *serve Cincinnati* on Sunday morning by staffing a hydration station at mile 10 along the marathon route. Information on how to sign up to serve, and info about the “pig out” dinner is on the City. The registration deadline for serving is FRIDAY, APRIL 22ND!!!
- Discuss plans for your community heading into the summer. Note: there will be some summer studies. Stay tuned...details coming early-mid May.

LEADER NOTES

This is a story about snakes. Or more accurately, it's a story about the children of Israel, in the wilderness, being bitten by snakes. We know from historical testimony (and the reality of things today) that snakes were common in this region. But in Numbers 21, this adversity comes on the heels of the Israelites complaining and grumbling against Moses and God. Snakes in the Old Testament (and in the ancient world in general) are a symbol of evil and poison and death. In that sense, the world is full of snakes. The Israelites experience more acutely what we all deal with: both in the world, and in our hearts.

But this is also a story about healing. The *caduceus* (pole with a snake curled around it) is a nearly ubiquitous symbol of healing: found on hospitals, ambulances and medical insignias. When we see it, it ought to call in mind this strange and interesting story.

OPENER

What one critter are you most afraid of? OR What one food are you least likely to try?

OPENING PRAYER

Open your group in prayer. Pray extemporaneously, or use this prayer:

Father, help us to seek what is good and true and beautiful. Give us love for each other and for our city. Use our group tonight to make us more into the people you want us to be.

STUDY/DISCUSSION

We are looking at the life of Moses. This week we look at an incident toward the end of the wilderness wanderings.

STUDY THE TEXT

1. Read Numbers 21:4-9. What stands out to you in this story as interesting, challenging, or confusing?
2. What do you learn about sin from this story?
3. How does God bring about their healing?

APPLY THE TEXT

4. The sin of the Israelites is monotonously repetitive (they've been down this road before). Do you identify with this at all? Do you find yourself falling into the same destructive patterns of sin and struggle? How can we break free?
5. C.S. Lewis wrote: "How monotonously alike all the great tyrants and conquerors have been: how gloriously different are the saints." What do you think he means?
6. Dorothy Sayers described sin as a "deep interior dislocation of the soul." Does that image help you understand the nature of sin and its effects? Why or why not?
7. In verse 5, the Israelites felt that what God gave them was never good enough. Josh quoted from an article describing the tendency of young urbanites to have a "Flaw-O-Matic," a tendency to pick apart everything and everyone. Did any of this resonate with you? What can be done about it?
8. God sends the serpents into the Israelite camp. Has God ever used trouble and adversity in your life?
9. One of the first thing the Israelites needed to do was to repair their relationship with Moses. Discuss the following quote: "You cannot face the troubles and the wildernesses of life without friends." Why are friendships so important?
10. Read John 3:7-15. Why does Jesus use this story to explain his mission?

PRAY THE TEXT

Take some time and pray together. This can be done together as a whole group, or in smaller groups. Use 2 Corinthians 5:21 as a way to pray.