**Scripture and Background Information for September 22-28**

**The 40 Day Lab**

When you look throughout the Bible, there is a pattern where God uses time periods of 40 days to invite people to encounter Him in a new way or for the very first time. Those 40 days were not just about learning facts about God, but they were *real-life experience* with God.

**A special BONUS for this series:** We are providing daily prompts by text message which will give you practical ways to experience God beyond the lectures. We encourage you to sign up by texting **40DAYLAB** to 33222.

To prepare for your group discussion each week**,** group members should use the **Community Group Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD’S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scriptures at the bottom of this page.

Remember we are using the updated **Discussion Guide** (available from your leader or from the Next Steps Center). Because we are using longer narrative passages, we have adapted the prompts to keep the time commitment between 20 & 30 minutes. In the **GOD’S WORDS** section, rather than copying the scripture “word for word”, you’ll write down a few of the details that you might need to retell the story to a friend or a neighbor. In the **MY WORDS** section, take a few minutes to retell the story in your own words.

**Background for Numbers 13:1-3, 17-33**

Throughout the Old Testament, in God’s dealings with His chosen people, the Israelites, a familiar cycle continues to repeat itself. That cycle is of deliverance and short-lived gratitude from the people. Before much time has passed, the Israelites find some reason to doubt God’s future providence or distrust His goodness. The history of Israel and the Old Testament is a history of this cycle.

In Numbers 13:1-3, 17-33, the Israelites are faced with an important decision. After traveling throughout the desert being led out of captivity in Egypt, Moses sends a handful of spies into the promised land. However, the spies return with conflicting reports. After 40 days spying in the promised land, only Joshua and Caleb report that the Israelites can take the land (14:6-9). However, the people choose to believe those who fear taking the land. Growing weary with their lack of faith, God then trades their 40 days of spying in the promised land for 40 years of wandering in the desert. This sobering story of how God is faithful reminds us that in a land of milk and honey, it’s better to smell the roses than to only see the bees.

**Scriptures for the upcoming weeks:**

**September 29 Elijah 1 Kings 19:1-18**

**October 6 Jesus Matthew 4:1-11**