

SE ONLINE

FROM
EXODUS
to
Easter

FROM
EXODUS
to
Easter

Week 1

PROLOGUE

Day One: DYSFUNCTION

In order to understand Israel's exit from Egypt, we must first understand how they got there in the first place. The story of the Exodus begins nearly 400 years before Moses was born. Indeed, it began long before the nation of Israel was even a nation. In Genesis 37, the future nation was comprised of one man (Jacob) and his family. Unfortunately, that family had more than its fair share of problems. Those problems would bubble over on one fateful day that would have ramifications for centuries to come.

READ Genesis 37:1-14

- How did Jacob show favoritism in his household? What effect did this have on his children? How did Joseph make the situation worse?
- What was Joseph's dream? How do you think this made Joseph's brothers feel?

READ Genesis 37:18-36

- What did Joseph's brothers do to him? Where did Joseph ultimately end up?

The decision Joseph's brothers made to sell him into slavery changed everything in an instant. Jacob would mourn his seemingly lost son for decades. Joseph would spend those same years living as a stranger in a strange land. Most importantly, the descendants of Jacob – the nation of Israel – would now find their fate intertwined with that of Egypt. It would take years, but Joseph's entry into Egypt would eventually bring his entire family there.

Week 1

PROLOGUE

Day Two: ACCUSATION

Joseph's integrity and accomplishments set him apart from his counterparts. As a result, the young Israelite soon caught the eye of his master, Potiphar. Joseph was promoted to the head of Potiphar's home and put in charge of every issue that affected his family and household. Potiphar trusted Joseph with everything. It turns out his trust was well-placed. When the opportunity to betray Potiphar came his way, Joseph ran away. But even that wasn't enough to keep him out of trouble.

READ Genesis 39:5-23

- How was Joseph tempted? How did he respond to this temptation? What did his response cost him?
- What happened to Joseph in prison? How did he once again show his great integrity?

READ Genesis 40:5-23

- Who did Joseph encounter in prison? How was he able to help them?

Locked up and forgotten, Joseph would spend two more years in prison for a crime he did not commit. Though he once enjoyed a charmed life as his father's favored son, those days were long behind him. It seemed like Joseph's integrity had cost him everything. And yet, God was up to something in that prison cell. The one who had once been so proud was learning humility. The boy who once proclaimed his own dreams was learning to interpret the dreams of others. He may not have known it at the time, but his time in prison was really a time of preparation.

Week 1

PROLOGUE

Day Three: PROMOTION

Two years after Joseph interpreted the cup-bearer's dream, Pharaoh had a dream of his own. When none of his advisors or astrologers could tell him the meaning of his visions, the cup-bearer finally broke through his case of amnesia. He remembered Joseph and recommended his former cellmate as a resource. The fact that Pharaoh would so quickly turn to a prisoner revealed his desperation. World leaders seldom take their cues from convicts. Still, even Pharaoh seemed to understand that he could trust Joseph with anything.

READ Genesis 41:1-36

- What was Pharaoh's dream? How did Joseph interpret that dream? What did Joseph suggest Pharaoh do in response to his dreams?

READ Genesis 41:37-57

- How did Pharaoh respond to Joseph's words? What power did He give to Joseph?
- What did Joseph do to prepare Egypt for the famine? How did this end up blessing the nations around them?

Once again, Joseph's life changed in the course of an afternoon. Thirteen years after his transition from son to slave, Joseph suddenly found himself moved from the prison to a palace. As second in command over all Egypt, Joseph oversaw the famine relief for the nation. Indeed, people from all over the known world benefitted from Joseph's efforts. Countless lives were saved by his preparation and planning. Joseph's life might have taken some unexpected turns, but it turns out that he was exactly where God wanted him to be.

Week 1

PROLOGUE

Day Four: PRESENCE

It's hard for us to even begin to visualize the kind of rollercoaster that Joseph experienced in his life's circumstances. One moment, he was the favored son of his father. The next, he was on a slave caravan headed to Egypt. One minute, he was the head of Potiphar's household. The next, he was a prisoner rotting away in a cell. The ups and downs of his life would make even the biggest thrill ride enthusiast sick. Still, in the midst of life's hills and valleys, there was one constant in Joseph's life: God was always with him.

READ Genesis 39:1-5, 19-23;

- What does this passage tell us about God's presence with Joseph? Do you think Joseph realized this at the time, or was it only in retrospect? How would this knowledge have influenced him?

READ Romans 8:31-39

- What does this passage tell us about God's presence with us? How should this knowledge influence the way we live?
- Can anything separate us from God's love? Why does suffering make us feel so neglected? What can we do to combat this in our minds and hearts?

Even when he felt abandoned, Joseph was never alone. God was with him. When he sat at his father's table, God was with him. When he marched in chains to Egypt, God was with him. When he ran from the advances of Potiphar's wife, God was with him. When he laid his head on a cot in prison, God was with him. When we saved Egypt as Pharaoh's second-in-command, God was with him. No circumstance could change the fact that God was with Joseph. That same promise belongs to us today.

Week 1

PROLOGUE

Day Five: REDEMPTION

Eventually, the famine that so ravaged Egypt began to affect the rest of the world. It became so bad, in fact, that the very brothers who sold Joseph into slavery were forced to turn to Egypt for help. When they entered the capital city to seek aid, they unknowingly stepped into Joseph's domain. Though Joseph immediately recognized his brothers, they had no idea it was him. Joseph initially used this to his advantage in order to play a trick on his unsuspecting siblings. However, he soon found that even he could not keep up this ruse for long.

READ GENESIS 45:1-46:4

- How do you think Joseph felt after being reunited with his brothers? How do you think they felt once they realized it was him?
- What promise did God make Jacob as he entered the land of Egypt?

READ Genesis 50:14-21

- What assurance did Joseph give his brothers once their father had died? What perspective did Joseph have on everything that had happened?

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good” (Genesis 50:20). While the road had not been easy, Joseph could look back on his life and see how God had directed everything. Sure, the things that happened to him might not have been good, but God turned them for good. Thousands of years later, the apostle Paul would give us a similar assurance in Romans 8:28: “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose.” God, in his sovereignty, can take evil and turn it for His glory. If we fail to understand that, we might get confused by the story of the Exodus. Worse, we might get confused by the story of our lives.

Week 1

PROLOGUE

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Week 2

SLAVERY

Day Six: OPPRESSION

Centuries after Joseph's death, the Egyptians forgot how an Israelite slave had saved their nation. Instead, they looked out on Joseph's descendants and saw a new group of people to enslave. The Israelites, now numbering in the millions, became the primary workforce for Pharaoh and his burgeoning kingdom. As the number of Israelites began to swell, the Egyptians used harsher and harsher tactics to keep their workforce subjugated. These methods would eventually escalate into some of the most brutal and inhumane abuses in biblical history.

READ Exodus 1:8-22

- What did the Egyptians do to disenfranchise and oppress the Israelite people? How did some stand up against this injustice?
- In your opinion, why did the Egyptians treat the Israelites so badly? How does sin always lead us to devalue and dominate the people around us?

READ Romans 6:12-23; 7:7-13

- In what ways is sin a form of slavery? How does it push us further and further into what it desires?

The Egyptians were cruel taskmasters. They worked the Israelites without pity. They subjugated them with no hope of release. They forced infanticide to curb the Israelite population. Everything Egypt touched turned to death. While we'd like to think our world has moved past such atrocities, there is a kind of slavery that affects us all. In John 8:34, Jesus told us about the reality of our situation: "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin." Our sins enslave us. Our disobedience dominates us. Like the Israelites, we need relief. We need rescue.

Week 2

SLAVERY

Day Seven: DEFIANCE

Repression almost always triggers rebellion. As the Egyptians became more and more cruel towards their Israelite slaves, the oppressed started finding small ways to strike back. It began with the Hebrew midwives Shiphrah and Puah, who refused to follow Pharaoh's murderous decrees. It continued in the home of a young Hebrew couple who decided to hide away their newborn son. Their act of defiance would come to set the stage for an incredible act of deliverance.

READ Exodus 2:1-10; Hebrews 11:23

- How did Moses' parents defy Pharaoh's order? Why, according to the writer of Hebrews, were they willing to do that?
- Where did baby Moses ultimately end up? How did God honor the faith and courage of Moses' parents?

READ Exodus 2:11-21

- What happened to Moses when he grew up? Where did he flee when he escaped from Egypt?

Pharaoh had commanded the Israelites to throw their newborns into the Nile. When Moses' parents placed him in a basket and set him adrift on that same river, they started something new. They weren't just saving their son's life; they were setting the stage for the salvation of Israel. The child they saved would become a man who grew up in Egypt's palaces. He would know court protocols and throne room officials. He would know the ins and out of Egyptian life. Yet, Moses would need more than those things to be ready for the task at hand. His years in the wilderness of Midian would prepare him for the real work God had planned for him.

Day Eight: HEARD

For years, the Israelites cried out for some relief from their captivity. For years, it seemed as though God wasn't listening. Where they expected an answer, all they got was silence. But, just because God was silent didn't mean He was distant. As it so happened, God had heard their pleas. He had listened as His people cried out for relief and rescue. And, on a hot afternoon in the desert, God answered their cries in a miraculous way.

READ Exodus 3:1-10

- What did Moses see that got his attention? Who was calling to him from the burning bush?
- How had God received the cries of His people? What did He want Moses to do about it?

READ Hebrews 11:24-28

- Why did Moses identify himself with the Israelite people? What was he looking forward to?

“I have indeed seen... I have heard... I am concerned...” (Exodus 3:7, NIV). When God's people cried out to Him for comfort, He wasn't ignoring their request. Neither was He sitting idly by waiting for the situation to resolve itself. No, God had a plan to rescue His people and deliver them out of the land of bondage. He had a plan that would bring about His glory and their good. When we struggle in prayer, when we wonder if God actually hears us, we can have the assurance that He will answer our prayers in His way and according to His will. Maybe His words to us are the same He said to Moses: “I have seen... I have heard... I am concerned.”

Week 2

SLAVERY

Day Nine: CALL

“Your mission, should you choose to accept it...” For years, those words have signaled the start of a new adventure. When we hear them, we know there’s some new world-saving mission our heroes are about to embark on. There’s a certain sense of expectation and excitement that comes with getting a mission to go out and save the world. Unfortunately, when Moses received a similar calling from God, he was less than enthusiastic. In fact, he came up with all kinds of reasons why he wasn’t qualified to do what God wanted him to do.

READ Exodus 3:9-22

- What were some of Moses’ initial reasons for not accepting God’s call? How can we use these same excuses today?
- What did God promise at the end of this passage? What would it take to get Pharaoh to let the Israelites go?

READ Exodus 4:17

- What kind of objections did Moses continue to raise in regards to his calling? How did God answer Moses’ doubts?

All told, Moses made at least five excuses as to why he couldn’t do what God had called him to do. He didn’t know enough. He didn’t have enough skill. He didn’t have enough connections. He didn’t have the right credentials. He didn’t have the right words. Yet, God didn’t counter Moses’ objections with self-help mantras or inspirational speeches. God calmed Moses’ doubts by sharing more of Himself. He told Moses His name. He showed Moses His power. He reminded Moses of His sovereignty. Whenever we feel like we’re not enough, we need only to remember the God whose very name is “I AM.”

Week 2

SLAVERY

Day Ten: DELIVERER

Though it had taken much convincing, Moses finally agreed to the assignment God had in mind for him. After consulting with his father-in-law and packing up his family, Moses began the trip back into Egypt. When he left, Moses was a murderer, having slaughtered one Egyptian in an act of vengeance. Now, he returned to Egypt as a deliverer, bent on bringing liberation to all of his fellow Israelites. On the trip back, however, God reminded Moses that his task would not be an easy one. Pharaoh would not take kindly to the idea of letting his workforce leave for free.

READ Exodus 4:18-31

- What had God empowered Moses to do? What did God tell Moses He was about to do to Pharaoh?
- How did the Israelites respond when they recognized that God had heard their misery and responded?

READ Hebrews 3:1-14

- How is Jesus greater than Moses? In light of this, how does the writer of Hebrews tell us we should respond to Him?

The Israelites lived in oppression and slavery. They needed someone to come and bring them deliverance. They needed someone to come and bring them hope. That's what Moses did. As their deliverer, he made it possible for them to leave the land of slavery. The Bible says Jesus has done the same for us. Though our sin held us captive, Jesus came into our world and broke its chains. He set us free and delivered us out of slavery. Now we have freedom. Now we have hope. Now we have life. "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined" (Matthew 4:16; Isaiah 9:2).

Week 2

SLAVERY

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Week 3

MIRACLES

Day Eleven: SETBACK

Armed with God's message and the staff representing His power, Moses began his trip back into Egypt. After a joyful reunion with his brother Aaron, Moses met with the Israelite elders and told them about the great promises God had made toward His people. Everyone rejoiced at the news. They believed God was truly going to deliver them from Pharaoh's hand. Moses' initial conversation with Pharaoh would test that newfound confidence. Pharaoh wouldn't just reject Moses' request for relief; his tyranny would grow because of what Moses had asked.

READ Exodus 5:1-23

- What was Moses and Aaron's initial request of Pharaoh? What response did the king give?
- How did Pharaoh punish the Israelites for Moses' request? How did the Israelites respond to Moses after this?

READ I Peter 4:12-19

- How should we respond to our own trials and difficulties? How can God use these setbacks to do His work in our lives?

If Moses thought everything was going to be smooth sailing, he was sadly mistaken. Pharaoh's initial anger toward Moses and Aaron revealed a heart that had already been hardened against his Hebrew slaves. Even though Moses had done what God had called him to do, he and his people still suffered for it. In I Peter 4, the apostle tells us the same thing can happen to believers today. Holy living doesn't always lead to happy living. But we can trust that even in our setbacks and sufferings, God is still leading us toward His freedom.

Week 3

MIRACLES

Day Twelve: PROMISES

With Pharaoh's resounding "No!" still echoing in their ears, Moses and Aaron were left to contemplate the road ahead. It didn't seem as though Pharaoh was on board with God's plan for liberation. And yet, as Moses and Aaron conferred with God, the Lord confirmed that His plans had not changed. He still intended to free Israel from their bondage. He still intended to use Pharaoh as an example of His own strength and might. God's plans and His promises were trustworthy and true. He reaffirmed them with Moses so that there would be no doubt.

READ Exodus 6:1-13

- What promises did God make to His people in these verses? How should these promises have reassured them?
- How did the people react when Moses reminded them of God's promises? How did this cause Moses to become discouraged?

READ Exodus 6:14-27

- We often skip over genealogies, but they are records of God's faithfulness over generations. How had God blessed His people in the land of Egypt?

In Romans 15:4, Paul reminds us that God's Word gives us "hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled" (NLT). Like the Israelites, we can face discouragements and doubts. We can wonder if God is going to be true to His promises. Scripture, however, reminds us that He is always faithful to His Word. He has always done what He promised and He will always do what He's promised. He will save. He will rescue. Even in our darkness, we can trust that He is our Deliverer.

Week 3

MIRACLES

Day Thirteen: BETTER

Pharaoh considered himself a god. As the most powerful man in the world, he lived a life of power and privilege that few could imagine today. He literally had the world at his fingertips. Not only that, but as the leader of Egypt, it was assumed that he had the favor of all the other Egyptian gods. It's no overstatement to say that Pharaoh was thought to be a god among gods. So, the true God needed to show Pharaoh his true place. Through a series of ten plagues designed to ravage Egypt, God would not only show that He was superior to their so-called gods; He would show His superiority to any other would-be deity.

READ Exodus 7:14–8:10

- What were the first two plagues over Egypt? How did they affect all of Egyptian life?
- According to 8:10, why did God allow these plagues to happen? What did God want Pharaoh to learn?

READ Exodus 8:16–9:7

- What were the next three plagues in Egypt? How did God protect His people throughout these plagues?

The ten plagues weren't merely an annoyance; they were an announcement. They proclaimed that the God of the Hebrews was far greater and stronger than any god the Egyptians had produced. Turning the Nile into blood was a direct assault on the domain of the Egyptian god Osiris. The plague of frogs made a mockery of the frog-headed goddess Heqet. The Egyptian god over the earth, Geb, was powerless to stop the swarms of gnats God brought forth from the dust. In each and every plague, the God of Israel asserted His power over Egypt, her gods, and her king.

Week 3

MIRACLES

Day Fourteen: DESTRUCTION

At the halfway point of the ten plagues, the nation of Egypt had already paid a steep price for their king's insolence. They had seen their homes overrun with frogs and their fields filled with dead livestock. As Pharaoh continued to harden his heart against God, his people continued to suffer. Another cycle of plagues would quickly follow, striking to the very heart of Egyptian life and culture. In all these signs, God would accomplish His ultimate goals: that people would see His power and proclaim His name (Exodus 9:16)

READ Exodus 9:8-26

- What were the next two plagues that struck Egypt? How would these have devastated the nation and its people?
- What was the magicians' reaction to the plague of boils? How does this exhibit God's power?

READ Exodus 10:13-29

- How did the eighth and ninth plague affect Egypt? What was Pharaoh's response after this?

Blood. Frogs. Gnats. Flies. Livestock. Boils. Hail. Locusts. Darkness. Egypt had paid a terrible price for Pharaoh's stubbornness. The nine plagues had ravaged their country, their homes, and their families. Their gods had been insulted and their very way of life had been compromised. The sheer amount of destruction the nation faced in such a short amount of time should have convinced Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. Unfortunately for Egypt and its king, a final plague was coming, one that would make the others pale in comparison.

Week 3

MIRACLES

Day Fifteen: FIRSTBORN

The opening verses of Exodus revealed the depth of Pharaoh's hatred and cruelty towards the Jewish people. In an attempt to curb their population, the people of Egypt were given the power to toss Hebrew infants into the Nile. Countless parents experienced the pain of having their children forcibly taken from them and killed. A just God could not let such brutality go unpunished. The King of Heaven would judge the king of Egypt by his own standards. The tenth and final plague would be a sobering reminder of God's divine justice.

READ Exodus 11:1-8

- How did Moses try to warn Pharaoh of what was about to happen? What was Moses' response when Pharaoh refused to heed the warnings?
- What would Israel experience during this plague? How would it set them apart?

READ Exodus 13:11-16

- Though God would spare Israel's firstborn sons, He still required something of them. What did God tell the Israelites about their firstborns?

In those days, the firstborn son had a favored status. This was the son who was expected to carry on the family lineage. This was the son who would receive his father's blessing and the bulk of the inheritance. By taking away their firstborn, God was striking at the very heart of the Egyptians' pride and joy. Our modern sensibilities may bristle at this story, but the harshness of the tenth plague was necessary to ensure Pharaoh's surrender and Israel's freedom. More than that, the deaths of these firstborn sons reminds us of the death of another Firstborn, one who would willingly lay down His life for the entire world (Col. 1:15).

Week 3

MIRACLES

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Week 4

DEPARTURE

Day Sixteen: LAMB

Nine plagues had so hardened Pharaoh's heart against God that he had failed to heed Moses' warnings about the tenth. With Egypt doomed to suffer the loss of their firstborn children, Moses turned his attention to the Israelites. While they would be exempted from the calamity the Egyptians were about to face, God still had some demands for His people. If their homes and children were to be protected from the coming death, something else was going to have to die. As Moses told them, the blood of a lamb would keep them all safe from harm.

READ Exodus 12:1-13

- What were they supposed to do with the Passover lamb? How would its blood protect them?

READ I Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 9:18-28

- How is Jesus our Passover Lamb? In what ways does His blood protect us?
- How is Jesus' sacrifice superior to any other sacrifice?
What has He accomplished for us?

On the day of death, the blood of the lamb protected the Israelites. The red doorposts signified their faith and trust in God's commands. More than that, it signified that their penalty had already been paid and their sins had been atoned for. This very first Passover established a simple equation: blood equals life. Centuries later, on another Passover, a different kind of Lamb would be sacrificed. This Lamb, the Son of God, would bear not just the sins of the Israelites, but the sins of the entire world. The equation was the same: Jesus gave His blood so that we could live. On the day of death, the blood of the Lamb still protects.

Week 4

DEPARTURE

Day Seventeen: PASSOVER

Food has a way of triggering certain memories. The smell of chocolate chip cookies fresh from the oven can make us nostalgic for our childhoods. The aroma of turkey and pumpkin pie can take us back to holidays and homes long since passed. There are certain smells and tastes that can remind us of things we've forgotten, people we lost, or occasions that transformed our lives. It shouldn't surprise us, then, that God used food to remind His people of their deliverance. The Passover meal wasn't just about the food; it was about the memory.

READ Exodus 12:14-27; 13:1-10

- What were some of the elements of the Passover meal? What were they designed to remind the Israelites of?
- How were the Israelites supposed to use this meal to teach their children?

READ Luke 22:14-20

- What did Jesus do during the Passover meal? How are these elements supposed to remind us of what He's done for us?

"I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you... and I will take you as my own people" (Exodus 6:6-7). As the Israelites gathered around the Passover table, they remembered these four promises with four cups of wine. On the night before He died, Jesus took one of these cups and used it to point towards the sacrifice He was about to make. Like the Israelites, we have been brought out, freed, redeemed, and taken to be God's very own people. The bread and the cup serve as a weekly reminder of the ways Jesus has changed our lives.

Week 4

DEPARTURE

Day Eighteen: EXIT

The time had finally come. After centuries of slavery, it was time for Israel to leave Egypt. After celebrating the first Passover feast and making the preparations for their departure, the Israelites went to bed knowing that their deliverance would come by morning. As the Egyptians awoke in the middle of the night to find their firstborn sons dead, a great sadness swept through the land. For as stubborn as Pharaoh had been, his edict to leave came swiftly. Before the sun even began to rise, the Israelites were on their way out of Egypt.

READ Exodus 12:28-42

- How many Israelites left Egypt during the Exodus? What did the Egyptians give them as they left the country?
- How long was Israel enslaved? What does this teach us about God's timeframe compared to ours?

READ Exodus 13:17-14:4

- When Israel left Egypt, where did God take them? What reasons did He give for choosing this route?

Though their salvation sometimes looked like it was in doubt, the Israelites were rewarded for their faithful endurance. They walked out of Egypt just as God had promised they would. Yet, it wasn't just Israel's faith that had been rewarded. Joseph's had been, too. When he died nearly 400 years before, Joseph made the Israelites promise that they would take his bones back home with them. Joseph may not have seen that promise fulfilled during his lifetime, but even in death, God had proven Himself faithful.

Week 4

DEPARTURE

Day Nineteen: WATER

The Israelites' first few days in the wilderness were incredible. The people celebrated their newfound freedom and the God who had made it possible. What they didn't realize was that Pharaoh was about to change his mind about the release of his work force. His utter humiliation and defeat had left a sour taste in his mouth, one that he had every intention of remedying. Pharaoh's stubborn obstinance would set the stage for one of the defining acts of deliverance in the Old Testament.

READ Exodus 14:5-31

- How did the Israelites first respond when they saw Pharaoh pursuing them? What did Moses tell them they needed to do?
- What did God do to Pharaoh and his army at the Red Sea? How did the Israelites respond to their deliverance?

READ I Corinthians 10:1-13

- How is the Red Sea a picture of the baptism that would ultimately be offered in Christ? According to this passage, what are some of the ramifications of our own "Red Sea" moment?

In the days of Noah, God used water as a symbol of both judgment and deliverance. The Great Flood served as His punishment for sin and His salvation for the righteous. A similar thing happened at the Red Sea. The sea that so devastated Pharaoh and his men delivered Moses and the Israelites to their freedom. The same water brought both cleansing and liberation. Today, the waters of baptism accomplish much the same. They bring cleansing from sin and freedom to live a new life. As Romans 6:4 says: "For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead... now we also may live new lives."

Week 4

DEPARTURE

Day Twenty: CELEBRATION

On the banks of the Red Sea, the Israelites stopped to reflect on what they had just witnessed. The sea had parted. They had crossed on dry ground. Having secured His people, God then closed the sea up, drowning Pharaoh and his men. Israel was free. The days of slavery had ended. As the sun rose on a new day, God's people took a moment to think about all they had seen Him do for them. In that moment, their hearts overflowed with what certainly must have been the only acceptable response: They worshiped Him!

READ Exodus 15:1-21

- What titles/word pictures are used to describe God in these verses? How had the Israelites experienced God in these ways through the Exodus?
- What reasons do the Israelites give for worshiping God? As you think over your life, what would your song of praise talk about?

READ Psalm 136

- How does the story of the Red Sea deliverance play into this worship psalm?

Worship is always a response. God reveals His identity and we praise Him for His character and nature. God does incredible things and we worship Him for His mighty work on our behalf. Worship isn't our idea; it's our reaction to who God is and what He has done. As the Israelites pondered all God had led them out of and all He was about to lead them into, they paused to celebrate Him. As His people today, our lives should be marked by the same kind of praise. We should praise Him for the life He's brought us out of and the Land He's leading us closer to with every passing day.

Week 4

DEPARTURE

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Week 5

COVENANT

Day Twenty-One: PROVISION

Over a million Israelites had left the Promised Land under Moses' leadership. Such a miraculous deliverance was not without its logistical issues. Namely, how do you supply food and water to so many people? Better yet, how do you meet these needs in the middle of the desert? The Israelites would soon discover that the God who had saved them also had a plan to supply them with everything they needed. The duration of their sojourn in the wilderness would give them an almost daily reminder of God's power to provide.

READ Exodus 16:1-31; 17:1-6

- What caused the Israelites to start grumbling? How did their hunger even make them nostalgic for Egypt?
- How did God provide for their needs?

READ Joshua 5:2-12

- When did the manna end? Given that this passage takes place 40 years after Exodus, what do we learn about God's ability to provide?

The thought of feeding a million Israelites for four decades would make even the most accomplished restaurateur cringe. It has been estimated that just a basic meeting of their needs would have required 1500 tons of food and 11 million gallons of water a day! And God was faithful to make sure they had it. His provision of bread in the wilderness serves as a vivid reminder of the nourishment God has given us in His Son. As Jesus said: "Yes, I am the bread of life! Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. Anyone who eats the bread from heaven, however, will never die" (John 6:48-50).

Week 5

COVENANT

Day Twenty-Two: COMMANDMENTS

Before heading to the Promised Land, the nation of Israel had to make a pit stop at Mount Sinai—the mountain where God first appeared to Moses in the burning bush. It was there that God would give them the Law and show them what it truly meant to be His covenant people. God hadn't just saved the Israelites from something; He had saved them for something. If they were going to live in communion with Him and in community with each other, they had to agree on the rules of the relationship. The grace that had so transformed their lives would now show them a new way of living.

READ Exodus 19:1-10

- What did God want to do at Sinai? How did the people respond to this?

READ Exodus 20:1-20

- The Law began with 10 commandments. What stands out to you about these commandments? How do these regulations touch almost every arena of life?
- What was the Israelites' response to these words? How does this reflect our own response to God's holiness?

The Ten Commandments taught the Israelites what it means to live in relationship with God. They taught the people what it means to live in peace with the people around you. It's no wonder that these ten commands have been reused and recycled by so many communities and governments through the years. And yet, their familiarity betrays their difficulty. We have trouble following these ten basic commands! There are 603 more in the Old Testament! Even if we only had these ten, we would know that there's no way for us to live up to God's standards. The Law may show us how to live, but it cannot give us life. Only Jesus can do that.

Week 5

COVENANT

Day Twenty-Three: COMMUNITY

Two people should be able to find agreement on almost any issue. Three people would probably find it more difficult, but they might be able to work it out. One million people, however, would find such a task impossible. How would they make decisions? How would they settle disputes? In order for their community to thrive – perhaps even survive – the Israelites needed a common standard everyone could appeal to. While some of the Old Testament Laws can seem archaic or outdated from our perspective, they were absolutely necessary for the Israelite community to know how to do life together.

READ Exodus 21:12-19; 22:1-9; 23:1-9

- How would some of these laws have helped protect individuals? How would they have protected the social order of the entire Israelite nation?
- What do these laws teach us about the importance of justice, fairness, and grace in our interactions with others?

READ Galatians 5:13-26

- What one law sums up the other Old Testament laws? From this passage, what would you say it looks like to live out that law?

“For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Galatians 5:14). When we look at the Old Testament laws, we must always keep this one law in the back of our minds. These laws were given to the Israelites to show them how to love one another. They helped the people to understand what justice looked like. They made mercy and compassion tangible. In a world where we are so tempted to treat people like commodities, the Law can help us treat them like individuals created in the very image of God.

Day Twenty-Four: TABERNACLE

During their time in captivity, the Israelites had seen all kinds of magnificent temples built to honor the gods of Egypt. Chances are that they had even helped build many of them. So, when their God asked them to build a place of worship, this request wouldn't have caught them off guard. After all, any god needed a place to dwell. What would have surprised them was the kind of structure their God wanted. He didn't ask them to build a permanent temple of stone. No, He asked them to build a Tabernacle, a tent that would be a symbol of His presence with them on their journey.

READ Exodus 25:1-22; 35:10-29

- Where would the materials for the building of the Tabernacle come from? What would be the point of its construction?
- What was the first item God asked them to build for the Tabernacle? Why was this object so important?

READ Hebrews 9:1-12

- How was the Tabernacle a symbol of what God was ultimately going to do in Christ?

The Ark of the Covenant. The golden lampstand. The altar of incense. The showbread. The Tabernacle was filled with items that were filled with meaning. The showbread reminded the people of God's incredible ability to provide for His people. The altar of incense gave them a visual picture of their prayers as they rose toward heaven. The golden lampstand illuminated the space the way God's Word illuminates our hearts. The Ark of the Covenant shimmered and shone God's presence for all to see. If ever the Israelites wondered if God was with them, they needed only to look to the Tabernacle to be reminded that He was.

Week 5

COVENANT

Day Twenty-Five: IDOLS

The first commandment had been clear: “You must not have any other god but me.” God – and God alone – is the only acceptable object of worship. If that wasn’t clear enough, the second commandment made even plainer: “You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea.” There were to be no other gods and no kinds of idols. Somehow, the Israelites found a way to violate both commands before Moses even came down from the mountain.

READ Exodus 32:1-20

- Why did the Israelites want to build the golden calf? What did they use to forge it?
- What was God’s reaction to this sin? How did Moses calm God’s anger against His own people? What does this teach us about idolatry?

READ Isaiah 44:6-20

- What is the ultimate foolishness of idols? Why, then, does God invite us to worship Him?

When the Israelites wanted Aaron to fashion the golden calf, they donated their rings and jewelry to the cause. Chances are that these were the very same rings that had been given to them as plunder by the Egyptians (Ex. 12:36). The blessings God had given them during their Exodus were used to create a false idol. While we may shake our heads at such a choice, the fact of the matter is that this is how idolatry always works. Idolatry causes us to take our gifts and turn them into gods. When we do that, we insult the very God who gave us those gifts in the first place.

Week 6

KINGDOM

Monday: WANDERING

Having received the Law as their guide for life and worship, the Israelites were ready to enter the land God had promised. There was only one problem: There were already people living in that land! Knowing that it would take more than a handshake to get them to vacate the land, Moses sent some spies to gather intelligence on what they were up against. The Israelite spies found that the land was exactly as God had described. It was all they had dreamed of and more. Unfortunately, all their dreams were about to become a generational nightmare.

READ Numbers 13:21–14:9

- What did the spies report back about the land? What was the people's response to their words?
- Two spies disagreed with the others. What were their names? What did they say about the land?

READ Numbers 14:26–45

- What consequence did God give the people because of their disobedience and distrust?

The journey from Egypt to the Promised Land should have taken about two weeks. The Israelites stretched it out over forty years! Their disobedience and grumbling sentenced them to four decades of wandering through the desert. And yet, God used this roundabout road to disciple and deepen His people. Their wandering and waiting might not have been the path they envisioned for themselves, but it wasn't so much about the journey as it was the destination. With every step the Israelites took, they – like each and every one of us – were getting one step closer to home.

Tuesday: FAREWELL

The Israelites' journey through the desert was filled with challenges and triumphs. They experienced some incredible suffering and witnessed some astonishing miracles. As they wandered their way across the wilderness, more and more of that rebellious generation began to die off. The desert had a way of teaching them that God was as faithful in keeping His judgments as He was in keeping His promises. Even Moses himself was not exempt from learning this truth. His own disobedience would eventually keep him from entering the Promised Land.

READ Numbers 20:1-13

- What did the Israelites grumble about in Kadesh? Why were they so prone to repeat the same mistakes? How do we do the same?
- What did God tell Moses to do in order to summon water from the rock? What did Moses end up doing instead?

READ Deuteronomy 30:11-20; 34:1-12

- What was Moses' final charge to the Israelites? Where did he die?

Moses spent 40 years of his life as a prince of Egypt, learning the ends and outs of palace life. He spent the next 40 years of his life in the desert, learning how to lead and live in the wilderness. The last 40 years would be spent leading the Israelites out of Egypt and across the desert to a land he would never fully get to experience. Though Moses was not without his faults, God used him to do some incredible things. Even in our day, God still uses imperfect people to fulfill His perfect plan.

Wednesday: COURAGEOUS

Moses' death on Mount Nebo brought with it the first transfer of power in Israelite history. Leadership of the nation now fell to Joshua. As a young man, Joshua had been among the twelve spies tasked with exploring the Promised Land. Now, 40 years later, he would lead the charge in their conquest of the land. As Joshua pondered the enormous task ahead of him, God gave him an incredible promise. His presence and power would be with Joshua in the same way it had been with Moses and Aaron. Joshua's courage was found not in the army that marched behind him, but in the God who walked beside him.

READ Joshua 1:1-18

- What promises did God give Joshua in this passage? What did Joshua have to remember in order to grab hold of these promises?
- How did the people respond to Joshua? What did they encourage him to do?

READ 2 Timothy 1:6-10

- What Spirit has God given us? How can we have the same confidence and strength Joshua had?

“Be strong and courageous!” Joshua heard these words repeated time and time again. To complete the task ahead of him, Joshua needed strength. He needed courage. That's because God had something incredible in mind for him. Joshua needed to remember that the presence of God went with Him. The intensity of God's power with him would match the immensity of God's plan for him. As those who have been given His very Spirit, we need to remember that God has not left us without power. He has given us strength. He has given us courage. That's because the task ahead of us is great. We need only trust in His power to accomplish His plan.

Thursday: CONQUER

Years earlier, the Israelite spies had balked at the size of both the cities and the people in the Promised Land. Its inhabitants looked like giants. Its cities had fortified towers that looked impossible to attack. In order to finally conquer the Promised Land, the Israelites were first going to have to conquer those fears. Their first steps into the Land gave God the opportunity to remind His people of His great power and might. God had promised this land to Abraham centuries before, and He was going to pull out all the stops to fulfill those promises.

READ Joshua 3:1-17

- What miracle did God perform as the people entered the Promised Land? How would this have reminded them of the Exodus from Egypt?
- The adult Israelites were only children at the parting of the Red Sea. How would this have reassured them of God's continued faithfulness to them?

READ Joshua 6:1-21

- What was God's plan for taking the city of Jericho? How does this compare with our ideas of military strategy? What does this tell us about the ways God works?

The waters of the Jordan River parted. The walls of Jericho crumbled. As the Israelites continued their conquest of the Promised Land, they would see even greater miracles than these. City after city would fall. Nation after nation would wither and fail. God cleared the path for His people to grab hold of His promises. Their military campaign took about five years, but the Israelites finally took possession of the Promised Land. After centuries of longing and waiting, they had everything they wanted. Their centuries of slavery and decades of wandering finally brought them home.

Friday: HOME

There really is no place like home. Sure, we may leave it. We might even try to run away from it. But there's something within us that cries out for our home. It's why our hearts leap at the end of a busy work day. It's why we tear up at the videos of soldiers coming home from war. Deep within us, we want to get home. We want to be in a place that's familiar and familial. Finding home isn't just about having a place; it's about having a peace. It's about knowing deep in your soul that you have found where you belong. It's what the Israelites found when they reached the Promised Land. It's what God promises us when we reach the end of our own journeys.

READ Joshua 23:1-11

- Who had given the Israelites this land? In light of that, what was Joshua's final charge to the nation?

READ Revelation 21:1–22:5

- How do the final chapters of the Bible describe our eternal home? What are you most excited to see there?
- How is our journey home similar to the Israelites' journey? How is it different?

The story of the Exodus is the story of God bringing His people home. So is the rest of the Bible. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible tells the story of how we lost home and what God has done to get us back there. He sent us a Deliverer. He brought us out of this world. Though we deserve death in the wilderness, our God promises us life everlasting with Him. On that glorious day when we finally come home – on that day we enter our Promised Land – may our words echo those of Joshua: “You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed” (Joshua 23:14).

Week 6

KINGDOM