

Centralia Christian Church

EXODUS

Week 1 Study Guide

Exodus

Week 1: Day 1

When I think of Exodus, I think of God's faithfulness to an unfaithful people. Exodus reminds me that God hears the cries of His people and rescues, redeems, and restores them. This was true for the Israelites in Egypt thousands of years ago and remains true today.

I am specifically thinking about when the Egyptians forced the Israelites into slavery because they saw the power in the growing number of Israelites, and the possibility of a revolt struck fear into the Egyptians and Pharaoh, their leader. The Israelites were tasked with making their daily quota of bricks, using straw and mortar. The Lord heard their cries and chose to send Moses to the Pharaoh to be the Lord's mouthpiece of deliverance for the people (**Exodus 3:7-10**). After Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh in the name of the Lord and asked him to let the Israelites go to worship the Lord their God, Pharaoh responded to the request in brutality, turned up the heat, and put more pressure on the slaves. He forced the Israelite workers to produce the same daily quota of bricks, but he also ordered that the Israelites gather their own straw, too. Pharaoh demanded that the people do the same amount of work with fewer resources (**Exodus 5:1-19**).

Let's pause for a minute... In today's economy, many of you have been asked to do the same – continue to meet high expectations with less resources. God hears your cries. He understands you questioning His faithfulness.

There's hope... Even Moses questioned God's faithfulness. **Exodus 5:22-23** says that Moses spoke to God and protested about Pharaoh's response of brutality, and that God had not yet rescued His chosen people. Then, God answered. Finally, Moses was told God's master plan for the deliverance of His people.

In **Exodus 6:6**, God says, *"I am the Lord. I will free you from your oppression and from your slavery in Egypt."* **God rescues. God redeems. God restores.** God saves. God hears. God fights. God understands. God is in control. God is faithful to unfaithful people.

Reflect on:

1. What has Jesus rescued you from?

2. How has He remained faithful to you in, despite your unfaithfulness to Him?

Exodus

Week 1: Day 2

As I spent time reflecting on the book of Exodus, it became clear to me that the book of Exodus has spoken into my life, in various seasons in my life, in a wide variety of ways.

When I think of Exodus, I think of Charlton Heston and Yul Brynner and the epic movie; *The Ten Commandments*. I'm transported back to my childhood and watching this movie on television, with my family, each year trying to stay awake through the whole thing! Watching the movie was one of the first times when the words of Scripture came to life in a way that ignited my faith. As a child, seeing is believing, and it was so cool seeing, on television, the stories that I'd heard and read so many times in church and Sunday school.

Maybe that's why the book of Exodus has always been a favorite of mine—one that I read and studied many times through college. And since then, in pastoral ministry, I've returned to it again and again with a desire to learn from the life of Moses what it means to be a shepherd/leader of God's people, what it means to live in community, what it means to be freed *from* and freed *for*, what it means to be sinful and imperfect (like Moses) and yet in constant relationship with God (like Moses) as we journey toward the Promised Land.

As I look forward with excitement, anticipation, and expectation to my journey (your journey and *our* journey) through the book of Exodus over the next several weeks and how God will use it to continue the journey we began together, working together to prepare us for what is coming next, I was drawn to **Exodus 17:8-16**.

Go ahead and look it up and read it...I'll be here waiting until you get back.

As we continue to journey faithfully together, as we continue to move closer to the "*watershed*" moment, as we continue to pursue with courage and persistence what it means to be God's people in this place and time; taking ground, being salt and light on our generational shift, as we prepare for the challenges and opportunities that we will face along the way I have two questions for you – and they are not rhetorical – I truly want you to be able to answer them; First, "**Who are your "Aaron" and "Hur?"**" And, second, "**Is the Lord your banner?"**"

Point to Ponder: If you're a guy – what 2 guys are walking with you – close enough to hold you up when you get tired and weary? What 2 guys are you “*doing life*” with? What 2 guys are speaking truth, encouragement, and counsel into your life? What 2 guys are praying for you and holding you accountable? Ladies, same questions for you. And if you want to take this a step further – as a couple – what 2 couples are walking with you?

What a powerful image that must have been – Joshua and the men fighting in the battle looking up to see their leader, Moses, staff in hand, with hands raised in the air, with Aaron and Hur by his side holding up his arms – God's presence and power displayed before them – taking them into the battle and assuring them the victory!

And God's presence and power will go before us as we journey faithfully together – for He is *Jehova-Nissi*; the Lord our Banner. In battle, opposing nations would fly their own flag on a pole at each of their respective front lines. This was to give their soldiers a feeling of hope and a focal point, a reminder of all that they were fighting for. My friends, that is what God is to us; a banner of encouragement to give us hope and a focal point – only His flag isn't flown on a pole, it's on a cross – a cross that declares the final victory has been won – ours is the victory!

Prayer: *Jehovah-Nissi* – the Lord our Banner – how awesome it is that You go before me – that You walk beside me – that You've got my back! How awesome it is that I was never expected to walk this road alone! Thanks for Your power, Your presence, Your provision and Your protection in my life as I journey faithfully with my brothers and sisters in the faith. Give me the courage to press on toward the goal one step at a time, one day at a time, one decision at a time. When things aren't going well and I'm feeling like the battle isn't going my way, help me to remember to look up, to look to the cross, and be reminded of who I am and whose I am and what I'm fighting for! And through it all may You be given all the glory, praise, and honor. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Exodus

Week 1: Day 3

As I think about Exodus, I immediately think about how God used Jethro to help Moses not be overwhelmed as a leader but to organize and lead this new nation and family. God gave Moses a design for delegation that includes sharing relationships and responsibilities. Healthy bodies, families, and ministries work together. I see a picture of a healthy biblical family in action through how Moses learned to lead people God's way.

"Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. In His grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well." (Romans 12:5-6a).

From a biblical standpoint, being a family means living out biblical relationships and sharing in the biblical responsibilities.

Please read Exodus 18 (until it soaks in)

The nation of Israel had emerged from slavery as an unorganized horde. But gradually, as a new national spirit was beginning to take shape through the leadership of Moses, they became more and more organized. As so often happens, organization leads to an unbearable workload if there is not proper delegation. And this happened with Moses.

Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you: you cannot handle it alone. Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you" (v. 17-18).

In this verse we see that Moses' lack of delegation was hurting him, but also hurting his people. It was impossible for him to meet all the needs of the people. His lack of delegation was wearing everyone out. In the context of **Exodus 18** we see that God has given us a blueprint not only for how to be a family but also a picture of spiritual maturity in action. Think about this: *"Spiritual maturity is one's willingness to either delegate responsibility or accept responsibility as part of God's family."*

Our mission at CCC is “*We will relationally RESTORE, RAISE UP, and RELEASE disciples of Jesus.*” In a true family environment that includes biblical delegation, there will be love, support, freedom, and opportunities:

- To develop one’s own gifts and abilities
- To learn from each other
- To practice and play
- To make mistakes
- To be creative
- To try again
- To take risks and be bold
- To share ideas
- To share relationships and responsibilities

Please read Jethro’s life-giving advice to Moses about how to delegate God’s way (verses 20-22).

God through Jethro leaves us with this truth. *“If you follow this advice (delegation) and if God commands you to do so, then you will be able to endure the pressures, and all these people will go home in peace.”*

I’m so grateful for Jethro and his courage to give godly vision to Moses. I’m encouraged by Moses’ willingness to humble himself to God’s truth and how he put God’s truth into action. I can come up with 100 ways why not to delegate, can’t you? I praise God that He showed us why we need to share relationships and responsibilities. Delegation ignites God’s design for biblical family.

Point to Ponder:

To be a great leader you have to be a great follower:

- **Exodus 18** is loaded with leadership/follower principles from God. Please take some time and mine them out for yourself.
- What is God speaking to you through this thought: *“Spiritual maturity is one’s willingness to either delegate responsibility or accept responsibility as part of God’s family”?*

Exodus

Week 1: Day 4

As I was thinking for this day, I thought about a God who hears the cry of His people and rescues them. He does not, however, rescue them in a way that seems "*normal*". He uses unlikely people to do seemingly impossible things. They must rely on Him, and not on their own power, ability, or strength. Even throughout their "*rescue*" they continue to question God's provisions and choices. They resort to relying on their own "doing" and get themselves into mess after mess, rather than trust in Him. Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

A particularly interesting part is when God tells them at the end of **chapter 3** that they will plunder the Egyptians when they leave by simply asking for their stuff. He makes the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the Israelite people, and the Egyptians give them gold, silver, and clothing for their children (**vs. 21-22**). It turns out that the gold and silver were for the later building of the tabernacle. I wonder what they thought as they trudged through the desert with gold and silver while they were worried about having enough food and water. God provided for their basic needs in ways that weren't normal. Then they doubted God and decided to rely on the gold and silver, making "*gods*" to put their trust in. That didn't work out so well for them.

It seems ridiculous as we read the story. Why didn't they just trust God? Weren't they aware that it was Him who was taking care of them and had promised them something better? Why in the world would they turn away from Almighty God and put their trust in things that don't work?

Thoughts to reflect on:

1. What things am I putting my trust in rather than God?
2. What has God given me that is for His glory and not my own comfort and security?
3. How do I determine what things God has given for my provision and what is to be given back to Him?
4. How does the story of the *Exodus* parallel my rescue from bondage by Jesus?

Exodus

Week 1: Day 5

The thing that God impresses upon me most is that our walk with Him is a *journey*. In this marvelous book, God shows up in miracle after miracle to *lead* the Israelites. He never whisks them away or “poofs” them into a land flowing with milk and honey! He travels with them – slowly but surely toward the land He had promised to Abraham and his descendants forever!

As I pondered this further, I saw that in a similar way today, God wants to lead us on our own spiritual journey in Christ. Immediately several questions began arise in my mind: *What does this look like? How am I to follow Him? How do I know it's Him who's leading so I don't get led astray?* Well, I believe that if we study the Israelites' transition from Egypt to Palestine, we may be able to answer some of these questions!

First, it's important to understand that the Israelites were in *bondage*; they were *slaves* to the Egyptians and were used to fulfill the desires of Pharaoh. It is from this place that the journey began (**Exodus 1-2**).

In a mighty display of His power God's people were freed from bondage and brought through the waters of the Red Sea! But the enemy was not allowed to pursue them through the water (**Exodus 7-14**). Yet they soon began to question God when Moses was gone so long on Mount Sinai, and they pressured Aaron into making a golden calf for them to worship (**Exodus 32**)!

In the desert, God provided daily bread (*manna*), water from the rock, and fresh meat (*quail*). Yet the Israelites murmured and complained – they were dissatisfied (**Exodus 15-17**). They even began to look back with longing to Egypt, thinking about the “*good*” things they had (varieties of food) but ignoring the hardships (*bricks and straw*).

God is the ultimate Leader! Even though God had Moses to help Him, He still revealed Himself to the people as a magnificent pillar of cloud in the day and fire by night. Although He spoke to Moses face-to-face, He directed Moses on how to instruct the people. And God disciplined His people during the journey, teaching them to obey with consequences that were quite serious.

So... Where did *your* journey begin? We each have our own unique stories about where we were before we knew Jesus. But one truth is common to us all: **our journey began in slavery; in bondage to sin and under the power of Satan.** But the good news is that Christ set us free from the bondage to sin and we have now passed through the waters of baptism – where the enemy is not permitted to follow!

Do you understand the *power of God to save* (**1 Corinthians 1:18**)? Or do you forget and turn instead to an idol of your own making? It's easy to forget during times when we are disconnected from God's people. We need to stay connected in relationship so we can build each other up in the faith, reminding each other of God's goodness and power (**Hebrews 10:25**).

David wrote in **Psalm 37:25** *"I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread."* Jesus told us to not worry about our needs, but to seek after Him and His Righteousness and those things would be taken care of (see **Matthew 6:33**). He promises to give us the provision we *need* in order to do what He asks.

What areas of your life do you not trust God's provision or direction in? It's easy to kid ourselves here, because most of us know *intellectually* that God is able to sustain us, that He loves us, and that He knows and wants what is best for us. But ask yourself: **What is it that I continually take back from God? What do I have difficulty not controlling? What do I worry about? What do I look back at in my past and long for?** Your answers will help you determine those places where you don't *really* trust Him!

What do you do with those things once you've uncovered them? Start by confessing your lack of faith to God. He promises to forgive you (**1 John 1:9**)! Like the desperate father in **Mark 9:24**, ask God to help you overcome your doubt. God understands our weaknesses; He is so compassionate and forgiving. What He truly desires is for us to repent and walk with Him in daily fellowship. If you're *not* doing this, start today – you'll soon see your faith strengthen and your contentment grow.

Many times, people ask what God's will is for them in one circumstance or another. They fret over making "*wrong*" decisions that carry serious consequences. Some people question whether God is testing them or even tricking them! Fortunately, God's Word is clear on this. God never tempts anyone! (**James 1:13**). And although God does *discipline* those He

loves (**Proverbs 3:12**), He does not lay traps in our paths! In fact, He makes our paths straight! (**Proverbs 3:6**). **Romans 12:1-2** gives us instruction in understanding God's "*good, pleasing, and perfect will.*" And that is by the renewing of our mind!

How do you renew your mind? Do you read your Bible every day? How much time do you spend online, listening to your iPod, or watching TV? While those things are fine in moderation, do they consume more of you than God's Word, His people, and His worship?

Pray about what's guiding your thinking and decision making. Ask God to help you grow in Christ; look to those He has placed in authority in the church; look in His Word for guidance; and seek His face each day as you follow Jesus on this incredible journey to the Promised Land!

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