



EXODUS

Book Study Guide

Exodus

Week 5: Day 1

READ: Exodus 32

A SLIPPERY SLOPE

“So all the people took off the gold rings that were on their ears and brought them to Aaron. He took the gold from their hands, fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it into an image of a calf. Then they said, ‘Israel, this is your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.’ ” (Ex 32:3-4, HCSB)

At the end of Exodus chapter 3, we read that while the Israelites were still in bondage in the land of Egypt and Moses had yet to return and petition Pharaoh for the release of his people, and as Moses was receiving his commission from God on this very mountain, God told Moses that when they left Egypt they would leave with much silver, gold, and clothing. We also read at the end of chapter 12 that this did indeed happen. The Israelites plundered the Egyptians when they left their land!

Have you ever stopped to think: *Why did God have them do this?* After all, it would have been more prudent, by our way of thinking, to have them carry some extra food and water. But God didn't tell them to bring extra food and water, and we see in chapters 15-17 that He provided manna, quail, and water along the way. God must have had a plan to use those items for something. But He didn't share that part of the plan with the Israelites – He just asked them to obey. It's also curious to me that we have no record of them inquiring as to why they were to take the treasure. It's as if they just assumed it was for their own pleasure. Assumptions most often lead to disappointment – and as we read, this time is no different.

In this passage of Scripture, we see the people grow impatient with Moses and God as they wait for over a month for Moses to come down from the mountain! As their impatience grows, they decide to take some of their gold and make an idol to worship. While they certainly

weren't sure why God had blessed them with this treasure, we can be sure that God didn't intend for them to make an idol and worship it! This is a direct violation to God being worshipped as the one and ONLY God!

So, this is where we find God's chosen people: recently released from bondage, cared for on their journey through the desert, and witness to an awesome display of God's holiness! Yet, as soon as their expectations weren't met, they grew impatient. Their impatience led to taking control for themselves and thereby misusing the treasure that God had provided for some other purpose – a purpose which they neither knew, nor apparently cared to know, ultimately defying God through idol worship and revelry!

Personal Conviction:

When I read this, I have to ask myself "*What have I have been given by God that I misuse?*" One of the first things that comes to mind is my time. I don't normally ask God how I should spend my time. Even the way I refer to it (*MY time*) betrays my attitude! But I need to stop and remember that each day is a gift from God; that He saved me for a purpose, to do the work which He prepared for me in advance! It really isn't mine, it's His. When I continue to look at my life, I see that there are many areas where I get fiercely territorial: my money; my house; my family. The list is embarrassingly long! Now, I don't always behave that way – but I sure do have a tendency to go there! This is why Jesus told us to take up our cross daily! I need to be reminded each and every day that it's not about me! It's about Jesus reconciling the world to Himself. And I must be willing to use everything He has blessed me with toward that same cause!

Reflection:

- What do you have that you tend to jealously guard?
- If you were to release what you're clinging to, how could God use it to advance His kingdom?

Let's pray about it!

- Ask God to make you aware of the things that you are hoarding in your life.

- Thank Him for those blessings and ask Him to help you give them back to Him to be used for His service!

“What do you have that God hasn’t given you? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift?” (1 Cor. 4:7, NLT)

Exodus

Week 5: Day 2

READ: Exodus 33

A VISION OF GOD

One of my favorite authors, Richard A. Swenson M.D., in his book; *More Than Meets the Eye: Fascinating Glimpses of God's Power and Design*, writes this about God,

“God’s power is undeniable; His precision impressive; His sovereignty on display. Why then do we live in such a metaphysical stupor? How can such power fail to dominate our every thought and action? It is not that God has failed to clearly demonstrate His nature, or that He has been lax in instructing us. It is just that we are slow to understand. Our eyesight is dim. The world is too much with us. What we need is a new vision of God. The real God. Not some vague image we fold up and stuff in the back drawer of life, but the kind of God who parts the Red Sea and shakes Mount Sinai. The kind of God who stuns the physicists with symmetry, the mathematicians with precision, the engineers with design, the politicians with power, and the poets with beauty.

When we understand the sovereignty, power, design, majesty, precision, genius, intimacy, and caring of an Almighty God, it takes away our fear. It removes our frustration. It allows us to sleep at night and trust Him with the running of His own universe. It allows us to have margin. It allows us to resume our proper role in the order of things rather than taking over His role. It allows us to seek His will rather than follow our own mind. The more we understand about God’s power, the less we worry about our weakness. The more we trust in God’s sovereignty, the less we fret about our future.”

Moses gets it. The signs, wonders, and plagues; the Passover; the Exodus; the miraculous provision of manna, quail, and water; the

victory over the Amalekites; the Ten Commandments; the golden calf; the tent of meeting. Moses also gets God's sovereignty, and he's not going anywhere without it. *“Then Moses said to him, ‘If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?’”* (**Exodus 33:15-16**)

This is a pivotal moment. Moses knows it, and he doesn't shrink back. Courageously, with enormous *hutzpah*, Moses asks to know God's ways, reminds God that these are His covenant people, asks for God's presence to go with them, and asks to see God's glory...face to face!

I've been a Christian most of my life, and a pastor my whole adult life, and it struck me as I was reading this past week that I don't really get it – or maybe I just forget sometimes. We need to pray for the *humility* of Moses, and as our journey through the book of **Exodus** concludes, I'm thinking that we should also pray for the *courage* of Moses.

I wonder what would happen if we had the courage of Moses, the courage to begin each day in bold, daring, insistent, and directed prayer to the sovereign God of the universe; prayer fueled by the signs and wonders, the miraculous provision and victories God has wrought on our behalf, by His amazing grace, abundant mercies, and steadfast love - asking God to teach us His ways, reminding God that we are His new covenant people, asking for God's presence to go with us, and asking to see His glory...today!

I'm so thankful for how that prayer is answered for us in and through Jesus Christ, *“...the word made flesh to dwell among us full of grace and truth,” “...the one who is the way, and the truth, and the life,” “...the one who is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word.”* It gives me courage for today and hope for tomorrow. Maybe even the courage of Moses.

Exodus

Week 5: Day 3

READ: Exodus 34:1-28

YOU MUST REST AND CELEBRATE

In **Exodus 34** we see the LORD instructing Moses to meet Him on Mount Sinai with two new stone tablets. The LORD then passes in front of Moses calling out, *“I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin.”* The LORD then tells Moses that there are consequences for their sinful choices, and these consequences will impact the entire family (*nation*) of Israel.

Moses throws himself to the ground and worships. Moses cries out for his people. He agrees with God that they are stubborn and rebellious, he asks God to forgive their sins, and to continue to claim them as His own special possession.

The LORD does renew His covenant with them, and says to them, “*listen carefully to everything I command you today...*”

- Never make a treaty with the people to whom live in the land you are going?
- You must worship no other gods.
- You must celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread.
- No one may appear before Me without an offering.
- Bring the very best of the first harvest to the house of the Lord your God.

Then, in **Ex. 34: 21-22**, The Lord says, *“You must rest and you must celebrate. You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but on the seventh day you must stop working (REST), even during the seasons of plowing and harvest. You must celebrate the Festival of Harvest with the first crop of the wheat harvest, and celebrate the Festival of the Final Harvest at the end of the harvest season.”*

I love being a disciple, husband, father, and Pastor. I love my church family. God has given me passion and energy to pursue those that I love. God has given me a burning desire to raise up leaders and

then release them to impact His Kingdom. Being a disciple and making disciples is my life, regardless of pay or position. I love God and love others. I praise God everyday day for the privilege of serving Him and you. Between celebration and rest, I struggle less with “**YOU MUST CELEBRATE**.”

However, I do struggle with “**YOU MUST REST**.” God is growing me in this area and I’m grateful. I have discovered that God’s design to rest and worship Him is powerful. I’m in a season of learning how to rest like God desires. I’m discovering I like to:

- Take naps
- Read my Bible for me
- Turn off my phone
- Be still and know I’m not God
- Write
- Pray alone

God has designed rest and celebration on purpose. If you are like me, then there is always room for you to grow in one, or both, of these areas.

Points to Ponder:

- Which area (**CELEBRATION OR REST**) can you mature in? Why?
- What are some creative ways you can celebrate God and others?
- What are some simple ways that you can rest and refresh?

Exodus

Week 5: Day 4

READ: Exodus 35

GENEROUS HEARTS

“...Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the Lord’s contribution: gold, silver, and bronze; blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen; goats’ hair, tanned rams’ skins, and goatskins; acacia wood, oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, and onyx stones and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breast piece. “Let every skillful craftsman among you come and make all that the LORD has commanded...”

(Exodus 35:5b-10, ESV)

God certainly has good reasons behind all the rules in the Old Testament. The sacrificial system drove home the connection between sin and death and provided a foreshadow of what was to come. The moral code was historically unprecedented in the height and humanity of its standards. The dietary laws went a long way toward the health of the ancient Israelites, who were living in a harsh environment without a sophisticated understanding of things like germ theory. The people of Israel were called out of slavery and had to be taught not to have a slave’s mentality. They had to be transformed into a blessing to all people groups and a suitable vessel for the redeemer of humankind. God was going somewhere with all of this!

But in this particular case God doesn’t lay down a rule, but He issues a request. Think about that. The Israelites were asked (not told) for contributions to the Lord. Those who were generous, willing, and whose hearts stirred them, brought all kinds of gifts to the Lord. He gave them the opportunity to voluntarily express their love toward Him. What can we learn from this?

God’s request for an offering has nothing to do with redemption. Redemption is already taken care of. But even redeemed people need to constantly, and voluntarily, approach the Lord. After all, His ultimate desire is to develop a love relationship with us.

Not all of God's instructions are necessary for salvation. But that doesn't mean they aren't necessary. God's request wasn't only for material goods. It was for services, too. God doesn't just want our wealth, He wants us. And out of ourselves we bring Him our possessions, our emotions, our intellects, and our skills. We don't get out of serving the Lord just because we give money and try to avoid sinning.

God cares about skill. Try counting how many times He mentions it! Furthermore, God is the giver of all these things: life, wealth, freedom, and skill. God made humanity, He made promises to Abraham, and He was there with Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. He heard the cry of the Israelites in slavery, and in the right way delivered them. He set them free, made the Egyptians send them away with wealth, He gave individuals skill, intelligence, knowledge, and craftsmanship through the Spirit of God. He gives us life, asks for love, and provides what we need to show love back to Him.

Points to ponder:

- Have you ever taken a moment of silence to sit by yourself and contemplate what God asks from you? Certainly, there are things that God requires of you. But what about those things God asks of you?
- Have you stopped to think about what you have that you are indebted to Him for?
- What gifts - material possessions and personal skills - do you get to use to serve Him?

Here's your challenge:

- Set aside some time, find a quiet place away from technology and other people, and think about it. Pray about it.
- What are God's goals? How can you use what He's given you to contribute to those goals over the long term?
- Thank God for giving you life and breath, mind, and heart. Enjoy it!

NOTES

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