

EXPECTATIONS.

We all have them.

There is a way that we expect life to turn out. We have pictures in our mind...snapshots of our future...a mental photo album of good times and good outcomes.

But life rarely turns out the way that we expect.

Disappointment. Discouragement. Disgust. Depression.

Behind these feelings is often the lament of shattered, shattered expectations.

The same is true in our Christian lives.

When we come to Jesus Christ, we often expect that things in our lives will turn out easier, nicer, lighter, smoother. After all, doesn't Jesus promise that *His yoke is easy and His burden is light* (Matthew 11:30)? Doesn't that mean that following Christ leads to better health, better relationships, better jobs, better marriages, better families, better times, better everything?

Not always.

In fact, sometimes life gets worse as we live for Christ in this present world.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

If anyone wants to follow Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.

In this world, you will have tribulation.

It is through many hardships that we must enter the kingdom of God. Matthew 5:10, 16:24; John 16:33; Acts 14:22

This is the experience of the children of Israel as they leave Egypt headed for the Promised Land. They simply did not expect that God's path would lead them through the trials of the wilderness.



Though Israel did not expect the journey through the wilderness (and certainly didn't want it), they needed the experience of the wilderness in order to learn to trust God even in difficult times.



Like the children of Israel, we are a redeemed people—redeemed by the blood of the Lamb—headed to God's promised kingdom. And God takes us through the wilderness to refine, strengthen, and train us to depend fully on Him.

Exodus 14-19 takes us from Egypt through the Red Sea into the Wilderness to Mount Sinai. This journey takes approximately two months (12:3-6; 19:1). There was a shorter, quicker way to the Promised Land (13:17) but God did not take them this route. Instead, He led them faithfully and purposefully to his desired destination—Mount Sinai. Here they would meet

God, worship Him, and receive His law. The exact location of Mount Sinai is still debated today. But wherever it is, it required a journey through the desolate desert of the Sinai Peninsula.

AUTHOR: Early Jewish and Christian traditions have unanimously attributed the authorship of Exodus, and the rest of the Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy), to **Moses (1526-1406 BC)**.

DATE: Between 1446-1406 BC

PURPOSE: Moses wrote Exodus to detail God’s historical deliverance of His people from Egypt and to describe their formation as the “people of God.” The nation of Israel is called both *out of* bondage in Egypt and *into* a covenant relationship with God. They are redeemed for a purpose.

“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

—Exodus 19:5-6

Exodus still speaks to us today. We too, as God’s people, are both called *out of* bondage to sin and *into* a covenant relationship with God. We are redeemed *for* a purpose and *toward* a goal.

OUTLINE: Exodus is generally divided into two main sections.

- I. **ISRAEL’S DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT (1:1-18:27)**
- II. **ISRAEL’S COVENANT WITH GOD (19:1-40:38)**

There is also a chiasmic structure to Exodus which points to the centrality of the Mosaic Covenant.

- A. **Slavery: Building for Pharaoh (1-5)**
- B. **Redemption: The Lamb of God (6-12)**
 - C. **The Wilderness: God with Israel (13-18)**
 - D. **The Covenant: The Law of God (19-24)**
 - C. **The Tabernacle: God with Israel (25-31)**
- B. **Rebellion: The Golden Calf (32-34)**
- A. **Worship: Building for God (35-40)**

The following study guide takes you through a weekly five-day exploration of the Book of Exodus.

Day 1: **OBSERVATION.** Reading the passage and observing what it says.

Day 2: **MEDITATION.** Reading key verse(s) over and over and memorizing them.

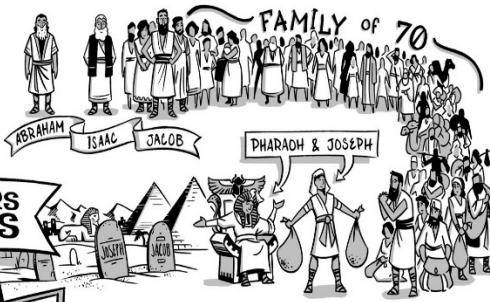
Day 3: **INTERPRETATION.** Doing a word study and/or exploring parallel passages.

Day 4: **DEVOTION.** Reading an excerpt from a classic commentary on Exodus.

Day 5: **APPLICATION.** Seeking to live out God’s Word in your daily life.

We encourage you to do this study individually *and* corporately. Spending time alone in God’s Word is a daily discipline that grows us in the faith. However, our spiritual growth is also connected to and lived out in community. Sharing what you are learning with others, praising God together, and loving and praying for one another are essential to our growth and to our joy.

BLESSING
 • HUMANITY (GENESIS 1: 28)
 • ABRAHAM (GENESIS 17: 1-6)



EXO

400 YEARS PASS

ISRAEL WAS **FRUITFUL** AND **MULTIPLIED** AND **FILLED** THE LAND (1:7)

1-18 EXODUS FROM EGYPT

TELL PHARAOH TO LET MY PEOPLE GO. I KNOW HE WILL RESIST, SO I WILL BRING PLAGUES AND HARDEN HIS HEART.



CONFRONTATION BETWEEN
5-15 **GOD & PHARAOH**



GOD VS PHARAOH



"PHARAOH HARDENED HIS HEART"
 OR
 "HIS HEART GREW HARD"
 "GOD HARDENED PHARAOH'S HEART"

THE POINT

GOD KNEW PHARAOH WOULD RESIST, BUT STILL GAVE HIM MANY CHANCES
 PHARAOH'S **EVIL** REACHES A POINT OF NO RETURN
 GOD **BENDS** PHARAOH'S EVIL TO HIS PURPOSES & LURES HIM INTO HIS OWN **DESTRUCTION**

15 **SONG OF THE SEA**
 THE LORD REIGNS AS KING

- HE CONFRONTS EVIL
- HE REDEEMS THE SLAVES
- HE LEADS HIS PEOPLE TO THE PROMISED LAND
- HE DEFEATS HIS ENEMIES

PASSOVER



16-18 **IN THE WILDERNESS**



DUST

GOD'S COVENANT PROMISES

ABRAHAM (GENESIS 12, 15, 17): GOD'S BLESSING TO ALL NATIONS

ISRAEL (EXODUS 19: 1-6) {
• KINGDOM OF PRIESTS TO THE NATIONS
• RESTORATION OF GOD'S PRESENCE

19-40 COVENANT AT MT. SINAI

19-24
GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL

TERMS OF THE COVENANT:
(CHS 20-23)
• THE 10 COMMANDMENTS
• 52 MORE COMMANDS ABOUT WORSHIP & SOCIAL JUSTICE

SIGN US UP!

MAKE A SANCTUARY FOR ME AND I WILL DWELL AMONG MY PEOPLE. (25: 8)

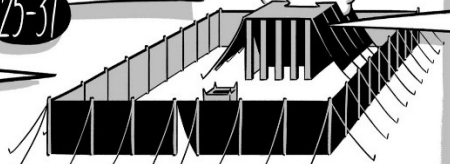
LOTS OF SYMBOLISM



GARDEN OF EDEN

TABERNACLE BLUEPRINT

25-31



MOST HOLY SPACE

HOT SPOT OF GOD'S PRESENCE



ARK OF THE COVENANT

32-34 ISRAEL BREAKS THE COVENANT

MAKE US A GOD!

HERE ARE YOUR GODS WHO BROUGHT YOU OUT OF EGYPT.



LEAVE ME ALONE THAT I MAY DESTROY THEM.



REMEMBER YOUR COVENANT PROMISE TO ABRAHAM!

"THE LORD IS MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS, SLOW TO ANGER, ABUNDING IN COVENANT FAITHFULNESS. HE FORGIVES SIN, BUT WILL NOT LEAVE THE WICKED UNPUNISHED." (34: 6-7)

35-40

MOSES BUILDS THE TABERNACLE



MOSES CAN'T ENTER

Created by the Bible Project

EXPERIENCING A MIRACLE

Exodus 14

DAY ONE

OBSERVATION

Israel is redeemed. They have been set free. They are on their way to the Promised Land. But before they leave Egypt, they will experience one more great miracle of deliverance.

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 14. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.

Then the Lord said to Moses,² “Tell the people of Israel to turn back and encamp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon; you shall encamp facing it, by the sea.”³ For Pharaoh will say of the people of Israel, ‘They are wandering in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.’⁴ And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord.” And they did so.

⁵ When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, “What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?”⁶ So he made ready his chariot and took his army with him,⁷ and took six hundred chosen chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them.⁸ And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly.⁹ The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

¹⁰ When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the Lord.¹¹ They said to Moses, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt?¹² Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.”¹³ And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again.¹⁴ The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”

¹⁵ The Lord said to Moses, “Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward.¹⁶ Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground.¹⁷ And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen.¹⁸ And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.”

¹⁹ Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, ²⁰ coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night.

²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. ²² And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ²³ The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. ²⁴ And in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, ²⁵ clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians."

²⁶ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen." ²⁷ So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the Lord threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. ²⁸ The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. ²⁹ But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

³⁰ Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses. (ESV)

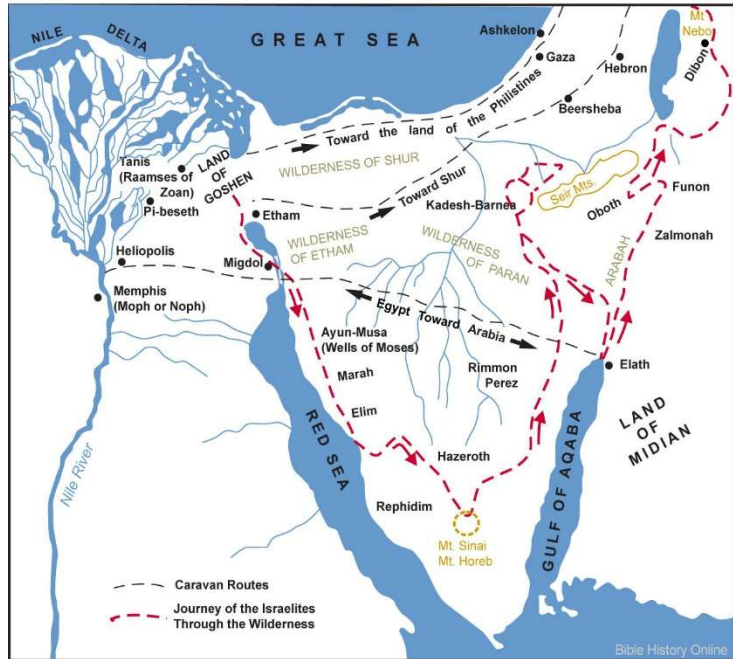
What thought or verse stands out to you in Exodus 14? Why?

Using different highlighters or colored pencils (or markings), **highlight the following:**

- Phrases that refer to the hardening of hearts in red or with a **box**.
- Phrases that refer to God's purpose "that they shall know" in green or underline.
- Phrases that refer to God's glory, power, fighting, or salvation in yellow or **circle**.

The places referred to in Exodus 14 are hard to pinpoint. There is ongoing debate on the exact location of the Red Sea and the route of the exodus. But it seems likely that the Red Sea refers to the sea just east of Egypt (i.e., the Gulf of Suez) in which case the Israelites would still be in the area of Egypt.

Locate Goshen (where Israel lived) and the caravan routes on the map. **What would Pharaoh think when Israel was seemingly stuck near Migdol? (14:3)**



In the midst of their great fear, what four statements do the people make to Moses? (14:11-12)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Write out Moses' response to the people. (14:13-14) _____

What does the Lord (or "the angel of God") do in the following verses?

- 14:8 _____
- 14:19-20 _____
- 14:21 _____
- 14:24 _____
- 14:30 _____

What is God's purpose for His actions in this chapter? (14:4, 18) _____

DAY TWO
MEDITATION

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Exodus 14:13-14 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*Moses said to the people,
“Do not fear!
Stand firm and see the salvation of the Lord that he will provide for you today;
for the Egyptians that you see today you will never, ever see again.
The Lord will fight for you,
and you can be still.” (NET)*

Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE
INTERPRETATION

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to blueletterbible.org and type "Exodus 14" into the "Search the Bible" box. Click on Exodus 14:14 to bring up the verse in the Hebrew. Find the phrase "hold your peace" and click on the Strong's number (H2790) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the OT.

What is the Hebrew word for "hold your peace"? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

How many times is it used in Exodus? _____ (See Search Results by Book.)

What is its definition? (Note especially II. in Outline of Biblical Usage. It is the Hiphil in Hebrew.)

Read the following passages which use this Hebrew word. Mark key words as you read.

Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the Lord had made his journey successful. (Genesis 24:21)

*When the Gazites heard that Samson was there, they surrounded the place and waited in ambush for him all that night at the city gate. They **kept quiet** all night, saying, "Let's wait until dawn; then we will kill him." (Judges 16:2)*

*If only you would be **altogether silent!** For you, that would be wisdom. (Job 13:5)*

*Whoever derides their neighbor has no sense,
But the one who has understanding **holds their tongue.** (Proverbs 11:12)*

*Even a fool who **remains silent** is considered wise,
And the one who holds his tongue is deemed discerning. (Proverbs 17:28)*

*"The Lord your God in your midst,
The Mighty One, will save;
He will rejoice over you with gladness,
He will **quiet** you with His love,
He will rejoice over you with singing." (Zephaniah 3:17)*

What do you learn about this Hebrew word from these verses?

Go back to Exodus 14:27 on blueletterbible.org. Find the word “overthrew” and click on the Strong’s number (H5287) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the OT.

What is the Hebrew word for “overthrew”? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? (Note especially Strong’s Definitions.)

Read the following verses which use this Hebrew word. Mark key words as you read.

*Then she called, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” He awoke from his sleep and thought, “I’ll go out as before and **shake myself free**.” But he did not know that the Lord had left him. (Judges 16:20)*

*Have you ever in your life commanded the morning or assigned the dawn its place,
So it may seize the edges of the earth and **shake** the wicked out of it? (Job 38:12-13)*

*Stand up, **shake** the dust off yourself!*

Take your seat, Jerusalem.

Remove the bonds from your neck, captive Daughter Zion.” (Isaiah 52:2)

Based on these verses, how would you describe God’s “overthrowing” of Egypt at the Red Sea?

Read Psalm 136:10-15.

To Him who struck the Egyptians through their firstborn,

For His lovingkindness endures forever,

Then brought Israel out from their midst,

For His lovingkindness endures forever,

With a strong hand and an outstretched arm,

For His lovingkindness endures forever.

To Him who divided the Red Sea in two,

For His lovingkindness endures forever,

And made Israel pass through the midst of it,

For His lovingkindness endures forever,

But He overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea,

For His lovingkindness endures forever.

According to the psalmist, what does the whole exodus event teach us?

DAY FOUR
DEVOTION

Read the following excerpt from **Charles Spurgeon's** sermon on Exodus 14, **Forward! Forward! Forward!** Spurgeon (1834-92) was a Baptist preacher in London, England. He has been called the "Prince of Preachers" because of his powerful sermons which were biblically deep and oratorically beautiful.

SPIRITUAL men, in their distresses, turn at once to prayer, even as the stag when hunted takes to flight. Prayer is a never-failing resort, it is sure to bring a blessing with it. Even apart from the answer of our supplications, the very exercise of prayer is healthy to the man engaged in it. Far be it from me to ever say a word in disparagement of the holy, happy, heavenly exercise of prayer!

But beloved, there are times when prayer is not enough—when prayer itself is out of season. You will think that a hard saying and say, "Who can hear it?" But my text is to the point. Moses prayed that God would deliver His people, but the Lord said to him, *Why do you cry unto Me?* (14:15). As much as to say this is not the time for prayer, it is the time for action. *Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.* When we have prayed over a matter to a certain degree, it then becomes sinful to tarry any longer... Having asked God's guidance, and having received divine power, we are to go at once to our duty without any longer deliberation or delay...

Beloved, it strikes me that the advice which the Lord gave to Moses...is a very fit one for me to deliver to you. Short, prompt, soldier-like, here is the whole of it, *Forward! Forward!* If you have been sitting down or tempted to go back—*Forward!* We have long been praying, let us today *Go forward!*

I. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL AS A FLOCK OF FUGITIVES

I think I see those poor Israelites crowding together, all alarmed and afraid, whispering to one another some such trembling words as these—"I saw them. I saw my old master on

horseback riding after me. I looked, and I saw regiment upon regiment of warriors marching in long red lines." "I heard," says another, "the sound of their war music. I heard the clash of their spears. We cannot stand against them. We are a defenseless multitude, and they are the well-trained sons of Mizraim, their swords will be drunk with our blood!"

They huddled together as a company of doves seeking to escape the hawk. Alas! what can they do? And Moses himself, in some sort of alarm, is crying out to God for them—"Lord, help this people, they are in great straits, they are in frightful difficulties... Lord, what am I to do with this company?" Here comes the divine answer, full of wisdom and love—*Speak unto them, and bid them go forward...*

Such is my message to the company of fugitives who are here today... Your conscience has been awakened... You long to be delivered altogether from sin in its power and its guilt. You have been flying as best you could from sin, but the whole of your sins are after you, and your conscience with its quick ear can hear the sound of threatening judgment...

God commands you to believe in His Son Jesus Christ. *Forward!* is my message. I come not here to tamper with you, to deal with your "ifs" and "buts" and excuses. Hell is behind you, you are shut up on the right hand and on the left by God's providence, your own fears, and divine justice. There is but one way of safety and that is the way of faith. *Forward, sinner!*

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Some of you have been frittering away your time, weeks, and months,

and years, thinking about it, praying about it, reading about it, hoping about it, fearing about it, but never coming to Jesus just as you are. It is all wrong. God's command is neither work, nor feel, nor fear, but it is simple and plain. Believe! Forward! Trust a Savior's wounds, and trusting there, there is life in a look at Him, and you are saved...

II. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL AS AN ARMY UNDER COMMAND

The command given to them is, *Forward!* "Forward? Forward?" might the wise men have said in the host of Israel, "How can we go forward? That narrow shingle beach leads down to the foaming billow. Forward! what do you mean? We are altogether as dead men if we go forward. Would you have us swim? Do you know where we are? There are miles and miles of deep water, and who knows the bottom of the sea? Forward? Absurd—we shall lose the camels, and the sheep, and the baggage, and our wealth, and our children, and our little ones, yea, and our own lives also." But thus saith the Lord, *Forward!*

If the Lord be your Captain, you must do absolutely what He bids you at any loss and at any cost. If He says, "Forward," and it be into the Red Sea or into a gulf of fire, forward you must go. Now, beloved, this presents us a picture of those who are saved, who, suddenly meet with difficulties in following Christ, and run to their minister or to their friend and say, "What are we to do?!" The Lord's message to your anxious inquiry is this—*Forward!*

"Sir, I have begun to be a Christian, but if I continue in it, I shall lose my business. My calling is such that I cannot be honest in it, and serve my God faithfully without sinking all my capital, and bringing myself and family to beggary. What ought I to do? Ought I not to give up my religion?" *Forward!*

No matter what is before you. *Forward!* ... "Ah!" says one, "but what is to become of my children, my family, my household?" Friend, I cannot tell you, but God can. It is yours to trust them with Him, for the only command I have for you is, *Forward! Forward!* "But my husband says I shall never come into the house again, my father tells me he will turn me out of doors." Be it so, no one pities you more than I do, but I dare not alter my message to your soul. I am to bid you, "Go forward!" "Well," says one, "these are hard commands." Yes, but the martyrs had harder still. Theirs was the stake, the gibbet, the rack...but what is the command? *Forward!*

Dear brother, if you have been sitting down timidly and saying, "Well, one of these days I will come out and own my Lord," instead of that, I am bid to command you on this point and on every other, if it is a plain duty, whether it is pleasant to the flesh or not, *Forward! Forward! Forward!* What are your marching orders? Does your Lord tell you to do it? Do it. Do the Scriptures bid you? Do it. It is not yours to reason why, any more than it is the soldier's. But as the seed of Israel march right on, even though the sea had been in their way, so must you, though death itself should be the result. *Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward.*

III. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL AS ON THE MARCH TOWARDS CANAAN

Many of you are on your way towards heaven and the Lord's command to you is, *Forward!*

There are some persons who cannot be persuaded to make an advance in the divine life. The moment you urge them to anything practical, they call you legalistic. They seem to consider themselves as inanimate clay ordained to lie passively in the hands of the Holy Spirit. But they forget that the Holy Spirit works in us, not to be idle and

powerless, but to will, and to do, of God's good pleasure. They neither will nor do, but talk about the Spirit as though He were to will and to do everything for them. To such who have been converted but have made no progress, let me in my Master's name, give clear utterance to that word, *Forward!* ...

You and I ought to go forward *in knowledge*. If I know no more of Scripture than I did ten years ago, what have I done with my time? If you have been in this world these years, and yet doctrine has not become more clear, nor experience more plain, it is time you should look about you, and follow on to know the Lord. We do not keep boys at school year after year, if they make no progress, and yet how many there be of professing Christians who seem to have been stunted in their early profession, so that they positively have not advanced in knowledge one iota beyond where they were ten or twenty years ago...

May I not use the same word in reference to *our fellowship with Christ*? I am afraid most of us make no progress as to nearness to Christ. Some of us, I am afraid, go back. We said, years ago, "Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee." Are we nearer? Have we come closer to the wounds of Jesus? Do we more frequently recline upon His bosom and sit at His feet? If not, I may say with Moses, *Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward*.

Above all, have we made any progress as to *work for our Master*? Some, as they grow old, give up their work. I do not understand it. I must confess an inability of comprehending how any man who once preached the Gospel can ever leave his ministry while his strength lasts. If the Master has once allotted you a field of labor, unless it be sheer inability, I cannot understand how you can ever cease to till the ground, or reap the sheaves. No, you will, if God has called you, want to do more

and more, and more for Jesus. You will feel a growing thirst after precious souls, at least, you ought to do so. You will be moved with greater yearning toward your fellow immortals and a higher zeal for the spread of your Master's kingdom...

Press onward in the divine life, forget the road already trod, and onward urge your way. Cry for the Spirit of God, ask for more unction, more power, more consciousness of the divine indwelling, and then take for the motto on your banner—*Forward! Forward!*

IV. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL LIKE CHRISTIANS IN TROUBLE

The children of Israel were in great straits. They were in a trial into which God had brought them, and it is an absolute certainty, that if God brings you in, He will bring you out. He never did take a saint where he must of necessity perish. The rocks of daily life rise on the right and on the left. The raging enemies are behind, the equally raging sea is before. What is to be done now? God's Word is—*Forward!* God shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace...

You cannot help yourself—that is clear. Your trouble is none of your own finding—that you know, and your escape will not be of your own working—that you know also. You have nothing now to do but to cast yourselves upon your God and go forward.

Beloved, it is a blessed thing to be absolutely stripped of creature, that you may be wholly clothed upon with the Creator. It is not pleasing to flesh and blood to be brought down to abject nothingness, but faith never is more happy than when the strength of the mortal is altogether dead, because then the immortal God comes in and clothes our weakness with His omnipotence. If I might have any choice between having abundant

wealth or being brought to absolute dependence upon daily supplies, if in the latter case, I could have greater power to exhibit and to exert faith in Christ, I must confess that I should prefer the mode of living which would give me most room to enjoy the luxury of depending upon my God. I believe it is a more happy, divine life to live from hand to mouth, dependent upon the providence of God, and having the confidence to trust Him, than it is to have all the abundance of this world, but to have nothing about which faith may exercise itself.

Often when our joys are thick about us, and we have ten thousand creature comforts, we are then naked, and poor, and miserable in spirituals. But when the creature comforts fall as the leaves are falling from the trees in autumn, then it is that we have frequently the most joy and the most peace in God...

Experientially I have learned, dear friends, that at the Red Sea of affliction we see most of the right arm of God. I am glad there was a Red Sea. I bless God that it had deep and foaming billows. I praise His name that there were fierce and cruel Egyptians. For if there had never been that Red Sea, never would the song of Moses, and the shout of Miriam have

been heard—*Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea!*

Your tribulations will yet yield you music. All you have now to do, is to honor God by going forward. Hold your peace, and God shall fight for you! *Be still, and know that I am God.* When the worst has come to the worst... *Forward! Christian, forward! ...*

Soon you and I will stand on the brink of Jordan's river. The deep sea of death will roll before us. Trusting in Jesus, washed in His blood, hoping in His mercy, we shall not fear the last solemn hour. We shall hear the angel say, *Forward!* We shall touch the chilly stream with our feet, the flood shall fly, and we shall go through the stream dry-shod.

If the flood gathers, and the Jordan overflows its banks, still the divine watchword, *Forward!* shall speed us on, and we will enter heaven's gates among the blood-washed throng, and sing unto Him who has enabled us to triumph gloriously in obedience to that command, *Forward! Forward!*

God help you to go forward, and unto Him be praise forever and ever. Amen.

What thought from Charles Spurgeon's sermon stands out to you the most? Why?

DAY FIVE
APPLICATION

Go back and re-read Exodus 14. Then take time to look over and reflect on the things that you learned from your Bible study this past week.

Write down one truth that impacted you from your study of Exodus 14.

The exodus from Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea are central events in the history of Israel. Throughout the OT, these events are remembered, reflected on, and rejoiced over.

Read and reflect on the following passages. Mark key words and phrases as you read.

Observe the month of Abib and keep the Passover to the Lord your God, for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night. And you shall offer the Passover sacrifice to the Lord your God, from the flock or the herd, at the place that the Lord will choose, to make his name dwell there. You shall eat no leavened bread with it. Seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread, the bread of affliction—for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste—that all the days of your life you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 16:1-3)

*You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt,
And heard their cry by the Red Sea.
You showed signs and wonders against Pharaoh,
Against all his servants,
And against all the people of his land.
For You knew that they acted proudly against them.
So You made a name for Yourself, as it is this day.
And You divided the sea before them,
So that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land;
And their persecutors You threw into the deep,
As a stone into the mighty waters.
Moreover You led them by day with a cloudy pillar,
And by night with a pillar of fire,
To give them light on the road
Which they should travel. (Nehemiah 9:9-12)*

*Marvelous things He did in the sight of their fathers,
In the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.
He divided the sea and caused them to pass through;
And He made the waters stand up like a heap.
In the daytime also He led them with the cloud,
And all the night with a light of fire. (Psalm 78:12-14)*

Take time to read and reflect on Psalm 77. In this psalm, Asaph is feeling overwhelmed by life and deserted by God. Write any thoughts you have next to the verses as you read.

*I cried out to God with my voice—
To God with my voice;
And He gave ear to me.
In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord;
My hand was stretched out in the night without ceasing;
My soul refused to be comforted.
I remembered God, and was troubled;
I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah*

*You hold my eyelids open;
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
I have considered the days of old,
The years of ancient times.
I call to remembrance my song in the night;
I meditate within my heart,
And my spirit makes diligent search.
Will the Lord cast off forever?
And will He be favorable no more?
Has His mercy ceased forever?
Has His promise failed forevermore?
Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Selah*

*And I said, "This is my anguish;
But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High."
I will remember the works of the Lord;
Surely I will remember Your wonders of old.
I will also meditate on all Your work,
And talk of Your deeds.
Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary;
Who is so great a God as our God?
You are the God who does wonders;
You have declared Your strength among the peoples.
You have with Your arm redeemed Your people,
The sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah*

*The waters saw You, O God;
The waters saw You, they were afraid;
The depths also trembled.
The clouds poured out water;
The skies sent out a sound;
Your arrows also flashed about.
The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind;
The lightnings lit up the world;
The earth trembled and shook.*

*Your way was in the sea,
Your path in the great waters,
And Your footsteps were not known.
You led Your people like a flock
By the hand of Moses and Aaron.*

How does the psalmist get through this difficult time in his life? What does he choose to do?

Write down an event in your own life that reminds you of God's marvelous works.

In Exodus 14, the Israelites were trapped between Pharaoh's army and the Red Sea. There was no apparent escape. Things were out of their control. In great fear, they cried out to God and complained to Moses. "Why did you bring us here? It would be better if we were still in Egypt!"

Their situation can mirror our own. We can feel trapped at times with no apparent way of escape.

<p>What difficulties are you facing right now?</p> 	<p>What fears do you have about the future?</p> 
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God's path is often *through* the sea. He alone can part the waters and lead you through whatever stands in your way. But you must quiet your heart, trust Him, and keep walking forward.

Read Exodus 14:13-14 again. What is God saying to you today through His Word?

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

The passage that was opened for the children of Israel by the Lord was His “way” for them, a secret and unknown path by which He was able to lead them safely from seemingly inescapable perils.

H. C. Leupold

*Had Israel not been caught—
baffled, terrified, and helpless—
at the Red Sea,
there would have been
no final defeat of the power
that enslaved them.*

J. Alec Motyer

*God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way
He works in ways we cannot see
He will make a way for me.*

Don Moen

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- What is one of the most amazing things that you have seen in your life, something that you really cannot forget, something that you can still see in your mind’s eye?
- What word, verse, or thought stands out to you as you read Exodus 14? Why?
- How do you think the Israelites felt when they saw Pharaoh’s army barreling toward them? Can you relate to what they said to Moses in 14:11-12?
- What does Moses tell them to do? What truths can you learn from Moses’ words?
- How do you picture the parting of the Red Sea? If you were there, would you ever forget this event?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of Charles Spurgeon? If so, what?
- In what ways do you feel trapped right now? What situation in your life produces fear? Take time to read Psalm 77 together as a group. How does this psalm encourage you?

SINGING TO THE LORD!

Exodus 15:1-21

DAY ONE

OBSERVATION

Israel stands on the other side of the Red Sea. They walked right through it! And they look back and see the defeat of the Egyptian army. They are truly free! The first thing that they do is break out in praise to the Lord.

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 15:1-21. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.

Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and said,

“I will sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted;
The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea.

²“The Lord is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation;
This is my God, and I will praise Him;
My father’s God, and I will extol Him.

³“The Lord is a warrior;
The Lord is His name.

⁴“Pharaoh’s chariots and his army He has cast into the sea;
And the choicest of his officers are drowned in the Red Sea.

⁵“The deeps cover them;
They went down into the depths like a stone.

⁶“Your right hand, O Lord, is majestic in power,
Your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy.

⁷“And in the greatness of Your excellence You overthrow those who
rise up against You;
You send forth Your burning anger, and it consumes them as chaff.

⁸“At the blast of Your nostrils the waters were piled up,
The flowing waters stood up like a heap;
The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea.

⁹“The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil;
My desire shall be gratified against them;
I will draw out my sword, my hand will destroy them.’

¹⁰“You blew with Your wind, the sea covered them;
They sank like lead in the mighty waters.

¹¹“Who is like You among the gods, O Lord?
Who is like You, majestic in holiness,
Awesome in praises, working wonders?

¹²“You stretched out Your right hand,
The earth swallowed them.

¹³“In Your lovingkindness You have led the people whom
You have redeemed;

In Your strength You have guided them to Your holy habitation.

14 “The peoples have heard, they tremble;
 Anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia.
 15 “Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed;
 The leaders of Moab, trembling grips them;
 All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.
 16 “Terror and dread fall upon them;
 By the greatness of Your arm they are motionless as stone;
 Until Your people pass over, O Lord,
 Until the people pass over whom You have purchased.
 17 “You will bring them and plant them in the mountain
 of Your inheritance,
 The place, O Lord, which You have made for Your dwelling,
 The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established.
 18 “The Lord shall reign forever and ever.”

19 For the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, and the Lord brought back the waters of the sea on them, but the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea.

20 Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing.

21 Miriam answered them,

“Sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted;
 The horse and his rider He has hurled into the sea.” (NASB)

What thought or verse stands out to you in Exodus 15:1-21? Why?

Using different highlighters or colored pencils (or markings), highlight the following words:

- “Lord” in red or with a box.
- “Sing” “song” “praise” “extol” “exalt” “dancing” in yellow or circle.
- Highlight the two questions in this song in green or underline them.

How many times is the word “Lord” used in this passage? _____

Write out the two questions asked in the middle of this song. (15:11)

Complete the following sentences based on this passage.

- *The Lord is my _____ and _____ (15:2).*
- *He has become my _____ (15:2).*
- *This is my _____ and I will praise Him (15:2).*
- *The Lord is a _____ (15:3).*
- *Your right hand, O Lord, is _____ (15:6).*
- *Your right hand, O Lord _____ (15:6).*
- *In Your _____ You have led the people (15:13).*
- *In Your _____ You have guided them (15:13).*
- *The Lord shall _____ forever and ever (15:18).*



What did Israel's enemies say? (15:9)

What did God do in response? (15:10) _____

What will the surrounding nations do when they hear what God has done? (15:14-16)

How is Miriam described? (15:20) _____

What did she do? (15:20-21) _____

DAY TWO
MEDITATION

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Exodus 15:11-13 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*Who among the gods is like You, Lord?
Who is like You—
majestic in holiness,
awesome in glory,
working wonders?
You stretch out Your right hand,
and the earth swallows Your enemies.
In Your unfailing love You will lead the people You have redeemed.
In Your strength You will guide them to Your holy dwelling. (NIV)*

Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE
INTERPRETATION

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to blueletterbible.org and type "Exodus 15" into the "Search the Bible" box. Click on Exodus 15:2 to bring up the verse in the Hebrew. Find the word "exalt" and click on the Strong's number (H7311) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the Old Testament.

What is the Hebrew word for "exalt"? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? (Note especially the *Polel* in the Outline of Biblical Usage and Gesenius.)

Read the following passages which use this Hebrew word. Mark key phrases as you read.

*The flood continued for forty days on the earth; the water increased and **lifted up** the ark so that it rose above the earth. (Genesis 7:17, first use of this word in the Bible)*

***Lift up** your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. (Exodus 14:16)*

*Then it shall be, that when you eat from the food of the land, you shall **lift up** an offering to the Lord. (Numbers 15:19)*

*But You, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory,
And the One who **lifts up** my head. (Psalm 3:3)*

*The Lord lives—blessed be my rock!
The God of my salvation is **exalted**. (Psalm 18:46)*

*For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion;
In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me;
He shall **set me high** upon a rock. (Psalm 27:5)*

*Oh, magnify the Lord with me,
And let us **exalt** His name together. (Psalm 34:3)*

*Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be **exalted** among the nations;
I will be **exalted** in the earth. (Psalm 46:10)*

*Great is the Lord in Zion;
He is **exalted** over all the nations. (Psalm 99:3)*

The Lord is **high** above all nations,
And His glory above the heavens! (Psalm 113:4)

My heart is not proud, Lord,
My eyes are not **haughty**;
I do not concern myself with great matters
Or things too wonderful for me. (Psalm 131:1)

A patient person shows great understanding,
But a quick-tempered one **promotes** foolishness. (Proverbs 14:29)

Righteousness **exalts** a nation,
But sin is a reproach to any people. (Proverbs 14:34)

For a day belonging to the Lord of Armies is coming against all that is proud and lofty,
Against all that is **lifted up**—it will be humbled. (Isaiah 2:12)

In what different ways is this Hebrew word used and translated? _____

What do you think it means to “exalt the Lord” based on what you learned from these verses?

Next go to Exodus 15:7 on blueletterbible.org. Find the word “stubble” and click on the Strong’s number (H7179) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the OT.

What is the Hebrew word for “stubble”? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

How many times is it used in Exodus? _____ (See Search Results by Book.)

What is its definition? _____

Using the Concordance Results, look up the other verse in Exodus in which this word is used.

What do you think the Israelites may have had in mind when they sang this verse of the song?

DAY FOUR
DEVOTION

Read the following excerpt from **Charles Spurgeon's** sermon on Exodus 15, *Jubilate!* Spurgeon (1834-92) was a Baptist preacher in London, England. He has been called the "Prince of Preachers" because of his powerful sermons which were doctrinally rich, biblically deep, and oratorically beautiful.

THIS is the first song unto the Lord which is recorded in Holy Scripture. In Jacob's blessing of his children there are verses which may be regarded as songs, but they are mere fragments, and can scarcely be said to be sung unto the Lord. There are other couplets in the Book of Genesis, but this is the first connected song upon record. I should think that Abraham often sang unto the Lord, but we have no record of it. We can hardly doubt that Isaac had his quiet psalm, as Enoch had, and Noah and others who called upon the name of the Lord, but none of these hymns are left to us. This is the very first of those sacred songs preserved in Scripture, and in some respect it is first in merit as well as in time...

The song of Moses appears to have been chanted by an exceedingly great multitude. Miriam, the prophetess, took her timbrel and led the strain, all the daughters of Israel going forth with her with their timbrels and dances, and the whole multitude of the people taking up the strain. Never had the shores of the Red Sea, or any other sea, heard such a song. There were six hundred thousand men, beside women and children. What an assembly! What a choir! Though their voices were little tuned to music, yet as they lifted them up, each one throwing his whole strength into the strain, it must have sounded like the noise of many waters, especially when they repeated the refrain, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea."

We see in Revelation 15 that the Song of Moses, the servant of God and of the Lamb, will be sung toward the close of this dispensation when those who have gotten the victory over the beast and his image shall stand on

the sea of glass, having the harps of God. Before the last plagues shall be poured out upon the earth, and God shall overthrow the hosts of Antichrist once for all, then shall this song be heard, sung, not by the Israelite nation, but by that higher Israel who have escaped by the grace of God from the power of the spiritual Pharaoh, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. How sweetly they will together take up the song, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty."

It is obvious, then, from the plentiful allusions to this song in Holy Scripture, that it is full of deep spiritual significance. It teaches us not only to praise God concerning the literal overthrow of Egypt, but to praise Him concerning the overthrow of all the powers of evil, and the final deliverance of all the chosen. It is God's intent that from the day of Moses downward, even to the hour when flames of fire shall lick up the works of men, and the heavens themselves shall be dissolved that this shall be the song of the chosen people everywhere, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously." The first verse of this song was quoted by David... "The Lord is my strength and song and has become my salvation" (Ps. 118:14; cf. Isaiah 12:2)...

I. THE TIME OF THIS SONG

To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven; there is a time for the singing of birds, and there is a time for the singing of saints. "Then sang Moses." It was first of all at the moment of realized salvation. "The Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians..."

There was no singing in Egypt, sighing, crying, groaning, and lamenting abounded there. There was no singing that I know of even at the celebration of the paschal supper, on that dreadful night when they ate the lamb in haste with their loins girded, and their staves in their hands. Its first observance was upon a night almost too solemn for song. I do not read that they sang when they reached their first encampment, I doubt not that they sang snatches of songs when they found themselves free from their daily tasks and from the Egyptian rod. No doubt there were individual songs, but the masses did not unite in concerted music, they were too hurried and too much in fear of pursuit. No poet, as yet, had arisen to write a lyric in which all would join. The hour of their complete deliverance had not yet fully come. They marched on steadily, but they had hardly reached the time for timbrels. When they had crossed the sea and the waters thereof rolled between them and the house of their bondage, "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord."

Their previous lives had been one long-drawn sigh, or one discord of anguish and fear and woe, but when their slavery was altogether a thing of the past, then sang Moses. The depths have covered the Egyptian host, there is not one of them left, "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord." ...The battle is fought, and the victory is won, and "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord." How could they help it? Surely, "if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." What does that teach us, brothers and sisters, but that we cannot sing in the land of bondage while under the dominion of sin and Satan? How shall we sing the Lord's song in that strange land? ... But, oh, when we see that Christ has saved us, when we understand that he that believes in Him has everlasting life, then we

sing! When we learn that "He that believes is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses," and hear the Word of the Lord declaring, "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name," then we sing unto the Lord. Who could stop us? It would be unnatural for us to be silent after sin is put away. When we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son, the mute devil is cast out of us. "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord."

Our early days when we first saw how complete was the redemption of Christ, were days of constant praise, and I think today if we see afresh how perfect is the righteousness of Christ, how fully accepted is the great atonement, how secure is our standing by virtue of our union with the Son of God, we shall return to our music and make this house resound with grateful psalms. When we doubt our salvation we suspend our singing, but when we realize it, when we get a grip of it, when we see clearly the great work that God has done for us, then we sing unto the Lord who has for us also triumphed gloriously. I say again, how can we help singing? How can our joy of heart any longer be pent up? It must pour itself forth in floods of harmony, in tunes of realized salvation...

II. THE TONE OF THIS SONG

Note, first, that the tone is **enthusiastic**. There is not a dull line, there is not a dreary sentence, all through, it is full of force, life, power. It rises to a height of intense enthusiasm which cannot be excelled. The words are: *I will sing unto the Lord for He has triumphed gloriously*, and the singers endeavor to sing gloriously, too.

The tone is also **congregational**, being intended for every Israelite to join in it. Though

Moses began by saying, “I will sing unto the Lord,” yet Miriam concluded with, “Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.” This is a hymn for every child of God, for all that have come out of Egypt. Should not there be praise from every one of you? You in the back settlements, you that bear the mark of Egypt’s lash, and smart from wounds still unhealed, you that remember well the taskmaster, and the iron furnace, yet sing you unto the Lord. From Egypt lately come, sing you unto the Lord! There should be sent up unto God by His church a perfectly unanimous harmony of praise.

Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness! Let all the redeemed of the Lord say so! O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

Notice also how very distinctly **personal** it is. It is strikingly so. “I will sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The Lord is *my* strength and song, and He is become *my* salvation; He is *my* God, and I will prepare Him a habitation; *my* father’s God, and I will exalt Him.” Don’t lose yourself in the crowd. It is not egotism to resolve that if nobody else will sing, you will say with David, “I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live.” The fact is that unanimity cannot become fact if each mind is not active in praise. We cannot have a perfect accord unless each child of God makes his own distinct music melodious in the ears of the Most High.

I tell you, brethren, if you will not praise the Lord this day, I will. Do you not say the same? Does not each brother and sister here say, “If no others feel bound to gratitude, yet I have such reason for thanksgiving that I will praise the Lord while I have any being”? In my case the Lord has “triumphed gloriously,” and if others will not take Him to be their God, yet this God is my God forever and ever, He shall be my guide even unto death. I like the personality of this song, and would

urge you to follow it. Some of you cannot sing unto God because you have no personal enjoyment of grace from Him, and do not know God for yourselves. Oh, if this is your case, do not let the sun go down until you know this God, and so can offer your own personal song to Him...

And this song is exceedingly **comprehensive**. It sings of what God has done, and then of what God will do in bringing His people into the Promised Land; nor does it finish till it rises to that loftiest strain of all, “The Lord shall reign forever and ever!” I think I hear them repeating that verse again and again, “The Lord shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah!” Sing to the Lord, not only of the past, but of the present and the future. Sing of the Second Coming, sing of the glory to be revealed, sing of high heaven and the city that needs no candle, neither light of the sun. Sing of the victories of Christ when the armies of heaven shall ride forth on their white horses, and He shall lead them whose name is written on His thigh—King of kings, and Lord of lords. There is matter enough for eternal music if our hearts are right with God.

Note, too, all through, that this song is immeasurably **joyous**. The Israelites were slaves enjoying new liberty, children let out to play. How merrily did they disport themselves! They did not know how to be glad enough. Let us give to God our unlimited joy. David said, “God is my exceeding joy.” Believers ought to be unutterably happy. Men redeemed with the precious blood of Christ ought always to be almost too happy to live, men that are children of God, and heirs of the covenant, and are soon to be where Jesus is in the ineffable splendor of God’s light, ought to feel their soul overflowing with delight. The pulse of the believer should beat hallelujahs... Oh, if our minds could but rise into the heavens, where we ought to be, we should not only be happy as the days are long, but we should enjoy the days of heaven upon earth...

III. THE CONTENT OF THIS SONG

“The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation...” Notice the song is all of God. There is not a word about Moses. Read this song through, and neither Moses, nor Aaron, nor Miriam is in it, God is all in all; “I will sing unto Jehovah.” That is blessed praise when self lies with the Egyptians at the bottom of the sea, and when everything that is in us that is commendable is traced to the grace of God, and the Lord is magnified for it. Oh for the glorification of Jesus, and none but Jesus!

Brothers, we spoil our music by diverting our thoughts to man. Let us forget men, forget earth, forget time, forget self, forget this mortal life, and only think of our God. The song shall be all for You, O Lord, for You are all in all...

Observe, the song dwells upon **what God has done**, “The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.” There is nothing concerning the deeds of Moses and Aaron, or the pride of Pharaoh, or the craft of Jannes and Jambres. No, the whole is consecrated to the doings of the Lord. Let us trace all the mercies we get to our God... He has chosen us. He has redeemed us. He has called us. He has quickened us. He has preserved us. He has sanctified us. And He will perfect us in Christ Jesus. The glory is all the Lord’s. Let us sing of what He has done. When you read human history, read it to see the finger of God in it, trace all along through human story the silver line of covenant working, observe how the Lord casts the horse and his rider into the sea when they come out against Him or His people.

The song also declares **what the Lord will yet do**. It is not about what evil men are doing or what we are afraid will happen through their malice, but of what the Lord alone will do. He says, “You will surely bring them in.”

He pictures the whole affair finished, and Israel settled in the Promised Land, and this is His song. Come, brethren, let us sing the music of the future, the music of what God will do. Do you believe that the Lord will be defeated in the long run? Do you fear that at the end Jehovah’s everlasting purpose will fail—that Christ will have died in vain? Do you think the eternal truth promulgated in this book will be driven out of the earth by modern thought? Or that our old Christianity, for which our fathers bled, will become extinct? By no means. We shall conquer yet in the great name of Jehovah. Therefore let us take heart of hope to ourselves, and sing of what the Lord has done so often, for again and again, “The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.”

Take up the first note, “**The Lord is my strength.**” What a noble utterance! Poor Israel had no strength! She had cried out by reason of her sore bondage, making bricks without straw. Poor Israel was weakness itself! But Jehovah drew near in power. The Lord is my strength when I have no strength of my own... The Lord is our strength when we are at the extremity of weakness. The Lord was also Israel’s strength against strength. Pharaoh was exceedingly mighty. The kings of the earth trembled at the neighing of his warhorses, the rattling of his chariots made the very heavens resound, but God was more than a match for him. When strength comes out against God’s people, God meets it with His omnipotence. What is Pharaoh’s strength when matched against Jehovah’s might? A paper pellet thrown against a wall of brass. The enemy said, “I will pursue; I will overtake; I will divide the spoil,” and so on, but Jehovah had only to blow with His wind, and the sea covered them. Thus will the Lord be our strength when the mighty are against us. It is well to say, “The Lord is my strength” when we are weak and the enemy is strong, but we must mind that we say the same when

we are strong, and our enemies are routed. Suppose Israel had stood on the shore and cried, “The Egyptian power is broken by the sons of Jacob. Israel has cut Rahab and wounded the dragon.” Suppose the nation had boasted itself, it would have been guilty of a treasonable attempt upon God’s glory...

Let this, then, be our song when we are weak and our song when we are strong, “The Lord is my strength.” Note, the word is not, “The Lord gives me strength,” but “The Lord is my strength”! How strong is a believer? I say it with reverence, he is as strong as God! “The Lord is my strength!”

The next is, “**The Lord is my song,**” that is to say, the Lord is the giver of our songs, He breathes the music into the hearts of His people, He is the Creator of their joy. The Lord is also the subject of their songs, they sing of Him and of all that He does on their behalf. The Lord is, moreover, the object of their song, they sing unto the Lord. Their praise is meant for Him alone. They do not make melody for human ears, but unto the Lord... O God, You are my exceeding joy! Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, You are my hymn of everlasting delight!

“**He has become my salvation.**” The Father, in His eternal purpose is my salvation; the Son in His complete redemption is my salvation; no, not in His redemption only, but in His life, His death, His resurrection, His intercession,

His Second Coming, He has become my salvation. And the Holy Spirit indwelling in me, quickening me, instructing me, illuminating me, perfecting me, keeping me—He has become my salvation. Triune God, it is not alone that You do save me, but You are my salvation. I look for nothing but what is in You, and if You give Yourself to me, You have given me a perfect salvation, salvation from bondage, salvation from worldliness, salvation from death and hell, salvation into light, and liberty, and love, and joy, salvation that shall culminate in eternal glory. A full salvation is God to His people...

Let it be the business of our lives to magnify Him. Let us tell our friends that which will make the Lord appear more glorious in their estimation. Let us lay ourselves out, by pen, and tongue, and life, to make our Lord Jesus Christ more honorable among those who surround us. Say, “I must and will exalt Him. Perhaps I have groaned too much over my trials, perhaps I have been too depressed and heavy in spirit, but from this day I will exalt my Lord, and sound forth His praises. If He will permit me, I will make the glory of the Lord the one objective of my being.”

Come, you young men and maidens, you old men and fathers, let us praise the Lord on the high-sounding cymbals, and spend the rest of our days in crying, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!” Amen.

What thought from Charles Spurgeon’s words stands out to you the most? Why?

DAY FIVE
APPLICATION

Go back and re-read Exodus 15. Then take time to look over and reflect on the things that you learned from your Bible study this past week.

Write down one truth that impacted you from your study of Exodus 15.

Exodus 15 is the first praise song in Scripture. It is a reminder to us that a redeemed people should be a joyful people... a singing people... a praising people!

Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior? Yes No Unsure

If you have not trusted in Him...or if you are not sure...then acknowledge your sin and your need for Him, believe that He died on the cross for you and rose again, and then confess Him alone as your Savior and Lord. Like the Israelites at Passover, it is by applying the blood of the Lamb (Jesus) to the doorposts of your heart that you are saved from God’s judgment and given new life.

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)

If you know Jesus as Savior, have you lost the joy of your salvation? Yes No

When is the last time that you sang with joy to Him? _____

If you have not sung with joy to Him recently, then why not? _____

Even in difficulty, we can choose to focus on the goodness of the Lord. We can choose to trust in His lovingkindness. We can choose to ask God to put a song in our hearts. We can choose to sing.

*Rejoice always;
pray without ceasing;
in everything give thanks;
for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)*

Write a praise song to God using an acrostic structure. Many of the psalms are written this way as each letter can be a prompt to remember God’s goodness in your life. Begin each line of praise with a word beginning with the letter listed. (Note: Some letters are skipped to make it easier.)

A _____
B _____
C _____
D _____
E _____
F _____
G _____
H _____
I _____
J _____
K _____
L _____
M _____
N _____
O _____
P _____
R _____
S _____
T _____
U _____
W _____
Y _____

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

*I pray, O God, that I may know
Thee, that I may love Thee,
so that I may rejoice in Thee.
And if I cannot do this to the full in
this life, at least let me go forward
from day to day until that joy
comes to fullness.*

Anselm (1033-1109)

*The happiness of the creature
consists in rejoicing in God,
by which also God is magnified
and exalted.*

Jonathan Edwards

*Christianity is a divine project
of replacing inferior joys
in inferior objects with
superior joys in God Himself.*

John Piper

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- What is one of your favorite worship songs? Why do you enjoy this song so much?
- What word, verse, or thought stands out to you as you read Exodus 15:1-21? Why?
- Why do you think we have a tendency to want to sing and dance when we are joyful? What could it say about us if we have lost interest in singing or dancing?
- What truths about God do you learn from this song? Which truth means the most to you at this point in your life?
- Discuss these words: *The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation.* What do you think this means? Is this your own testimony of faith?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of Charles Spurgeon? If so, what?
- Share your own praise song with the group (if you were able to write one). Then end your time by singing a praise song that everyone knows together.

GRUMBLING IN THE WILDERNESS

Exodus 15:22-27

DAY ONE

OBSERVATION

Israel experienced one of the greatest miracles in history. They walked through the Red Sea! They saw God's great power and deliverance! They sang a song of praise to Him! But three days later, things changed.

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 15:22-27. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.

So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. ²³ Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. ²⁴ And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" ²⁵ So he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet.

There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, ²⁶ and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you."

²⁷ Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters. (NKJV)

What thought or verse stands out to you in Exodus 15:22-27? Why?

What problem did the Israelites face? (15:22) _____

What did they find at Marah? (15:23) _____

How did they respond? (15:24) _____

What did Moses do? (15:25) _____

How is the problem solved? (15:25) _____

What do they learn about God from this event? (15:26) _____

What do they find at Elim? (15:27) _____

DAY TWO
MEDITATION

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Exodus 15:25b-26 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*The Lord made a statute and ordinance for them at Marah,
and He tested them there.*

He said,

*“If you will carefully obey the Lord your God,
do what is right in His sight,
pay attention to His commands,
and keep all His statutes,
I will not inflict any illnesses on you that I inflicted on the Egyptians.
For I am the Lord who heals you.” (CSB)*

Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE
INTERPRETATION

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to blueletterbible.org and type "Exodus 15" into the "Search the Bible" box. Click on Exodus 15:24 to bring up the verse in the Hebrew. Find the verb "murmured" and click on the Strong's number (H3885) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the Old Testament.

What is the Hebrew verb for "murmured"? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? (Note especially Strong's Definitions and (2) in Gesenius' Lexicon.)

Next go to Exodus 15:26 on blueletterbible.org. Find the verb "heal" and click on the Strong's number (H7495) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the OT.

What is the Hebrew verb for "heal"? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? _____

Read the following verses which use this Hebrew word. Mark key phrases as you read.

I said, "Lord, have mercy on me.

***Heal** my soul, for I have sinned against You."* (Psalm 41:4)

*He is the One who **heals** the brokenhearted*

And who binds up their wounds. (Psalm 147:3)

*"I have seen their ways, but I will **heal** them;*

I will guide them and restore comfort to Israel's mourners,

Creating praise on their lips.

Peace, peace, to those far and near,"

*Says the Lord. "And I will **heal** them."* (Isaiah 57:18-19)

This word can refer to physical healing but what other kind of healing do we often need?

DAY FOUR
DEVOTION

Read the following excerpt from **Charles Spurgeon's** sermon, *Marah Better Than Elim*. Spurgeon (1834-92) was a Baptist preacher in London, England. He has been called the "Prince of Preachers" because of his powerful sermons which were doctrinally rich, biblically deep, and oratorically beautiful.

AFTER I had fallen down at Mentone, and was grievously ill, a brother in Christ called upon me and said, "My dear friend, you have now come to Marah." I replied, "Yes, and the waters are bitter." He then said, "But Marah is better than Elim, for in Elim the Israelites only drank of the water and ate of the fruit of the palm trees, and that was soon over. But at Marah we read that God, *made for them a statute and an ordinance*, and that was never over. That statute and ordinance stood fast and will stand fast for Israel as long as they are a nation. There is much more benefit to be reaped from Marah than from Elim."

I thanked my friend for that good word. I had found it true before. I have found it true since then, and you and I, if we are indeed the people of God, will find it true to the end, that Marah, though it be bitter, is also better. And albeit that we do not like it, yet in the end there shall be no bitterness in it, but an unutterable sweetness which shall be ours through time and eternity.

We have a long record about Marah, have we not? I have read you four verses concerning Marah. How many verses have we about Elim? Only one. Does Marah deserve to be talked about four times as much as Elim? Perhaps it does. Perhaps there is four times as much fruit to be obtained from the bitter waters of Marah than from the twelve springs of water, and seventy palm trees at Elim. Who knows? This I know, however, that we are very apt to talk more about our bitters than about our sweets—and that is a serious fault. It were well if we had fewer murmuring words for our sorrows and more songs of thanksgiving for our blessings. Yet Holy Writ seems here to speak after the manner of men, and to let us have the four verses for the trial, and the one verse for the delight. Still, as it speaks also after the manner of God, I gather that Marah is, after all, more

noteworthy than Elim, and truly, there does come to God's people something better out of their troubles than out of their joys.

Certainly, one thing is clear, Israel had no miracle at Elim. Wells and palm trees they had, but they had no miracle there, no miraculous change of the bitter into the sweet. And they had no statute, and no ordinance, and no promise, and no new revelation of God, and no new name for JEHOVAH there. All that belonged to Marah, *for there he made them a statute and an ordinance*.

And there He promised, if they were faithful and obedient, that He would put none of the diseases of Egypt upon them, and there He revealed Himself as JEHOVAH Rophi, "the LORD that healeth thee." Oh, yes, there are many virtues and many blessings in the bitter waters of Marah! Often have we found it true that "Sweet are the uses of adversity."

I hope that nobody here thinks that these Israelites experienced a small trial. We are not accustomed to traveling in the desert, but those who are, tell us that thirst in the wilderness is something awful to endure. For all that great host to go three days without water must have been a very trying experience. You would not like to try that even in this country, but what must it be to go three days in the wilderness, beneath a burning sky, without a drop of water to drink? Then came the bitter disappointment at Marah. Probably the people knew that there were water springs ahead, so they hurried up to the place to drink, but when they stooped to taste the waters, they found that they were bitter. They could not drink of them and there they stood, in their desperation, with the long thirst parching their throats and bitter disappointment adding to their agony. And they murmured against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"

I say not this to excuse them, but lest you should think that they had only a small trial to bear. Remember, also, that this was a new form of trial. They never lacked for water in Egypt—there were plenty of rivers and canals there—and they could drink as much as they chose. This was an experience to which they were quite unaccustomed and I should not wonder if they were greatly surprised at it, for they knew that they were the people of God. They had just seen the Lord divide the Red Sea and drown their enemies—and now He has brought them out of Egypt to let them perish of thirst in the wilderness? They fancied that they were going to have one long triumphant march right into the promised land, or to be always dandled upon the lap of Providence, and indulged in every way, like spoiled children. They must have stood aghast at finding that, when the earth yielded water to slake their thirst, it was such water as they could not drink.

Well, now, this kind of surprise happens to many who have set out on the way to heaven. God has been very gracious to them—their sins are washed away and they think that the great joy which they have lately experienced will never be taken away from them and will never be even diminished. They reckon upon a long day without a cloud. God has favored them so much that they cannot imagine that they shall have any trial or any bitterness.

It is not so, beloved. A Christian man is seldom long at ease, no sooner does he start out on pilgrimage to heaven than he meets with difficulty, and as he goes on he finds out that the way to heaven is not a rolled pathway—it is up hill and down dale—through the mire and through the slough, over mount and through the sea. It is by their trials and afflictions that the people of God are proved to be His children. This experience was a great gain to Israel. Marah, with all its trials, was no loss to them.

I. They gained much by EXAMINATION.

It was to that end that they were brought there, that they might be examined by the Lord—

There he tested them. Speaking of Israel at Marah, they were in a **new position**. They were no longer slaves, they were not in Egyptian territory, the Red Sea rolled between them and their former lives and their former masters. But it is evident from their conduct that they were not altogether a new people. They had brought a great deal of evil out of Egypt with them.

When you heard them sing, you said, “It is strange that those poor slaves can sing such a jubilant song. Those women, so accustomed to carry heavy burdens of earth, how merrily they dance! How joyfully they strike the timbrels! Israel has certainly become a new race. What a grand choir they make! What singing is theirs! Who would have dreamt that those who cried by reason of their taskmasters would ever sing like that?” Yes, but when they were tried and tested, it was found that the old stuff was in them still—they murmured just as they had often done before when, in the land of Egypt, they had blamed Moses because their burdens were increased.

We, too, have entered quite a new state. Some of you, perhaps, have lately become new creatures in Christ Jesus. Between you and your old sins there rolls a deep, impassable sea—you will never go back to them again. Ah, but do not begin to flatter yourselves that you have left behind you all your old selves! There remains still, even in the regenerate, the old lusts of the flesh. They have had their heads broken, but they still live... You must not marvel, if, when you are tried and proved, you find that you are like these Israelites at Marah.

Notice, next, that the trial to which Israel was subjected was the **Lord’s own test**, which is searching and accurate—*He proved them.*

We sit down and practice self-examination, which is a very proper thing. Beware, I pray you, of a faith that will not stand self-examination. If you dare not look into your own heart, it must be because there is something rotten there. The tradesman who is afraid to inspect his books, or examine his stock, is going to the

bad, rest assured of that. We are bound to examine ourselves very carefully, but after all, our examinations are very superficial, very partial, and we are very apt to make a mistake.

In the case of Israel, the Lord proved them by that thirst in the wilderness, and that great agony on finding that the water they looked for was undrinkable. "He proved them." The Lord may be bringing some of you into deep waters and great trials, because He is proving you. When He sits as a Refiner of silver, believe me, it is no child's play to be in the crucible.

The Lord took Israel to those waters on purpose to prove them. Have you never prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts"? The Lord may answer you in a way of which you little dream—He may conduct you to some waters of Marah that He may test you and prove you...

They seemed full of faith at the Red Sea, did they not? Many dancers, but no doubters. Many singers, but no unbelievers. Yet the whole company had not more than a pennyworth of faith amongst them... Now their cry is, "What shall we drink?" And they murmured against Moses.

Theirs was a cupboard love, like yours and mine often is. They loved God very much for what they got out of Him... If He would divide the Red Sea for them, then He would be their God... But if He let them suffer the pangs of thirst, there should be no blessings for Him on their lips.

Ah, me! how like ourselves were these people! When we test ourselves, we say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." And I hope that that is correct. But when the Lord proves us, and we are very sharply tested, we are apt to say, "Nobody was ever tried as we are, nobody ever had the peculiar difficulties that surround us." And then we begin murmuring. When we are thinking of how much we love God, it might be more profitable to consider how very little we really love Him after all.

II. They gained much by EXPERIENCE.

First, they learned that **the wilderness was the same to them as it was to other people**. It is good that young converts know that this world is an evil world even to the man who is saved by grace. You are new, but the world is not. You love holiness, but the world neither loves you nor loves holiness. You are in a wilderness—you are in the enemy's country—you have not yet come into your rest. If you have not learnt this fact yet, you will have to learn it.

They were to learn, next, that **they were wholly dependent upon God**. When they stood at the brink of the Red Sea, they saw that they were so, and that only God could lead them through the sea. But after that, they were just as dependent. They could not live longer without water, they must perish of thirst unless God supplied them. It is a blessed lesson for us to learn that we are entirely dependent upon God for all things, but especially for spiritual things. You will not pray unless He gives you the Spirit of supplication. You will have no tenderness of heart unless He works repentance in you. You will have no more faith unless faith is constantly bestowed by God... We depend upon God every instant as much as we did at first, and all our old experience, all that we have learned, and known, and taught, will stand us in no stead whatever unless we continue perpetually to receive from God. That was the lesson Israel had to learn.

They also learned that **God and God alone would provide**. They might have to go very short of supplies at times and they might have a long thirst, but the Lord would not let one of them die of thirst. There is no record that even the tiniest babe in the camp, or even a sheep or goat in that mighty throng, perished for lack of water. God did provide.

He does not promise that there shall always be a dinner ready when the dinner bell rings. You have not such an appetite as you would afterwards have if you waited another hour, and sometimes the Lord may keep you waiting for

His supplies that you may enjoy them all the better when they do come. He never is before His time, but He never is behind His time, though He may be behind your time. God will provide.

The Israelites were also to learn, in the next place, that **God could make their bitter into sweets**, and He could do that in a very simple way. But He could do it—and He could bring good out of evil, and satisfy them by that which formerly nauseated them. Have you learned that lesson yet? Some of you people of God, when you get bitter waters, want to throw them away. Do not throw a drop of it away, for that is the water you have yet to drink. Accept your afflictions. They are a part of your education. Accept your afflictions.

III. They gained much by EDUCATION.

The Lord was not going to lead a mob of slaves into Canaan to go and behave like slaves there. They had to be tutored. The wilderness was the Oxford and Cambridge for God's students. There they went to the University, and He taught and trained them, and they took their degree before they entered into the promised land. There is no University for a Christian like that of sorrow and trial. Now the Israelites were educated by Marah.

First, they learned **self-distrust**. How could they ever trust themselves again when, three days after singing that jubilant song, they caught themselves murmuring against Moses? If they had been intelligent, as they were not, they would each one have said to his fellow, "Behold the boastfulness of our evil hearts." What a terrible drop it is from "I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously!" to "What shall we drink?" That is just how you and I come down when we are left to ourselves.

Next, they learned, as I have told you before, **daily dependence**. They learned that they must depend upon God even for a drop of water. That is the dependence of a Christian man. He has nothing and he can do nothing without his God.

We have no bread, no water, no anything, except as God shall give it to us. A blessed lesson was this for Israel. They were educated well at Marah.

Next, they learned the **power of prayer**. Will you fix your eyes upon verses 24-25? "And the people murmured against Moses, saying, *What shall we drink?* And he cried unto the LORD." Moses did not answer them. He did not upbraid them. He did not, even, begin to argue with them. But he cried unto the Lord and thus the people learned the power of prayer.

At Marah the Israelites began to learn **their separateness from Egypt**. The Egyptians never drank these bitter waters, but the Egyptians had foul diseases and terrible plagues. Now, the Lord tell His people that He will not put upon them any of the diseases of Egypt. God turned the rivers of Egypt into blood, but here He turns the bitter waters into fresh streams. His miracles were for Israel and against Egypt—and they began to clearly perceive that they had nothing to do with the Egyptians. They were a separated people.

It is a valuable piece of education for a young Christian to find out that he does not belong to the world. The tendency is to think that, though you are in the church, you can be in the world, too, and that you belong, in a measure, to both. That will never do. The Lord means to fetch His people right out of the world—and He will have them out.

Israel had next to learn the **position of obedience**. Will you kindly notice this? God did not say, "Do this and I will bring you out of Egypt." No, but after He brought them out, He said, "Hearken to my commandments, and keep my statutes." Salvation comes first and then obedience. Saved first, brought through the Red Sea with the high hand of God's gracious power, and after that, become His obedient people. Obedience follows after redemption and deliverance. First the blood of sprinkling on the doorposts and after that,

you shall give ear unto the voice of the Lord your God and diligently hearken to Him.

Israel also learned the **nature of obedience**. Obedience does not merely do what it knows it should do, but it finds out what it ought to do. Oh, you Christian people, do you make a practice of reading God’s Word to see what He would have you do? I am afraid that there are some who make a point of not seeing some of the duties which are not pleasing to them. There are some who half shun portions of Scripture because they would trouble their consciences. Let it not be so with any of us, but let us listen diligently to the voice of the Lord our God. If you are saved, the kind of obedience that you are bound to render is that of a willing heart, which cries like Saul, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

Then, Israel learned the **promise made to obedience**—“If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the

Egyptians.” For you there shall be no plagues.

God may try you, yet it will be not in anger, but in His dear covenant love. Everything shall be changed for you. If sickness comes, it shall be overruled for your spiritual health. When death comes, it shall only introduce you to eternal life. The Lord will be very gracious to you. He that forgives our sins also heals all our diseases. His name is JEHOVAH Rophi.

What an education it is for us when we feel that the God that healed the waters heals us and heals everything that has to do with us—changes the aspect of all things about us, takes the sting out of the wasp, and turns it into a bee, takes away the venom from the serpent, and gives us its wisdom, that we may be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves!

Oh, the wonderful cure-alls of God, the heavenly medicine of the cross, the universal remedy of a dying Savior! May our experience educate us in the knowledge of that gracious healing!

What thought from Charles Spurgeon’s words stands out to you the most? Why?

DAY FIVE
APPLICATION

Go back and re-read Exodus 15:22-27. Take time to look over and reflect on the things that you learned from your Bible study this past week.

Write down one truth that impacted you from your study of Exodus 15.

It is so easy to complain, isn't it? Most of the time we do not see complaining as a big deal. Yes, we know that we shouldn't complain but, after all, everyone does it. It is a minor fault at worst. But God has a different view of complaining. **Read the following verses.**

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron: "How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites. So tell them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Lord, I will do to you the very thing I heard you say: In this wilderness your bodies will fall—every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me. Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. (Numbers 14:26-30)

Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry." We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. (1 Corinthians 10:6-10)

Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world. (Philippians 2:14-15)

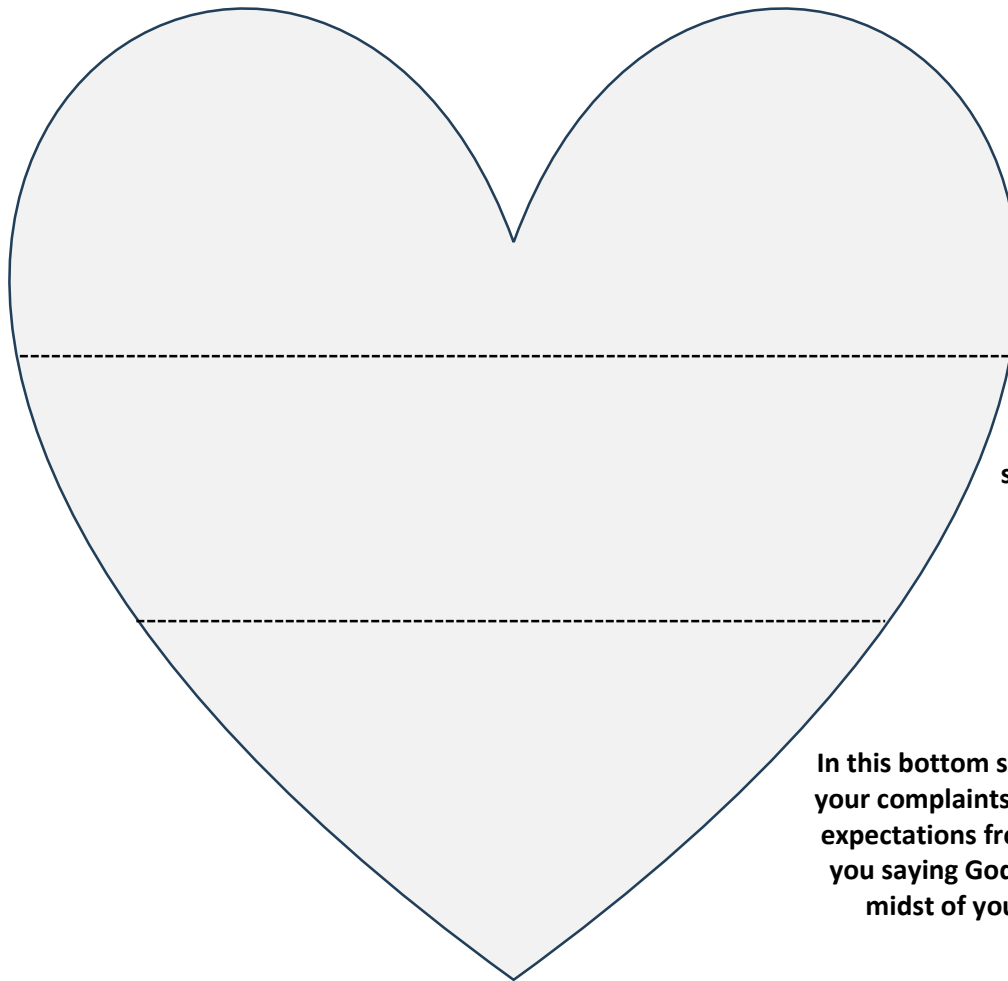
What does God think about our grumbling and our complaining?

What is behind our grumbling and complaining? What does it reveal about our hearts?

What does Philippians 2 say will happen if we learn to live without grumbling and disputing?

God brought Israel to Marah to test their hearts. Though they sang praises to God at the Red Sea, God knew that their faith and love were superficial at best. He needed to expose their hearts.

Evaluate your heart. What do you tend to complain about? Why? What thoughts or expectations do you have underneath your complaints? What deeper beliefs feed your complaints?



In this top section, list the things that you tend to complain about.

In this middle section, write what your complaints reveal about what you expect in life.

In this bottom section, write what your complaints reveal about your expectations from God. What are you saying God should do in the midst of your complaints?

In Exodus 15, the antidote to Israel’s complaining was found in a tree. Moses took this tree (or a branch from this tree) and threw it into the water, turning what was bitter into something sweet.

There is a greater application of this passage for the NT believer in Jesus Christ. When we face the bitterness of this world, we need God to show us the “tree” on which Jesus died. Just as God turned the bitterness of the cross into the sweetness of salvation, He can also turn our bitter experiences into something sweet if we are willing to look to the cross.

Draw a cross in the heart above. How can the cross turn your complaints into something sweet?

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

When ye murmur under afflictive dispensations, this is a presuming to instruct God how to deal with you, and to reprove Him as if He were in the wrong. Yea, there is a kind of implicit blasphemy in it, as if you had more wisdom and justice to dispose of your lot, and to carve out your own portion in the world.

Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

An unthankful and complaining spirit is an abiding sin against God, and a cause of almost continual unhappiness; and yet how common such a spirit is.

John Broadus (1827-95)

He who complains of the weather, complains of the God who ordained the weather!

William Law (1686-1761)

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- Over what do you tend to complain the most? Traffic? The weather? Politics? Your job? Other people's behavior? Your aches and pains? Technology frustrations? Why does this bother you so much? What are you expecting or demanding?
- What word, verse, or thought stands out to you as you read Exodus 15:22-27? Why?
- Imagine the scene of a large group of people, greatly thirsty and tired, coming to a source of water only to find that it is undrinkable. How do you imagine that scene?
- God tested them at Marah. What does complaining expose about our hearts?
- Why do you think God says what He says in verse 26? How does this relate to the situation at Marah?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of Charles Spurgeon? If so, what?
- The only way to stop complaining is to start giving thanks and trusting God in the midst of your circumstances. Share what you are thankful for today. Praise God for these blessings!

RECEIVING DAILY BREAD

Exodus 16

DAY ONE OBSERVATION

A month has passed since Israel left Egypt. In those thirty days, they have seen the parting of the Red Sea, sang praises to God, and complained about lack of water. Now they face another problem—lack of food.

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 16. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.

They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. ² And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, ³ and the people of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not. ⁵ On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.” ⁶ So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, “At evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, ⁷ and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against the Lord. For what are we, that you grumble against us?” ⁸ And Moses said, “When the Lord gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the Lord has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him—what are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the Lord.”

⁹ Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, ‘Come near before the Lord, for he has heard your grumbling.’” ¹⁰ And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. ¹¹ And the Lord said to Moses, ¹² “I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.’”

¹³ In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. ¹⁴ And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. ¹⁵ When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat. ¹⁶ This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.’” ¹⁷ And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. ¹⁸ But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever

gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat. ¹⁹ And Moses said to them, “Let no one leave any of it over till the morning.” ²⁰ But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. ²¹ Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

²² On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers each. And when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, ²³ he said to them, “This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.’” ²⁴ So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them, and it did not stink, and there were no worms in it. ²⁵ Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field. ²⁶ Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none.”

²⁷ On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. ²⁸ And the Lord said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws? ²⁹ See! The Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day.” ³⁰ So the people rested on the seventh day.

³¹ Now the house of Israel called its name manna. It was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. ³² Moses said, “This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Let an omer of it be kept throughout your generations, so that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.’” ³³ And Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the Lord to be kept throughout your generations.” ³⁴ As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the testimony to be kept. ³⁵ The people of Israel ate the manna forty years, till they came to a habitable land. They ate the manna till they came to the border of the land of Canaan. ³⁶ (An omer is the tenth part of an ephah.) (ESV)

What thought or verse stands out to you in Exodus 16? Why?

Using different highlighters or colored pencils (or markings), highlight the following words:

- “Grumble” or “grumbling” in yellow or with a box.
- “Morning” and “evening” in blue or with a circle.
- All phrases that indicate purpose “that you shall know” in green or underline.

How many people grumbled? (16:2) _____

Whom did they grumble against? (16:2) _____

Whom did they really grumble against? (16:8) _____

What did the people say in the midst of their grumbling? (16:3)

How is manna described? (16:14, 31)



What do the people say when they see it? (16:15)

How often was the manna provided? (16:21) _____

How much were they to gather? (16:18) _____

What happened if they kept it overnight? (16:20) _____

What made it special on the 7th day? (16:24) _____

What were the people to do on the 7th day? (16:23) _____

In what ways was manna prepared? (16:23) _____

How long did they eat manna? (16:35) _____

What truths do you think that the people were to learn through this daily provision of manna?

DAY TWO
MEDITATION

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Exodus 16:12-15 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

“I have heard the complaints of the Israelites. Tell them:

*At twilight you will eat meat,
and in the morning you will eat bread until you are full.
Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.”*

So at evening quail came and covered the camp.

In the morning there was a layer of dew all around the camp.

*When the layer of dew evaporated,
there were fine flakes on the desert surface, as fine as frost on the ground.
When the Israelites saw it, they asked one another, “What is it?”
because they didn’t know what it was.*

Moses told them, “It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat.” (CSB)

Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE
INTERPRETATION

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to blueletterbible.org and type "Exodus 16" into the "Search the Bible" box. Click on Exodus 16:31 to bring up the verse in the Hebrew. Find the word "manna" and click on the Strong's number (H4478) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the Old Testament.

What is the Hebrew word for "manna"? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? (Note especially Strong's.) _____

God's provision of manna to the people of Israel in the wilderness teaches many valuable truths.

Read the following passages that refer to manna. Mark key words and phrases as you read.

*"Carefully follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase, and may enter and take possession of the land the Lord swore to your ancestors. Remember that the Lord your God led you on the entire journey these forty years in the wilderness, so that he might humble you and test you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you by letting you go hungry; then he gave you **manna** to eat, which you and your ancestors had not known, so that you might learn that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."* (Deuteronomy 8:1-3)

*And in their heart they put God to the test
By asking for food according to their desire.
Then they spoke against God;
They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?
Behold, He struck the rock so that waters gushed out,
And streams were overflowing;
Can He give bread also?
Will He prepare meat for His people?"*

*Therefore Yahweh heard and was full of wrath;
And a fire was kindled against Jacob
And anger also mounted against Israel,
Because they did not believe in God
And did not trust in His salvation.
Yet He commanded the skies above
And opened the doors of heaven;
He rained down **manna** upon them to eat
And gave them grain from heaven.
Man ate the bread of angels;
He sent them provision to satisfy. (Psalm 78:17-25)*

Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, set His seal."

Therefore they said to Him, "What should we do, so that we may work the works of God?"

Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

*So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform? Our fathers ate the **manna** in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"*

Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, Moses has not given you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread."

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will never hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. Now this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

*Jesus answered and said to them, "Stop grumbling among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the **manna** in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and also the bread which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."
(John 6:26-51)*

Write down 3-5 truths that you learn about manna from these Bible passages.

DAY FOUR
DEVOTION

Read the following excerpt from **Charles Spurgeon's** sermon, *Lessons from the Manna*. Spurgeon (1834-92) was a Baptist preacher in London, England. He has been called the "Prince of Preachers" because of his powerful sermons which were doctrinally rich, biblically deep, and oratorically beautiful.

IT seems to us that it must have been a very difficult thing to supply food for the hundreds of thousands, I shall not be incorrect if I say the millions who were in the wilderness. But difficult as that was, the commissariat was not so difficult as the education. To train that mob of slaves into a nation under discipline, to lift up those who had been in bondage, and make them fit to enjoy national privileges—this was the Herculean task that Moses had to perform. Their God, who loved the children of Israel and chose them, and determined to make them a peculiar people unto Himself, undertook to teach them, and He used their food as part of the means of their education.

I. HOW THE LORD TAUGHT THESE PEOPLE BY HIS GIFT

He wanted them to know Him. His great desire was that they should know JEHOVAH their God. If they knew God, they would know all else, for after all, "the proper study of mankind" is God. When man knows God, he knows himself. But if he thinks that he knows himself while he knows not his God, he is greatly mistaken. God desired, then, to teach them Himself by the gift of the manna.

He taught them, first, **His care over them**, that He was their God, and that they were His people, and that He would lay Himself out to provide for them. Think of the care that God had over them, over each one of them, for each man had his own omer of manna. No woman, no child was forgotten. Every morning there was sufficient quantity for every man, according to his eating for that day. There was no more and there was never any less, so carefully did God watch over each individual.

The individuality of the divine love is a great part of the sweetness of it. God thinks of every separate child of His as much as if He had only that one. The multiplicity of His elect does not divide the loaf of His affection. He has an infinite affection for each one and He will take care of the details of each chosen life. He will see your omer filled, precisely, to an ounce. He will give you all you can possibly require, but He will give you nothing that you can lay by to minister to your pride.

And this care was shown every day. The Lord taught them the continuity of His remembrance by its coming every day. If He had sent one great rain of liberalities to refresh His inheritance, and had bidden them gather up the vast store and carry it with them in all their journeyings, they could not so well have learned His care as when He sent it fresh every morning. Besides, they would have had the burden of carrying it and they were free from that, for the heavenly supplies were always close at hand exactly at the spot where they pitched their tents and tarried. Every morning, there was the manna precisely where they needed it...

The Lord teaches you and me in the same way, that He not only cares for each one, but cares for each one each day and each moment, tracking our footsteps, and meting out the full supply of the hour according as the peculiar necessity arises. "He is always thoughtful, always thoughtful of me," you may say of your Lord... Was not that a sweet lesson for the children of Israel to learn as they gathered their daily bread?

JEHOVAH taught them, next, **His greatness**. He had taught them that in Egypt by His

mighty plagues and at the Red Sea, when He branded the breast of the waters with His mighty rod. But now He gently taught them His greatness, His exceeding greatness, first, by the quantity of the manna. There was enough for them all. How much it required, I leave arithmeticians to calculate—I cannot go into that question tonight. But remember, that quantity fell every morning for forty years. What a great God is He who could feed the canvas city of His chosen people for forty years at a stretch and yet without His stores being ever drained!

His greatness was also seen by the mode in which He fed these myriads. Usually our bread springs up from the soil, but these people were in a waste howling wilderness. Wonder of wonders, their bread came down from the sky! Shall men live on air? Will you sustain a population on mist, and cloud, and dew? Yet out of a seeming vacuum came a constant plenty. Every morning the earth was covered with the heaped-up food of all that multitude and they had nothing to do but to go out and gather it... The heavens supply what the earth denies. Behold, the greatness of your God, you who are fed by His care!

Next, they learned **His liberality combined with His greatness**, for everyday they were fed, but not fed as Joseph supplied the people in Egypt, when he took from them all their stores to buy the corn, and at last took themselves to be bondsmen unto Pharaoh, and their lands to be Pharaoh's, that they might live. No, there was never a pretense of paying for that daily bread. The richest man had his omer filled, but he paid not a penny for it. And the poorest man had his omer just as full at the same price. There was nothing to pay—no manna-tax was ever exacted of the Israelite's hand. Oh, the liberality of God! ...

The children of Israel also learned **God's immutability**, for they had been fed with manna

all through the wilderness. Some old man may have said, "I remember going out the first time to gather my omer. I was astonished at it. My neighbors kept calling out, 'Man-hu? Man-hu? Man-hu?'" We were all wonderstruck... And now," said he, "I have been out all these years... It has always been just as white, and just as round, and just as plentiful, and just as near my tent as at the first. I used to live over on the left side of the camp and I moved to the right, but I always found that the manna was equally plentiful in every direction wherever I went. And it is so now," the old man would say, "it is so now and it is just as sweet, and just as plentiful, and just as freely to be had for nothing by every man who chooses to go out and gather it. Blessed be God, He changes not and therefore we sons of Jacob are not consumed! If He had changed, the manna would have failed us and we would have been consumed with hunger."

Do you not think, beloved, that from this gift the children of Israel also learned **God's wisdom**? If they were not sensible enough to know it, He had given them the best food that He could give them. In that hot climate, if they had eaten meat continually, they would often have been ill. When the Lord did allow them quail in answer to their cravings, while the meat was yet in their mouths they were taken with deadly sickness. It was unwholesome for them to have meat—this manna from on high was the best thing for people living in tents, journeying from place to place, over a burning sand beneath a scorching sky. The Lord had adapted the food to the people, yet they said, "Our soul loatheth this light bread." The very name they gave to it showed that it was just the right sort of food for them, easy of digestion. God had adapted their food to their position in the wilderness—no doctor could have drawn up a dietary table that was equal in wisdom to the one prepared by God for His people while they were in that condition...

II. HOW THE LORD TAUGHT THESE PEOPLE BY MAKING THIS MANNA A TEST TO THEM

Their position was, in many respects, a very pleasant one. They had not to work for daily bread—they had only to go out and gather it. There it was, but here is the point for us to observe. It was given every day—they never had any store. A man who gathered manna for twenty years might say, in language that I have often heard, “I ain’t a bit forwarder, I am just where I was twenty years ago,” as if it were not getting forwarder to be twenty years older and to have had twenty years of mercy.

Yet there was no store of manna—all up and down the wilderness there was not a single bank in which people could put their money, there was no such thing as a dividend to be received by anybody, and nobody could be laying up anything. Each Israelite had what he wanted for the day—he kept on having just so much and no more, and this was a test. Could he endure that test?

And then, again, as there was no store for the whole of them, and they did not get any richer, so there was no opportunity for greed, for it was given to every man. He who thrust out his two hands to rake up the manna, when he returned to his tent, had an omer for himself, and his wife, and his eight children, but he had not any more. He thought the next day, perhaps, that he would sweep away... and get an extra quantity—but when he examined it, he had exactly as much as he and his family could eat and no more. The rest was all gone, evaporated, and nothing was left over and above what he needed. And his poor palsied neighbor, who could only get a little together in his basin with his hand found that, somehow, he had enough, for God made it to grow in the basin. And when he looked at it, there was just enough for the day’s supply.

“Oh!” says one, “I would like that.” Well, I agree with you. I should like that. How long would you like it? I dare say, about as long as these Israelites did, and you would begin grumbling just as they did.

Here was God’s test of them—every day and no store—every man and no greed. It is so with grace— God gives us as much grace as we want, but there is nobody here who has any grace laid up.

Oh, yes, I heard one person say that she had so much grace that she had not sinned for months. Ugh! I thought I smelt something. I did not say anything, but I remembered what manna does when it is kept, and there I left the subject. I hope none of you think that you have more grace than you need because you have not. You have as much grace as will last you through today, but you will need as much as that tomorrow morning, if not more. Oh, yes, I know that you have an iron safe, and you go and rattle your keys, and you say, “Look here. I have grace enough locked up for the next six weeks.”

Go again and you will be glad to run away from the stench, for you will find that you have locked up so much pride, and nothing else. We do not want dying grace till we come to die. Be satisfied to have living grace while you live... This gift of the manna, every day for every man, was a test by which the Lord taught the children of Israel...

The grandest life is a life of dependence upon God, for that is true independence. If you wholly depend upon God, then you have risen to independence. He who has nothing but what God gives him day by day has a competence. He is the man who has saved most who has least, for he is saved from the worry of taking care of it. If he is still dependent upon God’s providence, and faith can keep her hold, he is the best off man after all.

III. THE LORD TEACHES US BY THIS MANNA AS TO TEMPORAL THINGS

He teaches us that **our supplies depend upon Him**. Where did all the manna come from? It all came from God. Child of God, all your supplies must come from God. Whatever the secondary causes, all you have will come from God.

Learn, next, that **our supplies are sure to faith**. If the manna did not fail for forty years, neither will the Lord fail to supply your needs... “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” He who carves for himself will cut his fingers and get an empty plate, but he who waits for the great Host of all the chosen family to carve for him shall have enough and that of the best. “My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

But learn that **our supplies will have to be gathered and prepared by ourselves**. God sent the manna from heaven, but the people had to go out every morning and get it—and when they had gathered it, they used to grind it in mills, bake it in pans, and make it into cakes. God is not the patron of idleness. He will have His people work and His rule is, “If any man will not work, neither shall he eat.”

And **our supplies ought to content us**, for the children of Israel had enough for all their

needs. They had no superfluities, but they had all-sufficiency. They had no luxuries, but yet, if they chose to think so, their daily mercies became luxuries to them. Oh, that God might teach us to trust Him as to temporals!

IV. THE LORD TEACHES US BY THIS MANNA AS TO SPIRITUAL FOOD

Every day you and I ought to go forth and find food for our spiritual life... If you have spiritual life, you must feed it, and God will give you manna from heaven, that is, Christ Himself with which to feed your soul. He is that Bread of life which came down from heaven and you must feed on Him. Take care that you go diligently to work to get this spiritual food. The Israelites were up early to gather the manna which fell morning by morning. Be not idlers with the Word of God—search it. Get up early in the morning to read your Bible... Steal from your sleep a happy hour to read the Scriptures. Diligently and earnestly seek the Lord, for He has said, “They that seek me early shall find me.” ...

The manna was to be continually sought. So must your spiritual food. Do not try to live on last year’s manna. Stale experiences are poor food... You need a daily realization of the things of God. Hourly feed on Christ, for the food of years past will be of small account to you. Continually go about the meadows and feed, sheep of the Lord. Go again and again to the still waters, drink and be satisfied!

What thought from Charles Spurgeon’s words stands out to you the most? Why?

DAY FIVE
APPLICATION

Go back and re-read Exodus 16. Take time to look over and reflect on the things that you learned from your Bible study this past week.

Write down one truth that impacted you from your study of Exodus 16.

Manna teaches us about daily provision and daily dependence. We seek security in a lot of things but ultimately we have to learn to trust God day-by-day. This is our prayer in the Lord’s Prayer.

Give us this day our daily bread. (Matthew 6:11)

What things do you tend to worry about? Why? _____

What would a daily trust and dependence on the Lord look like in your life?

God designed us to live day-by-day. We cannot control the future but we can trust in Him today.

Don’t worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. Therefore don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matthew 6:31-34)

Manna also teaches us about feeding on God’s Word day-by-day.

So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. (Deuteronomy 8:3)

The daily practice of collecting manna was also to teach Israel to depend every day on spiritual food. Just as we need food to nourish our bodies, we need God’s Word to nourish our souls.

Make the daily reading of God’s Word a priority in your life!

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Central to worry is the illusion that we can control things... This illusion of control lurks inside your anxiety. Anxiety and control are two sides of one coin. When we can't control something, we worry about it.

David Powlinson

Whatever keeps me from my Bible is my enemy, however harmless it may appear to me.

A.W. Tozer

*So the Light became alive
And manna became Man.
Eternity stepped into time
So we could understand.*

Michael Card


SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- Talk about a time when God provided for you in a way that you did not expect. What did you learn from this experience?
- What word, verse, or thought stands out to you as you read Exodus 16? Why?
- What surprises you about Israel's complaint in 16:3? How does God respond to their complaining (16:4)? Does this surprise you?
- List all the truths that the Israelites could learn from God's provision of manna. Which of these truths do you think is the most important in your own life?
- What do we learn about the importance of the Sabbath principle from Exodus 16?
- How is Jesus like manna?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of Charles Spurgeon? If so, what?
- What things do you worry about in your life? Why do you worry about these things? What would it look like for you to trust God for your daily bread?

our
Father which art in
Heaven,
hallowed be thy name. Thy

KINGDOM COME

THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH
as it is in heaven.

GIVE US  OUR DAILY
THIS DAY BREAD

and forgive us our debts, as we
FORGIVE ~~OUR~~ DEBTORS,

 & lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil 

For thine is the Kingdom

and the power and

the glory forever. Amen

MATTHEW
6:9-13

WINNING OUR BATTLES

Exodus 17

DAY ONE

OBSERVATION

As Israel travels through the wilderness, they face two problems—one from within (their constant grumbling) and one from without (attacks from their enemies). In both cases, their only help comes from the Lord.

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 17. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.

All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.

² Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?” ³ But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”

⁴ So Moses cried to the Lord, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” ⁵ And the Lord said to Moses, “Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶ Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.” And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

⁸ Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. ⁹ So Moses said to Joshua, “Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.” ¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. ¹¹ Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. ¹² But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. ¹³ And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.

¹⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.” ¹⁵ And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The Lord Is My Banner, ¹⁶ saying, “A hand upon the throne of the Lord! The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.” (ESV)

What thought or verse stands out to you in Exodus 17? Why?



What problem do the people face at Rephidim? (17:1)

What do they do in the face of this problem? (17:2-3)

How does Moses respond? (17:4)

How does God answer? (17:5-6)

What question do the people ask? (17:7) _____

What is the second problem that the children of Israel face at Rephidim? (17:8)

Who leads Israel into battle? (17:9) _____

Who goes to the top of the hill? (17:10) _____

What happens when Moses' hands are raised? (17:11) _____

What happens when his hands fall down? (17:11) _____

What causes his hands to fall down? (17:12) _____

What is the solution? (17:12) _____

What does God tell Moses to do after this event? (17:14) _____

What name for God emerges from this event? (17:15) _____

DAY TWO
MEDITATION

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Exodus 17:4-6 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*Then Moses cried out to the Lord,
“What will I do with this people?—a little more and they will stone me!”*

*The Lord said to Moses,
“Go over before the people;
take with you some of the elders of Israel
and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile and go.
I will be standing before you there on the rock in Horeb,
and you will strike the rock,
and water will come out of it so that the people may drink.”*

And Moses did so in plain view of the elders of Israel. (NET)

Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE
INTERPRETATION

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to blueletterbible.org and type “Exodus 17” into the “Search the Bible” box. Click on Exodus 17:2 to bring up the verse in the Hebrew. Find the verb “chide” and click on the Strong’s number (H7378) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the Old Testament.

What is the Hebrew word for “chide”? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? (Note especially Strong’s Definitions and Gesenius’ Lexicon.)

Next go back to Exodus 17:2 on blueletterbible.org. Find the verb “tempt” and click on the Strong’s number (H5254) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the OT.

What is the Hebrew word for “tempt”? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? (Note especially the Outline of Biblical Usage and Gesenius’ Lexicon.)

This Hebrew word is unique in that it can have both a positive and a negative connotation.

Read the following passages that use this Hebrew word. Mark key phrases as you read.

*For all the people have seen My glory and My signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have **tested** Me now these ten times, and have not obeyed Me—they will by no means see the land that I promised on oath to their fathers, nor will any of them who despised me see it. (Num. 14:22-23)*

*You must not put the Lord your God to the **test** as you did at Massah. (Deuteronomy 6:16)*

*Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and **test** you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands. (Deuteronomy 8:2)*

*In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might **test** you, to do good for you in the end. (Deuteronomy 8:16)*

*Examine me, Lord, and **put me to the test**;
Refine my mind and my heart. (Psalm 26:2)*

*How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness
And grieved Him in the desert!
Again and again they **tempted** God,
And pained the Holy One of Israel.
They did not remember His power,
The day when He redeemed them from the adversary. (Psalm 78:40-42)*

*They quickly forgot His works;
They did not wait for His counsel,
But craved intensely in the wilderness,
And **tempted** God in the desert. (Psalm 106:13-14)*

Based on these verses, what is God’s goal in testing us, putting us through difficult times?

Based on these verses, what are we doing when we put God to the test?

In Exodus 17, Israel is attacked by the Amalekites. **Read the following verses regarding Amalek.**

*Timna was a concubine of Esau’s son Eliphaz and she bore **Amalek** to Eliphaz. These are the sons of Esau’s wife Adah. (Genesis 36:12)*

*Then the **Amalekites** and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down, and struck them and beat them down as far as Hormah. (Numbers 14:45)*

*And he looked at **Amalek** and took up his discourse and said,
“Amalek was the first of the nations, but his end shall be destruction.” (Numbers 24:20)*

*Remember what the **Amalekites** did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and attacked all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God. When the Lord your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land He is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the name of **Amalek** from under heaven. Do not forget! (Deuteronomy 25:17-19)*

What do you learn about the Amalekites from these verses?

DAY FOUR
DEVOTION

Read the following excerpt from **Charles Spurgeon's** sermon, *Both Sides of the Shield*. Spurgeon (1834-92) was a Baptist preacher in London, England. He has been called the "Prince of Preachers" because of his powerful sermons which were doctrinally rich, biblically deep, and oratorically beautiful.

IN trying to understand the truth of God we are in great danger of being one-sided. One man catches a part of truth, and says, "That is it, and that is the whole of it." Another man lays hold of another side of truth, and he says, "This is the whole of it;" and straightway there arises a contention between them. They are like the men who quarreled as to the material of which a certain shield was made. One said that it was a golden shield; the other was sure that it was a silver one: whereas it so happened that it was gold on one side and silver on the other. So they fiercely wrangled when they might very well have been agreed if they had known a little more.

Most truths have two sides, and it is well to try to see both of them. Nearly every doctrine in the Word of God is balanced by some other doctrine, and many of the differences among the people of God have arisen from the undue stress which has been laid on one aspect of truth, while the other side has been altogether neglected. This danger very frequently besets us... Running away with half a truth, they are like men that go through the wilderness wearing only one shoe, and they get lame of one foot, and that makes them limp all over. It does not matter which foot is lame; the man is a cripple if either foot is thus afflicted...

I have long ago given up all attempts to reconcile what God has revealed in one part of the Bible with what he has made known in another part. If I find in God's Word doctrines which appear to me to be at variance with the teaching in other passages, I say to myself, "God knows where these things harmonize, and if he had wanted me to know it, he would have told me. As he has not told me, why should I worry myself about it?" ...

In [Exodus 17], I am going to take up two sets of truths which are rather varied, and yet are very practical withal. My range of thought will be extensive, but I will not wander from the incident before us. There are four things which have been suggested to my mind while meditating upon this text and its context, each which may be viewed from two standpoints...

I. PERSECUTION

On the one hand, notice that this attack upon Israel was **Amalek's great sin**, on account of which the nation was doomed... God said, "I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." But, on the other hand, this assault was the result of Israel's sin, for it is significantly put after the strife of Massah and Meribah, "Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim." The point is this: persecution may come to you from evil men, distinctly from them, and it may be their wicked free will which makes them assail you; and yet, at the same time, it may be your sin which lies at the bottom of it, and because you have erred they have been permitted, and even appointed, to bring trouble upon you...

These Amalekites attacked Israel, and greatly sinned in so doing, for they were the first that made war against God's people. He who had so graciously chosen and kept them, who with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm had brought them through the Red Sea, had espoused their cause... Though Abraham and others had, at times, gone forth to battle, nobody had fought with Israel since she had become a nation, and by mighty signs and wonders had been delivered from the hand of Pharaoh and the bondage of Egypt. But

Amalek first among the nations dared to assail the chosen people of God; and hence a stern doom was decreed against him. He had heard what great things God had done for his people, and yet he presumed to fight against them, and in so doing impiously lifted up his hand against Jehovah himself. He became the leader in this particular form of evil, and thus assumed a fearful responsibility, and assured to himself a terrible judgment.

But the sin was still worse; for **Amalek went out of his way to attack Israel**. The people had not come into his territory; they were a good way off it, and were passing quietly by; but we read, "Then came Amalek." His envy was stirred up so much that he came away from his own region to fight with Israel without any provocation. Amalek was a descendant of Esau, and the hate of Esau towards Jacob so burned in the breast of Amalek towards Israel, that he came a long journey in order that he might at once, without proclaiming war, fall suddenly upon the hosts of Israel. Because the attack was thus wanton, he had to suffer the stern judgment of God...

Moreover, **Amalek in this act went forth to fight against God himself**. It was not with Israel alone that he warred; he battled also with Jehovah, the God of Israel. In the words of verse 16, as some translate them, Amalek had laid his hands upon the throne of God, therefore God laid his own hand upon the throne, and swore by his throne that he would uproot Amalek from among the nations...

Let us now turn our thoughts to the other aspect of this subject. The guilt of ungodly men in persecuting God's people is not inconsistent with my next statement, that assaults upon us may also arise from our own sins. We may have brought the evil upon ourselves; and we had better look to it that there be not a sin of our own that lies at the root of what we suffer, for it was so with these peo-

ple. When they had chided with Moses, and murmured against God, *then came Amalek*.

Israel had been quarrelling with God. Is it any wonder, then, that other people quarreled with them? You may often read your sin in its punishment; and, if you had prophetic eye enough, you might see your chastening in your offence. Many a time our severity to others is the reason for God's apparent severity with us. If we have withheld from the poor, we need not wonder if God withholds from us; and if we have been slow to forgive, we need not marvel if we do not soon get a sense of forgiveness for ourselves... Israel quarreled with God and now Amalek quarrels with Israel.

They questioned God. *Is the Lord among us or not?* A horrible question, since it involved a doubt as to the reality of all the great wonders which were wrought in Egypt and in the wilderness. Because they questioned Him, God makes it a serious question between them and Amalek—a question which, for a while, seemed to be answered favorably, for Israel prevailed. But soon it was answered unfavorably, for Amalek prevailed. The conflicting hosts sway to and fro on the battlefield, first victors, then vanquished; again conquering, then once more conquered. How will the terrible struggle end?

No wonder that God puts the issue in question, when they had put him in question. If you question God, he will soon leave you to question yourselves. I do not wonder that men say, "Have I any faith?" when they begin to doubt the very inspiration of Scripture. What is the good of having any faith when there is nothing left for you to believe? You may well fear to build upon that Scripture whose very foundations you have undermined. If we make God a question, God will make our safety a question, and we shall have a stern fight for it.

II. INSTRUMENTALITY

Another contrast is to be found in the text and its connection. If you will notice, in verse 5, God says to Moses, "Take with thee of the elders of Israel; and *thy rod*, wherewith thou smotest the river;" but when Moses talks about the rod, in verse 9, he says, "Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the *rod of God* in mine hand." In both verses it is the same rod which is spoken of. God calls it the rod of Moses; Moses calls it the rod of God; and both these expressions are true. It is the rod of Moses; that is the human side... But the divine side is just as noticeable, and then it is called the rod of God. With reference to the instrumentality which God is pleased to use, we must thus remember its twofold nature, and look on both sides of the shield.

One side is that God calls it the rod of Moses, and so honors him. Wherever there is an opportunity of doing honor to the faith of his own servants, God is never slow to use it. He is a King who delights to give glory to his warriors when they behave themselves bravely in the heat of battle. It gives him pleasure to knight them on the field, and let them know that they have done well. At the end he will say to those who have been valiant for his cause, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Even here he gives his chosen a foretaste of that full approval which will make their heaven complete.

God is not afraid of spoiling his people by saying a good word about them. You remember the story of the man who had a good wife, and one said to him, "Why, she is worth her weight in gold." "Yes," he said, "she is worth a Gibraltar rock in gold, but I never tell her that. You know that it is necessary to maintain discipline, and, if I were to tell her how much I really value her, she would not know herself." Well, now, that is wrong. It does people good to be told how highly we

value them. There is many a Christian man and woman who would do better if now and then someone would speak a kindly word to them, and let them know that they had done well. God himself gives us an example of this, for he here puts honor on his servant, by saying to Moses, "Thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go."

We must never despise the instrumentality which God uses... God will have his servants esteemed; and, if he puts honor upon them, we cannot be wrong if we also honor them.

Moreover, it really was the rod of Moses, and would not so well have fitted any other hand. God does not put into a position of influence a man unfit for the post. Even Moses did not work wonders with the rod until he had renounced the riches of Egypt, and borne the burden of life in the wilderness. There was a fitness in the fact of the rod being in the hand of such a man. He had no rod when, in his fleshly energy, he slew the Egyptian whom he found oppressing the Hebrew slave. Had it then been in his hand, what sad havoc he might have made! But now he used it as God directed. In fact, the rod was the symbol of his authority, and that authority was not bestowed upon him until he was qualified to exercise it. Thus, in a very real sense, it was the rod of Moses... When a man is evidently used of God, let us be quick to recognize the special qualities which render him worthy to be used, and let us esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake...

On the other hand, Moses calls it the rod of God, and so honors God. He whom God uses gives God the praise, for God is ever the source of our strength; and if any work is done that is worth the doing, unto him must be ascribed all the glory. It was not in his own might that Moses turned the waters of the Nile into blood, and caused the fish to die. It was not by any power inherent in himself that

he made the dust of Egypt to live, and become a terrible plague to the people. It was not by any human magic that Moses divided the Red Sea, and made a way for the ransomed nation to march through its depths. No one knew better than he that the instrument that branded the breast of the Red Sea, and left a dry mark where it fell, was the rod of God, not man's. It is he alone that doeth great wonders, and unto his name be all praise. "Not unto us, O Lord; not unto us, but unto thy name, give glory." [Psalm 115:1]

III. PRUDENCE

Moses said unto Joshua, "Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek." To which Joshua might have replied, "Yes, I will gladly do that, and you will go too, Moses, and fight, will you not?" No, no, he will not. "Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand." As Oliver Cromwell put it: *prudence trusts in God, and keeps its powder dry*. Prudence prays with Moses, while it fights with Joshua. In like manner, in the activities of our holy faith, we must learn to balance work and worship, prayer for victory and conflict with the enemy...

Moses did not call all the people to pray when it was time for fighting. He prayed, but at the same time he set the battle in array. This is true wisdom, for "faith without works is dead." We cannot expect to have souls saved if we pray and never preach. We cannot expect to have our children saved if we only pray for them night and morning, and never speak to them about eternal matters, and do not instruct them in the things of God. The means must not be neglected.

Observe how Moses prepared to fight the Amalekites. He said to Joshua, "Choose us out men." He did not lose sight of the necessity of having the fittest warriors, because his trust was in God. If someone,

seeing only one side of the question, had come to him, and said, "The battle is the Lord's, why do you want to pick the men? Will not one man do as well as another?" Moses would probably have replied, "These Amalekites are mighty warriors. Take chosen men—men that are able-bodied, men that are expert in war, the choicest men you can find, and go to war with Amalek. We shall need our best men to overcome such a foe. Choose us out men." This is a rule without an exception, when you go to work for Christ, bring forth the best of everything that you have, your best thought, your best knowledge, your best ability. Let the church always see to it that she tries to get the best men she can to fight the battles of the Lord. It is a mistake to suppose that anybody will do for Christian work. Christ may use whom he wills, even the weakest things, and the things that are despised; but as for us, we must always look to that which is most adapted to the work, most suitable for it, ever hearkening to the words of Moses to Joshua, "Choose us out men."

The leader was also chosen—*Moses said unto Joshua*. He did not pick up the first youth that he met, and say to him, "Go and fight these Amalekites," but he took the man whom God had fitted for the post of leader in the war and said to him, "Go out, fight with Amalek." It is well for us, in carrying on the work and warfare for God, to rally round those whom God has qualified to be leaders. Means are not to be neglected, nor may God's work be done in a slovenly style. Choose you out men, and let the leader of them be a choice man, the man of God's choice...

Note, again, that the battle was most real. Moses did not say, "Choose you out men, and go and drive Amalek away like a flock of sheep." No; but "Go out, fight with Amalek." Believe me, brethren, we make a great mistake if we think that this world is to be

conquered for Christ without mighty efforts. Some talk as if the expenditure of a few pounds, and the going forth of a few men will end the whole war. It will do nothing of the sort... When the battle began, it was no child's play; it was a hand-to-hand conflict, a struggle for life or death; and the end of it was that "Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword;" not merely by praying, but with the sword. Moses on the hilltop is doing his part by holding up the rod; but you must have Joshua down below with the sharp edge of the sword...

Unfortunately, in our work for God, we generally fall into one of two blunders. Either we get a lot of machinery, and think that we shall accomplish everything by that; or else we are like some whom I have known, who have confided so much in prayer that they have done nothing but pray. Prayer is a downright mockery if it does not lead us into the practical use of means likely to promote the ends for which we pray. I have known friends take medicine when they have been ill, and never pray about their sickness. There are some others who pray about their sickness, but never take the proper medicine. They are both wrong. You must have Joshua, and you must have Moses, too, in the time of trial. Go before God with your sickness; but if there be an appointed means that has been made useful to others, use it, for God will bless you by the use of means.

Try to see two sides of a thing. Do not trust exclusively to either one or the other. It is a very heinous fault to trust the means without God; but, though it is a much smaller fault to trust in God, and not use the means, yet still it is a fault. Practical prudence will lead you to do both. It gives to Joshua his sword, and it gives to Moses his rod, that he may go with it up to the top of the hill, and hold it up there in the sight of the people, that all may know that the battle is the Lord's! ...

IV. CHRIST

Christ is represented to us here as Moses on the hill pleading, and as Joshua in the valley fighting.

Learn, first, that **Christ is pleading for us**. He is not here: he is risen, and he has ascended to the right hand of God, even the Father, and there he is making intercession for his people. It is because he intercedes for us that we win the victory. Cannot your faith's eye see him now, on the top of the hill, with the rod of God in his hand, with all power given to him in heaven and in earth, pleading with authority before the great throne of Jehovah?

Here is the secret of our strength. He never fails; he never needs to sit down upon a stone; nor does he need any to stay up his hands because they grow weary. No, blessed be his name, he pleads and prevails from generation to generation, and will continue to do so until he shall descend from heaven a second time to complete the victory of his people! In his mediation is our confidence.

But, then, do not forget that **he is also warring for us**. He is here, though I have just said that he is not here; in one sense he is gone, and in another sense he remains. On the very eve of his departure, he said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." And his promise is forever true, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

So, though he has gone into the glory, he is yet here in a spiritual sense by the Holy Spirit, who is his lieutenant, who takes the kingdom, and presides over it, and works in it on behalf of King Jesus. He is that "other Comforter" whom the Lord Jesus promised to send to his disciples; and so, though Christ has ascended, that blessed Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, has

taken his place, and, by the Holy Ghost, Christ is still here. We need not pray for the Holy Ghost to be poured out. He never will be poured out again, since he was once poured out at Pentecost, and is still here... He came down once, and here he stays. "He shall abide with you forever." This is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, and in him Christ is always with us, our greater Joshua, fighting for the people whom he will one day lead into the promised land, the heavenly Canaan.

I think that I see our Joshua now, sword in hand, chasing our adversaries; and I turn my eye upwards, and see our Moses, rod in hand, pleading for his people. Let us see him in both capacities, and thank God that Christ is all — not one type of the law, but all the types— not one of the ceremonials, but all the ceremonials, and all the shadows melting into one great substance. Glory be to his name!

Believe in Christ in heaven, and trust him with your prayers. Believe in Christ on earth,

range yourself on his side, and rest assured that no foe will be able to stand against him. He is on the battlefield today; and in the thickest of the fray, when his own people are driven back, and his adversaries begin to rejoice, friends and foes alike shall yet prove the power of his almighty arm...

So, you see that, though two things may look contradictory, they are often both really true, and are both different sides of one shield. Try, then, always to see both sides of every truth revealed in the Scriptures. Divine truths often resemble tramcars, which travel upon two lines of iron, and yet the two lines make but one tramway. The lines are parallel, and do not touch each other. How could the car travel if they did? This is the truth of God; it is but one truth, but it has two sides which run parallel to each other. Do not try to join them, nor take them up, and make them cross each other; but travel along them till you come to the great terminus above.

What thought from Charles Spurgeon's words stands out to you the most? Why?

DAY FIVE
APPLICATION

Go back and re-read Exodus 17. Take time to look over and reflect on the things that you learned from your Bible study this past week.

Write down one truth that impacted you from your study of Exodus 17.

Exodus 17 reminds us that we have two battles in our spiritual lives—one from within and one from without. We face the challenges of our own heart, our own selfish desires, our own doubts, our own foolish demands on God. *Is the Lord with me or not?!* On the other side of the coin, we also face very real challenges from the world. We face temptations that the world dangles in front of our eyes. We face persecution, opposition, hatred, betrayal.

To win our spiritual battles, we must rely on the Lord, on His Word, on His strength, on His grace. This is the divine side. We must also obey and do what He has called us to do. This is our side.

What outside battle are you facing right now? What attacks are you feeling in your life?

What inside battle are you facing right now? What sins or doubts are you facing in your heart?

Pray to the Lord. Lift up your hands and cry out to Him. Cast your cares upon Him. Seek His face. Use Psalm 91 on the next page to guide you in your prayers. Pray through this psalm verse-by-verse. Read a few verses out loud and then pray to the Lord in response to what you read.

Seek the support of others. Even Moses grew tired and weary. As he lifted up the rod of God, his hands felt heavy. He needed the support of others to keep his hands lifted to the Lord.

Who is someone that you can ask to pray for you? _____

Don't neglect the support of the body of Christ. Reach out to a fellow believer today.

Speak the Word of God. God's Word is your sword in the spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:17). You cannot win this battle if you do not have a weapon in your hands. Just as Jesus defeated Satan in the wilderness with the Word of God. So you need to memorize God's Word and speak it out loud in the midst of your battle. On the next page, write out a verse to memorize for your battle.

Read through Psalm 91. Speak or write out a prayer to God after each paragraph.

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress;
My God, in Him I will trust."

Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler
And from the perilous pestilence.
He shall cover you with His feathers,
And under His wings you shall take refuge;
His truth shall be your shield and buckler.
You shall not be afraid of the terror by night,
Nor of the arrow that flies by day,
Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness,
Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.

A thousand may fall at your side,
And ten thousand at your right hand;
But it shall not come near you.
Only with your eyes shall you look,
And see the reward of the wicked.

Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge,
Even the Most High, your dwelling place,
No evil shall befall you,
Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;
For He shall give His angels charge over you,
To keep you in all your ways.
In their hands they shall bear you up,
Lest you dash your foot against a stone.
You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra,
The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.

"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him;
I will set him on high, because he has known My name.
He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will deliver him and honor him.
With long life I will satisfy him,
And show him My salvation."

Write out a Bible verse to help you in your battle. _____

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

*In this battle, the victory depended
on the uplifted hands of Moses.
In the OT, this is the customary
gesture of prayer or praise.*

.....
*The sustained prayer of Moses was
the secret ingredient securing the
military victory of Joshua.*

.....
*Without prayer, nothing will bring
victory. The essential battle is the
battle for the secret place.*

J. Alec Motyer

*Men may spurn our appeals,
reject our message, oppose our
arguments, despise our persons,
but they are helpless
against our prayers.*

J. Sidlow Baxter

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- Do you think the biggest challenges that the church is facing today are more from the inside? Or more from the outside? Explain your answer.
- What word, verse, or thought stands out to you as you read Exodus 17? Why?
- What was the first “battle” that the Israelites faced in this chapter (17:1-7)? What made this such a serious battle? What could have happened if God did not intervene?
- What was the second battle that the Israelites faced in this chapter (17:8-16)? What made this such a serious battle? What could have happened if God did not intervene?
- Have you ever asked in your heart, “Is the Lord with me or not?” When? Why?
- What can we learn about prayer from Moses’ experience in Exodus 17:8-13?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of Charles Spurgeon? If so, what?
- Share one of the battles that you are facing right now in your spiritual life? Is it coming more from the inside or the outside? How can you gain victory in this particular battle?

SHARING OUR BURDENS

Exodus 18

DAY ONE OBSERVATION

When Moses and the people arrive at Mount Sinai, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, comes out to meet him, bringing Moses' wife and children. Jethro rejoices in what God has done and gives Moses some very helpful advice.

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 18. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.

And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people—that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. ² Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, ³ with her two sons, of whom the name of one was Gershom (for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land") ⁴ and the name of the other was Eliezer (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh"); ⁵ and Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness, where he was encamped at the mountain of God. ⁶ Now he had said to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her."

⁷ So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, bowed down, and kissed him. And they asked each other about their well-being, and they went into the tent. ⁸ And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them on the way, and how the Lord had delivered them. ⁹ Then Jethro rejoiced for all the good which the Lord had done for Israel, whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. ¹⁰ And Jethro said, "Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh, and who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. ¹¹ Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods; for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, He was above them." ¹² Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and other sacrifices to offer to God. And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.

¹³ And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening. ¹⁴ So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?"

¹⁵ And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. ¹⁶ When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws."

¹⁷ So Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you do is not good. ¹⁸ Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. ¹⁹ Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you:

Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. ²⁰ And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. ²¹ Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. ²² And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you. ²³ If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace.”

²⁴ So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. ²⁵ And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. ²⁶ So they judged the people at all times; the hard cases they brought to Moses, but they judged every small case themselves. ²⁷ Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way to his own land. (NKJV)

What thought or verse stands out to you in Exodus 18? Why?

How does Moses greet Jethro? (18:7) _____

What does Moses tell Jethro? (18:8) _____

What does Jethro now know? (18:10-11) _____

What does Jethro do in response? (18:12) _____

What does Moses do all day? (18:13-16) _____

Summarize Jethro’s advice. (18:17-23) _____

What kind of men are needed? (18:21) _____

DAY TWO
MEDITATION

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Exodus 18:9-12 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the Lord had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians.

He said,

*“Praise be to the Lord,
who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh,
and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians.
Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods,
for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly.”*

Then Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses’ father-in-law in the presence of God. (NIV)

Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE
INTERPRETATION

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Jethro (also known as Reuel) is one of the more unique characters in Scripture. He is a key figure in the Exodus narrative yet we do not know much about him. Besides Exodus 18, there are only a few references to him in the Bible. **Read these references below.**

When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well. Now a priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father’s flock. Some shepherds came along and drove them away, but Moses got up and came to their rescue and watered their flock. When the girls returned to Reuel their father, he asked them, “Why have you returned so early today?” They answered, “An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock.” “And where is he?” Reuel asked his daughters. “Why did you leave him? Invite him to have something to eat.” Moses agreed to stay with the man, who gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage. Zipporah gave birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom, saying, “I have become a foreigner in a foreign land.” (Exodus 2:15-22)

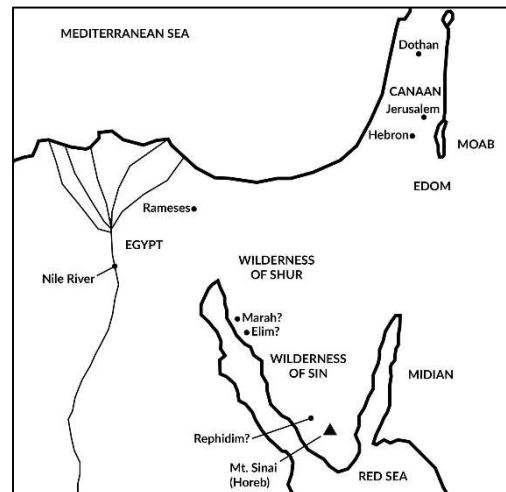
Meanwhile, Moses was shepherding the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. (Exodus 3:1)

Then Moses went back to his father-in-law, Jethro, and said to him, “Please let me return to my relatives in Egypt and see if they are still living.” Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.” (Exodus 4:18)

List 3-5 things that you learn about Jethro from these passages.

Jethro was a Midianite. The Midianites were a nomadic people but they generally lived in the area to the east of the Sinai Peninsula (i.e., modern-day Saudi Arabia).

The Midianites were descendants of Abraham through his wife, Keturah, whom he married after Sarah’s death (Genesis 25:1-4). Though they were related to the children of Israel through Abraham, the Midianites were not generally friendly to the Israelites. Their religion and way of life would have been different. They may have known of God but they would not have known Him as Yahweh.



Read the following passages regarding Midian and the Midianites.

*When **Midianite** traders passed by, his brothers pulled Joseph out of the pit and sold him for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took Joseph to Egypt... And the **Midianites** sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, a court official of Pharaoh, a commander of the imperial guard. (Genesis 37:28, 36)*

*Now Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites, and Moab was terrified because there were so many people. Indeed, Moab was filled with dread because of the Israelites. The Moabites said to the elders of **Midian**, "This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field." So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the Euphrates River, in his native land. Balak said: "A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that whoever you bless is blessed, and whoever you curse is cursed." The elders of Moab and **Midian** left, taking with them the fee for divination. When they came to Balaam, they told him what Balak had said. (Numbers 22:2-7)*

*Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel... Indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a **Midianite** woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. (Numbers 25:1-3, 6-8)*

*Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "Harass the **Midianites**, and attack them; for they harassed you with their schemes by which they seduced you in the matter of Peor and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a leader of **Midian**, their sister, who was killed in the day of the plague because of Peor." (Numbers 25:17-18)*

*The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the **Midianites**. Because the power of **Midian** was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds. Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the **Midianites**, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count them or their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it. **Midian** so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord for help. (Judges 6:1-6)*

What do you learn about Midian and the Midianites from these verses?

DAY FOUR
DEVOTION

Read the following excerpt from **Matthew Henry's Exposition of the Old and New Testaments**. Matthew Henry (1662-1714) was a pastor, speaker, and author from Chester, England. He is best known for his exhaustive, six-volume, verse-by-verse commentary on the Scriptures.

EXODUS 18:1-6

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, comes...

I. To congratulate the happiness of Israel, and particularly the honor of Moses his son-in-law; and now Jethro thinks himself well paid for all the kindness he had shown to Moses in his distress, and his daughter better matched than he could have expected. Jethro could not but hear what all the country rang of, the glorious appearances of God for his people Israel; and he comes to enquire, and inform himself more fully thereof, and to rejoice with them as one that had a true respect both for them and for their God. Though he, as a Midianite, was not to share with them in the promised land, yet he shared with them in the joy of their deliverance. We may thus make the comforts of others our own, by taking pleasure, as God does, in the *prosperity of the righteous*.

II. To bring Moses's wife and children to him. It seems, he had sent them back, probably from the inn where his wife's aversion to the circumcision of her son had like to have cost him his life (4:25); fearing lest they should prove a further hindrance, he sent them home to his father-in-law. He foresaw what discouragements he was likely to meet with in the court of Pharaoh, and therefore would not take any with him in his own family... Though there might be reason for the separation that was between Moses and his wife for a time, yet they must come together again, as soon as ever they could with any convenience...

Jethro, we may suppose, was glad of his daughter's company and fond of her children,

yet he would not keep her from her husband, nor them from their father... Moses had now a great deal both of honor and care put upon him, and it was fit that his wife should be with him to share with him in both.

Notice the significant names of his two sons. The eldest was called *Gershom, a stranger*, Moses designing thereby, not only a memorial of his own condition, but a memorandum to his son of his condition also: for we are all strangers upon earth, as all our fathers were... The other he called *Eliezer, my God a help*, as we translate it; it looks back to his deliverance from Pharaoh, when he made his escape, after the slaying of the Egyptian; but, if this was (as some think) the son that was circumcised at the inn as he was going, I would rather translate it so as to look forward, which the original will bear, *The Lord is my help, and will deliver me* from the sword of Pharaoh which he had reason to expect would be drawn against him when he was going to fetch Israel out of bondage. Note: When we are undertaking any difficult service for God and our generation, it is good for us to encourage ourselves in God as our help: he that has delivered does and will deliver.

EXODUS 18:7-12

I. The kind greeting that took place between Moses and his father-in-law, v. 7. Though Moses was a prophet of the Lord, a great prophet, yet he showed a very humble respect to his father-in-law. However God in his providence is pleased to advance us, we must make conscience of giving honor to whom honor is due, and never look with disdain upon our poor relations. Those that stand high in the favor of God are not thereby

discharged from the duty they owe to men, nor will that justify them in a stately haughty carriage. Moses went out to meet Jethro, did *homage to him, and kissed him*. Religion does not destroy good manners. *They asked each other of their welfare*. Even the kind how-do-you-do's that pass between them are taken notice of, as the expressions and improvements of mutual love and friendship.

II. The narrative Moses gave his father-in-law of the great things God had done for Israel, v. 8. This was one thing Jethro came for, to know more fully and particularly what he had heard the general report of. Note: Conversation concerning *God's wondrous works* is profitable conversation; it is *good, and to the use of edifying*, Ps. 105:2. Asking and telling news, and discoursing of it, are not only an allowable entertainment of conversation, but are capable of being tuned to a very good account, by taking notice of God's providence, and the operations and tendencies of that providence, in all occurrences.

III. The impressions this narrative made upon Jethro. He congratulated God's Israel: *Jethro rejoiced*, v. 9. He not only rejoiced in the honor done to his son-in-law, but in *all the goodness done to Israel*. Note: Public blessings are the joy of public spirits. While the Israelites were themselves murmuring, notwithstanding all God's goodness to them, here was a Midianite rejoicing. This was not the only time that the faith of the Gentiles shamed the unbelief of the Jews; see Mt. 8:10. Standers-by were more affected with the favors God had shown to Israel than those were that received them.

He gave the glory to Israel's God: *Blessed be Jehovah* (for by that name he is now known), *who hath delivered you, Moses and Aaron, out of the hand of Pharaoh*, so that though he designed your death he could not effect it, and by your ministry has *delivered the peo-*

ple, v.10. Note: Whatever we have the joy of God must have the praise of.

His faith was hereby confirmed, and he took this occasion to make a solemn profession of it: *Now know I that Jehovah is greater than all gods*, v. 11.

The matter of his faith: that the God of Israel is greater than all pretenders, all false, counterfeit deities that usurp divine honors; he silences them, subdues them, and is too hard for them all, and therefore is himself the only *living and true God*. He is also higher than all princes and potentates (who are called gods) and has both an incontestable authority over them and an irresistible power to control and overrule them; he manages them all as he pleases, and gets honor upon them, how great soever they are.

The confirmation and improvement of his faith: *Now know I*; he knew it before, but now he knew it better; his faith great up to a full assurance, upon this fresh evidence. Those obstinately shut their eyes against the clearest light who do not know that *the Lord is greater than all gods*.

The foundation of his faith: *For wherein they dealt proudly*, the magicians, and the idols which the Egyptians worshiped, or Pharaoh and his officials, *he was above them*. The magicians were baffled, the idols shaken, Pharaoh humbled, his powers broken, and, in spite of all their confederacies, God's Israel was rescued out of their hands. Note: Sooner or later, God will show himself above those that by their proud dealings contest with him. He that *exalts himself* against God *shall be humbled*.

IV. The expression of their joy and thankfulness. They had communion with each other both in a feast and in a sacrifice. Jethro, being hearty in Israel's interests, was cheer-

fully admitted, though a Midianite, into fellowship with Moses and the elders of Israel. They joined in a sacrifice of thanksgiving: *Jethro took burnt offerings for God* and probably offered them himself, for he was a priest in Midian, and a worshipper of the true God, and the priesthood was not yet settled in Israel. Note: Mutual friendship is sanctified by joint-worship. It is a very good thing for relations and friends, when they come together, to join in the spiritual sacrifice of prayer and praise, as those that meet in Christ the center of unity.

They joined in a feast of rejoicing, a feast upon the sacrifice. Moses, upon this occasion, invited his relations and friends to an entertainment in his own tent, a laudable usage among friends, and which Christ himself, not only warranted, but recommended, by his acceptance of such invitations. This was a temperate feast: *They did eat bread*; this bread, we may suppose, was manna. Jethro must see and taste that bread from heaven, and, though a Gentile, is as welcome to it as any Israelite; the Gentiles still are so to Christ the bread of life...

EXODUS 18:13-27

I. The great zeal and industry of Moses.

Having been employed to redeem Israel out of the house of bondage, herein he is a further type of Christ, that he is employed as a law-giver and a judge among them. He was to answer enquiries, to acquaint them with the will of God in doubtful cases, and to explain the laws of God... His business was, not to make laws, but to make known God's laws; his place was but that of a servant.

He was to decide controversies, and determine matters in variance, judging between a man and his fellow, v. 16. And, if the people were as quarrelsome one with another as they

were with God, no doubt he had a great many causes brought before him, and the more because their trials put them to no expense, nor was the law costly to them. When a quarrel happened in Egypt, and Moses would have reconciled the contenders, they asked, *Who made thee a prince and a judge?* But now it was past dispute that God had made him one; and they humbly attend him whom they had then proudly rejected.

Such was the business Moses was called to, and it appears that he did it,

1. **With great consideration**, which, some think, is intimated in his posture: he *sat* to judge (v. 13), composed and sedate.

2. **With great condescension** to the people, who stood *by him*, v. 14. He was very easy of access; the lowliest Israelite was welcome himself to bring his cause before him.

3. **With great constancy**. Though Jethro, his father-in-law, was with him, which might have given him a good pretense for a vacation (he might have adjourned the court for that day, or at least have shortened it), yet he sat, even the next day after his coming *from morning till evening*... Though Moses was advanced to great honor, yet he did not therefore take his case and throw upon others the burden of care and business; no, he thought his preferment, instead of discharging him from service, made it more obligatory upon him. Those think of themselves above what is meet who think it below them to do good. It is the honor even of angels themselves to be serviceable.

4. **With great compassion**. Though the people had been provoking to him, and were ready to stone him, yet still he made himself the servant of all. Note: Though others fail in their duty to us, yet we must not therefore neglect ours to them.

Though he was an old man, yet he kept to his business from morning to night, and made it his meat and drink to do it. God had given him great strength both of body and mind, which enabled him to go through a great deal of work with ease and pleasure; and, for the encouragement of others to spend and be spent in the service of God, it proved that after all his labors his natural force was not diminished. Those that wait on the Lord and his service shall renew their strength.

II. The great prudence and consideration of Jethro as a friend.

1. He disliked the method that Moses took, and was so free with him as to tell him so. He thought it was too much business for Moses to undertake alone, that it would be a prejudice to his health and too great a fatigue to him, and also that it would make the administration of justice tiresome to the people; and therefore he tells him plainly, *It is not good*. Note: There may be over-doing even in well-doing, and therefore our zeal must always be governed by discretion, that our good may not be evil spoken of. Wisdom is profitable to direct, that we may neither content ourselves with less than our duty nor over-task ourselves with that which is beyond our strength.

2. He advised him to such a model of government as would better answer the intention, which was, that he should reserve to himself all applications to God: *Stand before God for the people* (v 19). That was an honor in which it was not fit any other should share with him. Whatever concerned the whole congregation in general must pass through his hand, v. 20.

But he should appoint judges in the several tribes and families, who should try causes between man and man, and determine them, which would be done with less noise, and more dispatch, than in the general assembly wherein Moses himself presided. Thus they

must be governed as a nation by a king as supreme, and inferior magistrates sent and commissioned by him. Thus many hands would make light work, causes would be sooner heard, and the people eased by having justice thus brought to their tent-doors.

An appeal might lie, if there were just cause for it, from these inferior courts to Moses himself; at least if the judges were themselves at a loss: *Every great matter they shall bring unto thee*, v. 22. Thus that great man would be the more serviceable by being employed only in great matters. Note: Those whose gifts and stations are most eminent may yet be greatly furthered in their work by the assistance of those that are every way their inferiors, whom therefore they should not despise. The head has need of the hands and feet, 1 Co. 12:21. Great men should not only study to be useful themselves, but contrive how to make others useful, according as their capacity is. Such is Jethro's advice, by which it appears that though Moses excelled him in prophecy he excelled Moses in politics...

3. He adds two qualifications to his counsel:

(1) That great care should be taken in the choice of the persons who should be admitted into this trust (v. 21). It was required that they should be men of the very best character:

For judgment and resolution—*able men*, men of good sense that understood business, and bold men, that would not be daunted by frowns or clamors. Clear heads and stout hearts make good judges.

For piety and religion—*such as fear God*, as believe there is a God above them, whose eye is upon them, to whom they are accountable, and of whose judgment they stand in awe. Conscientious men, that dare not do a base thing, though they could do it ever so secretly and securely. The fear of God is that principle

which will best fortify a man against all temptations to injustice, Neh. 5:15.

For integrity and honesty—*men of truth*, whose word one may take, and whose fidelity one may rely upon, who would not for a world tell a lie, betray a trust, or act an insidious part.

For noble and generous contempt of worldly wealth—*hating covetousness*, not only not seeking bribes nor aiming to enrich themselves, but abhorring the thought of it; he is fit to be a judge, and he alone, *who rejects gain from extortion and keeps their hands from accepting bribes*, Isa. 33:15.

(2) That he should attend God's direction in the case (v. 23): *If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so*. Jethro knew that Moses had a better counsellor than he was, and to his counsel he refers him. Note: Advice must be given with a humble submission to the word and providence of God, which must always overrule.

Now Moses did not despise this advice because it came from one not acquainted, as he was, with the words of God and the visions of the Almighty; but he *hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law*, v. 24. When he came to consider the thing, he saw the reasonableness of what his father-in-law proposed and resolved to put it in practice, which

he did soon afterwards, when he had received directions from God in the matter.

Note: Those are not so wise as they would be thought to be who think themselves too wise to be counselled; for *a wise man* (one who is truly so) *will hear and will increase learning*, and not slight good counsel, though given by an inferior. Moses did not leave the election of the magistrates to the people, who had already done enough to prove themselves unfit for such a trust; but he chose them, and appointed them, some for greater, others for less division, the less probably subordinate to the greater. We have reason to value government as a very great mercy, and to thank God for laws and magistrates, so that we are not like *the fishes of the sea, where the greater devour the less*.

III. **Jethro's return to his own land**, v. 27. No doubt he took home with him the improvements he had made in the knowledge of God, and communicated them to his neighbors for their instruction. It is supposed that the Kenites (mentioned in 1 Sam. 15:6) were the posterity of Jethro (compare Jdg. 1:16), and they are there taken under special protection, for the kindness their ancestor here showed to Israel. The goodwill shown to God's people, even in the smallest instances, shall in no wise lose its reward, but shall be recompensed, at furthest, in the resurrection.

What thought from Matthew Henry's words stands out to you the most? Why?

DAY FIVE
APPLICATION

Go back and re-read Exodus 18. Take time to look over and reflect on the things that you learned from your Bible study this past week.

Write down one truth that impacted you from your study of Exodus 18.

Though Jethro was a “priest in Midian,” it is not clear that he truly knew the Lord. Some people see Exodus 18 as his “moment of conversion.” Jethro was impacted by Moses’ testimony of the Lord’s deliverance and, as a result, proclaimed Yahweh as the only true God and sacrificed to Him.

Sharing the story of God’s work in your life can be one of the best ways to be a witness for Him. **Take time to reflect on your own story.** Jot down your thoughts in each of the sections below.

BEFORE CHRIST
*What was your life like before you came to know Jesus Christ as Savior?
What thoughts or events opened up your heart and mind to seek Jesus?*

TRUSTING CHRIST
*When did you hear the message of Jesus’ death on the cross for you?
Who shared the gospel with you?
When did you trust Jesus as Savior?*

AFTER CHRIST
*How has your life changed since you came to know Jesus as Savior?
What is different about you now?*



Notice that Moses not only told Jethro about the good things that God had done but also about *all the hardship that had come upon them on the way* (18:8). Even in the hardships, Moses could see the hand of the Lord and could give praise to His name.

Through what hardship(s) has God carried you? How have you seen His hand in a difficult time?

In Exodus 18, Moses not only learned to share his testimony but he also learned to share the load of his ministry. Moses could not do everything on his own (though he apparently tried!). It did not take his father-in-law long to realize that if Moses kept up his daily pace, then he would not only wear himself out but he would wear the people out as well. Jethro provided practical advice that gave relief to Moses, better leadership to the people, and a wise structure for the future.

In what area(s) of your life or ministry, are you taking too much on your plate? What are you trying to do on your own that is either too much for you or outside of your control? Why?

What do you need to let go of? What do you need to seek help with?

On the other side of the coin, Moses needed help! He could not minister to the people alone. He needed people with integrity, humility, and ability to work with him and under his leadership.

Consider the various ministries and responsibilities at your local church. How could you help serve in the body of Christ? How could you encourage the leaders of these ministries?

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

We would say that Jethro came to faith, that he was converted—and the response of the Israelite leadership shows that Jethro was officially affirmed in the faith.

J. Alec Motyer

According to Scripture, virtually everything that truly qualifies a person for leadership is directly related to character... Integrity is the main issue that makes the difference between a good leader and a bad one.

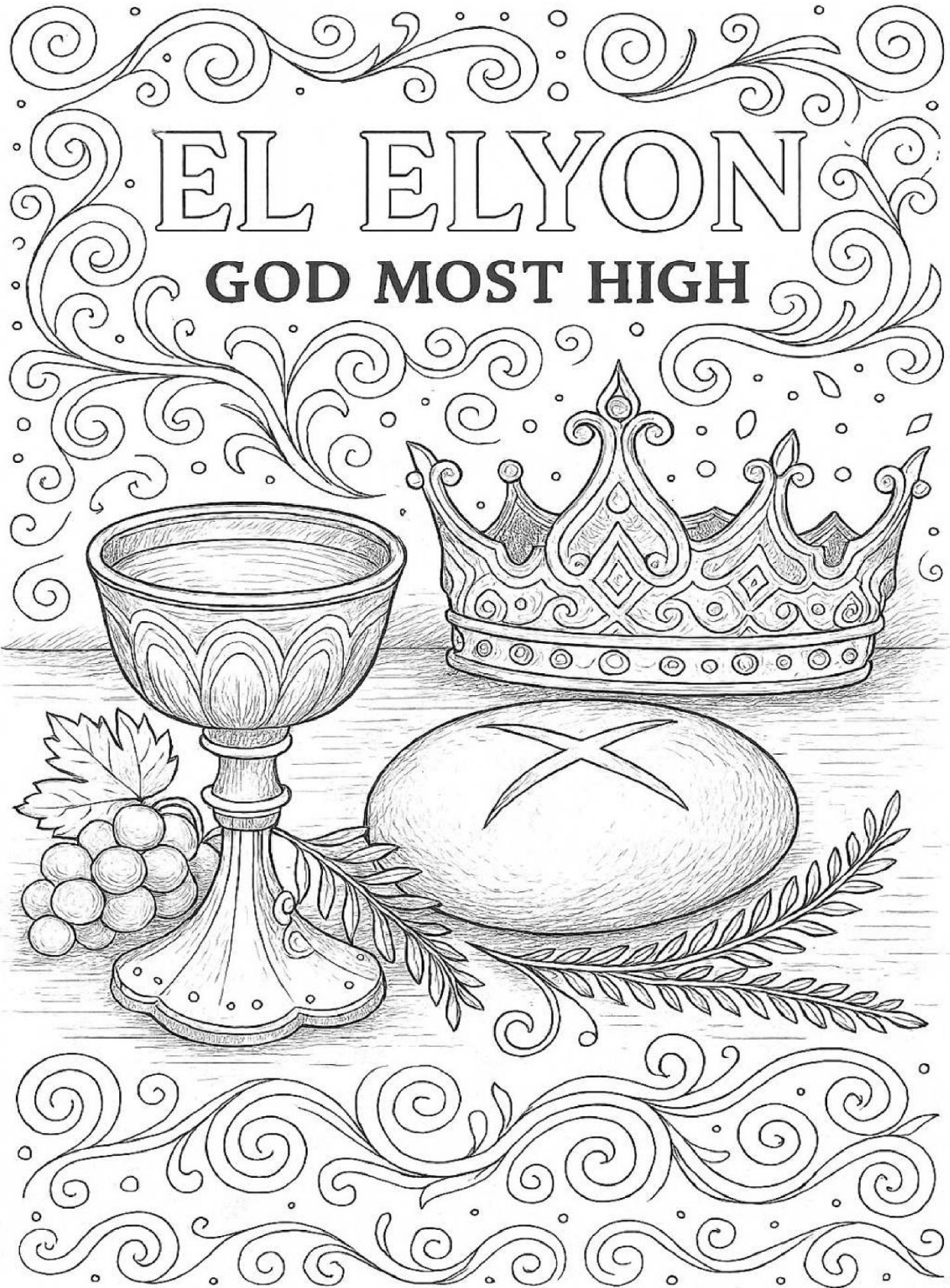
John MacArthur

It is better to set a hundred men to work than to try to do the work of a hundred men.

Dwight L. Moody

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- What was one of the best pieces of advice that you have ever received? Who gave it to you? How did it help redirect your life or help you make a needed change?
- What word, verse, or thought stands out to you as you read Exodus 18? Why?
- What is your picture of Jethro based on this passage and the previous mentions of him in Exodus? What kind of father-in-law do you think he was to Moses?
- What does Moses tell Jethro? How does Jethro respond? What do you think changed in Jethro's understanding of God?
- What advice does Jethro give Moses? How could we apply that advice even today?
- What kind of people make good leaders?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of Matthew Henry? If so, what?
- Share your own "Jethro moment." When did you come to recognize God as God? When did you trust Jesus as Savior? How has your life changed since that decision?



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BEING GOD'S PEOPLE

Exodus 19

DAY ONE OBSERVATION

Approximately fifty days after Passover, the Israelites arrive at Mt. Sinai. Here they will encounter God, receive His law, and learn what it means to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation as God's own special people.

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 19. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.

On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. ² They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, ³ while Moses went up to God.

The Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: ⁴ 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

⁷ So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. ⁸ All the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." And Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord. ⁹ And the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever."

When Moses told the words of the people to the Lord, ¹⁰ the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments. ¹¹ and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. ¹² And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, 'Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death. ¹³ No hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain."

¹⁴ So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments. ¹⁵ And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman."

¹⁶ On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. ¹⁹ And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. ²⁰ The Lord came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

²¹ And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to the Lord to look and many of them perish. ²² Also let the priests who come near to the Lord consecrate themselves, lest the Lord break out against them.” ²³ And Moses said to the Lord, “The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for you yourself warned us, saying, ‘Set limits around the mountain and consecrate it.’” ²⁴ And the Lord said to him, “Go down, and come up bringing Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord, lest he break out against them.” ²⁵ So Moses went down to the people and told them. (ESV)

What thought or verse stands out to you in Exodus 19? Why?

Using different highlighters or colored pencils (or markings), highlight the following words:

- “Lord” or “God” in red or with a box.
- “Moses went up” and “Moses went down” in green or with a circle.
- “People” (or “peoples”) in yellow or underline.

Complete the following sentences based on this passage:

You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on _____ wings (19:4).

If you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my _____ possession among _____ peoples, for _____ the earth is mine. (19:5)

You shall be to me a kingdom of _____ and a _____ nation. (19:6)

_____ the people answered together and said, “_____ that the Lord has spoken we will do.” (19:8)

Mount Sinai was a visual demonstration of the majesty, power, and holiness of God. If the people of Israel were to be holy representatives of God, then they needed to understand His holiness. Imagine the scene and then take a few moments to sketch out the scene on the mountain below.

Answer the following questions based on Exodus 19:9-25.

What were the people to do? (19:10)	What were the people <u>not</u> to do? (19:12-13, 15)
What would God do on the third day? (19:9, 11)	Why would God do this? (19:9)
What did the people see? (19:16-20)	What did the people hear? (19:16-20)
What did the people feel? (19:16-20)	What would happen if the people disobeyed? (19:12-13, 21-24)



DAY TWO
MEDITATION

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Exodus 19:4-6 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*“You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt
and how I lifted you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.*

*And now, if you will diligently listen to me and keep my covenant,
then you will be my special possession out of all the nations,
for all the earth is mine,
and you will be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”*

These are the words that you will speak to the Israelites.” (NET)

Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE
INTERPRETATION

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Exodus 19:1 begins with a chronological marker—literally, *on the third new moon*. Though there are different ways that this phrase can be interpreted, the traditional interpretation sees this as the first day of the third month (the Hebrew month of Sivan). Thus, the time from the Passover (14th day of the 1st month) to the giving of the law at Mount Sinai is traditionally seen as 50 days. This timeframe would coincide with the Feast of Pentecost which is 50 days after Passover.

One of the key words in Exodus is the simple word—*people*. Though this may not seem like an important word, it is in Exodus that Israel not only becomes a nation but they also become God’s *people*. Exodus 19:3-6 is considered by many Bible teachers to be the theme of the book of Exodus. In this passage, the Lord speaks of His redemption of Israel, His purpose for them as *His people*, and His covenant requirements if they are to experience His covenant blessings.

Go to blueletterbible.org and type “Exodus 19” into the “Search the Bible” box. Click on Exodus 19:5 to bring up the verse in the Hebrew. Find the word “people” and click on the Strong’s number (H5971) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the Old Testament.

What is the Hebrew word for “people”? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

In what OT book is it used the most? _____ (See Search Results by Book.)

What is its definition? _____

Go back to Exodus 19:5 on blueletterbible.org. Find the word “peculiar treasure” and click on the Strong’s number (H5459) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the OT.

What is the Hebrew word for “peculiar treasure”? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? _____

Read the following passages which use this Hebrew word. Mark key phrases as you read.

*For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. He has chosen you to be His people, **prized** above all others on the face of the earth. (Deuteronomy 7:6)*

*In my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my **personal treasures** of gold and silver for the temple of my God, over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple. (1 Chronicles 29:3)*

*I also amassed silver and gold for myself, as well as **valuable treasures** taken from kingdoms and provinces... (Ecclesiastes 2:8a)*

*“They shall be Mine,” says the Lord of hosts, “On the day that I make them **My jewels**. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.” (Malachi 3:17)*

What do you learn about this Hebrew word from these verses?

God’s desire for His people is that they would be a holy nation and a *kingdom of priests*.

Read the following verses regarding the role of a priest. Mark key phrases as you read.

*Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was **priest** of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” (Genesis 14:18-20)*

*“**You [Aaron] and your sons** are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the tent of meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, so that you can distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean, and so you can teach the Israelites all the decrees the Lord has given them through Moses.” (Leviticus 10:9-11)*

*Behold, I myself have taken your brothers the **Levites** from among the children of Israel. They are a gift to you, dedicated to Yahweh, to do the service of the Tent of Meeting. (Numbers 18:6)*

*[The **priests**] shall teach Jacob Your ordinances and Israel Your law. They shall put incense before You and whole burnt offerings upon Your altar. (Deuteronomy 33:10)*

*For every **high priest** is taken from among the people and appointed to represent them before God, to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal compassionately with those who are ignorant and erring, since he also is subject to weakness. (Hebrews 5:1-2)*

List five things that you learn about priests from these passages.

DAY FOUR
DEVOTION

Read the following excerpt from **Matthew Henry's Exposition of the Old and New Testaments**. Matthew Henry (1662-1714) was a pastor, speaker, and author from Chester, England. He is best known for his exhaustive, six-volume, verse-by-verse commentary on the Scriptures.

EXODUS 19:1-8

I. The date of that great charter

1. The time—in the third month after they came out of Egypt. It is computed that the law was given just fifty days after their coming out of Egypt, in remembrance of which the feast of Pentecost was observed the fiftieth day after the Passover, and in compliance with which the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles at the feast of Pentecost, fifty days after the death of Christ. In Egypt they had spoken of a three days' journey into the wilderness to the place of their sacrifice (5:3), but it proved to be almost a two months' journey; so often are we out in the calculation of times, and things prove longer in the doing than we expected.

2. The place—*Mount Sinai*, a place which nature had made eminent and conspicuous, for it was the highest in that range of mountains. Thus God put contempt upon cities, and palaces, and magnificent structures, setting up his pavilion on the top of a mountain, in a waste and barren desert, there to carry on this treaty. It is called *Sinai*, from the multitude of thorny bushes that overspread it.

II. The charter itself

Moses was called up the mountain (on the top of which God had pitched his tent, and at the foot of which Israel had pitched theirs), and was employed as the mediator and messenger of the covenant:

1. The maker and first mover of the covenant is God himself. Nothing was said nor done by this stupid, unthinking people themselves

toward this settlement; no motion made, no petition put up for God's favor, but this blessed charter was granted *ex mero motu*—*purely out of God's own goodwill*. Note: In all our dealings with God, free grace anticipates us with the blessings of goodness, and all our comfort is owing, not to our knowing God, but rather to our being *known of him*, Gal. 4:9. *We love him*, visit him, and covenant with him, *because he first loved us*, visited us, and covenanted with us. God is the Alpha, and therefore must be the Omega.

2. The matter of the covenant is not only just, and puts no hardship upon them, but kind and gracious, and such as gives them the greatest privileges and advantages imaginable.

He reminds them of what he had done for them, v. 4. He had righted them, and avenged them upon their persecutors and oppressors: *You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians*, how many lives were sacrificed to Israel's honor and interests. He had given them unparalleled instances of his favor to them, and his care of them: *I bore you on eagles' wings*, a high expression of the wonderful tenderness God had shown them (Deut. 32:11-12).

It denotes great speed. God not only came upon the wing for their deliverance, but he hastened them out, as it were, upon the wing. He did it also with great ease, with the strength as well as with the swiftness of an eagle... Especially, it denotes God's particular care of them and affection to them. Even Egypt, that iron furnace, was the nest in which these young ones were hatched, where they were first formed as the embryo of a nation; when, by the increase of their numbers, they grew to some maturity, they were

carried out of that nest. Other birds carry their young in their talons, but the eagle (they say) upon her wings, so that even those archers who shoot flying cannot hurt the young ones, unless they first shoot through the old one...

Thus, in the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud and fire, the token of God's presence, interposed itself between the Israelites and their pursuers (lines of defense which could not be forced, a wall which could not be penetrated): yet this was not all; their way so paved, so guarded, was glorious, but their end much more so: *I brought you unto myself*. They were brought not only into a state of liberty and honor, but into covenant and communion with God...

You have seen what I did; so that they could not disbelieve God, unless they would first disbelieve their own eyes. They saw how all that was done was purely the Lord's doing. It was not they that reached towards God, but it was he that brought them to himself...

He tells them what he expected and required from them in one word, obedience, v. 5, that they should *obey his voice indeed and keep his covenant*. Being thus saved by him, that which he insisted upon was that they should be ruled by him... Obey, not in profession and promise only, not in pretense, but in sincerity. God had shown them real favors, and therefore required real obedience.

He assures them of the honor he would put upon them, if they kept his covenant: *Then you shall be a peculiar treasure to me*. He does not specify any one particular favor, as giving them the land of Canaan, or the like, but expresses that which was inclusive of all happiness, that he would be to them a God in covenant, and they should be to him a people.

God here asserts his sovereignty over the whole visible creation: *All the earth is mine*. Therefore he needed them not; he that had so

vast a dominion was great enough, and happy enough, without concerning himself for so small a people as Israel was. All nations on the earth being his, he might choose which he pleased for his treasure...

He appropriates Israel to himself, *First*, As a people dear to him. *You shall be a peculiar treasure*; not that God was enriched by them, as a man is by his treasure, but he was pleased to value and esteem them as a man does his treasure; they were *precious in his sight and honorable* (Is. 43:4); he *set his love upon them* (Deut. 7:7), took them under his special care and protection, as a treasure that is kept under lock and key... By giving them divine revelation, instituted ordinances, and promises inclusive of eternal life, by sending his prophets among them, and pouring out his Spirit upon them, he distinguished them from, and dignified them above, all people...

Secondly, As a people devoted to him, to his honor and service, a *kingdom of priests*, a *holy nation*. All the Israelites, if compared with other people, were priests unto God, so near were they to him (Ps. 148:14), so much employed in his immediate service, and such intimate communion they had with him...

III. Israel's acceptance of this charter

1. Moses faithfully delivered God's message to them, v. 7: He *laid before their faces all those words*; he not only explained to them what God had given him in charge, but he put it to their choice whether they would accept these promises upon these terms or no. His laying it to their faces denotes his laying it to their consciences.

2. They readily agreed to the covenant proposed. They would oblige themselves to obey the voice of God, and take it as a great favor to be made a kingdom of priests to him. They answered together as one man: *All that the*

Lord hath spoken we will do. Thus they strike the bargain, accepting the Lord to be to them a God, and giving up themselves to be to him a people. O that there had been such a heart in them!

3. Moses, as a mediator, returned the words of the people to God, v. 8. Thus Christ, the Mediator between us and God, as a prophet reveals God's will to us and as a priest offers up to God our spiritual sacrifices...the work of his own Spirit in us.

EXODUS 19:9-15

I. God intimates to Moses his purpose of coming down upon mount Sinai, in some visible appearance of his glory, in *a thick cloud*, v. 9. This thick cloud was to prohibit curious enquiries into things secret, and to command an awful adoration of that which was revealed. God would come down *in the sight of all the people*, v. 11; though they should see no manner of similitude, yet they should see so much as would convince them that God was truly among them. And so high was the top of mount Sinai that it is supposed that not only the camp of Israel, but even the countries about, might discern some extraordinary appearance of glory upon it, which would strike a terror upon them. It seems also to have been particularly intended to put an honor upon Moses: *That they may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee forever...*

II. He orders Moses to make preparation for this great solemnity, giving him two days' time for it.

1. He must *sanctify the people*, v. 10. He must raise their expectation by giving them notice what God would do, and assist their preparation by directing them what they must do. *Sanctify them*, that is, "Call them off from their worldly business, and call them to religious exercises, meditation and prayer, that

they may receive the law from God's mouth with reverence and devotion."

Let them be ready, v. 11. Note: When we are to attend upon God in solemn ordinances it concerns us to sanctify ourselves, and to get ready beforehand. Wandering thoughts must be gathered in, impure affections abandoned, disquieting passions suppressed, nay, and all cares about secular business, for the present, dismissed and laid by, that our hearts may be *engaged to approach unto God*.

Two things particularly prescribed as signs and instances of their preparation—

(1) In token of their cleansing themselves from all sinful pollutions, that they might be holy to God, they must *wash their clothes*, and they did so. Not that God regards our clothes; but while they were washing their clothes he would have them think of washing their souls by repentance from the sins they had contracted in Egypt and since their deliverance. It becomes us to appear in clean clothes when we wait upon great men; so clean hearts are required in our attendance on the great God, who sees them as plainly as men see our clothes. This is absolutely necessary to our acceptably worshipping God. See Ps. 26:6; Isa. 1:16-18; Heb. 10:22.

(2) In token of their devoting themselves entirely to religious exercises, upon this occasion, they must abstain even from lawful enjoyments during these three days, and *not come near their wives*. See 1 Cor. 7:5.

2. He must *set bounds about the mountain*, v. 12-13. Probably he drew a line, or ditch, round at the foot of the hill, which none were to pass upon pain of death. This was to indicate that humble reverence which ought to possess the minds of all those that worship God. We are feeble creatures before a great Creator, vile sinners before a holy righteous

Judge; and therefore a godly fear and shame well become us, Heb. 12:28; Ps. 2:11.

We also ought to take notice of the distance at which worshippers were kept, under that dispensation, that we may value more our privilege under the gospel, having *boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*, Heb. 10:19.

3. He must order the people to attend upon the summons that should be given, v. 13: *When the trumpet sounds long then let them take their places at the foot of the mount, and so sit down at God's feet.* Never was so great a congregation called together, and preached to, at once, as this was here. No one man's voice could have reached so many, but the voice of God did.

EXODUS 19:16-25

Now, at length, comes that memorable day, that terrible day of the Lord, that day of judgment, in which *Israel heard the voice of the Lord God speaking to them out of the midst of the fire, and lived*, Deut. 4:33...

I. The preacher was God himself: *The Lord descended in fire, and the Lord came down upon mount Sinai.* The *shechinah*, or glory of the Lord, appeared in the sight of all the people; he *shone forth from mount Paran with ten thousands of his saints* (Deut. 33:2), that is, attended, as the divine Majesty always is, by a multitude of the holy angels, who were both to grace the solemnity and to assist at it. Hence the law is said to be given *by the disposition of angels*, Acts 7:53.

II. The pulpit was Mount Sinai, hung with a *thick cloud*, covered with *smoke* and made to *quake* greatly. Now it was that the earth *trembled at the presence of the Lord*, and the *mountains skipped like rams* (Ps. 114:4, 7), that Sinai itself, though rough and rocky,

melted from before the Lord God of Israel, Jdg. 5:5. Now it was that the *mountains saw him, and trembled* (Hab. 3:10), and were witnesses against a hard-hearted unmoved people, whom nothing would influence.

III. The congregation was called together by the *sound of a trumpet, exceedingly loud, and waxing louder and louder.* This was done by the ministry of the angels, and we read of trumpets sounded by angels, Rev. 8:6. It was the *sound of the trumpet that made all the people tremble*, as those who knew their own guilt, and who had reason to expect that the sound of this trumpet was the *alarm of war*.

IV. Moses brought the hearers to the place of meeting. He that had led them out of the bondage of Egypt now led them to receive the law from God's mouth. Public persons are indeed public blessings when they promote the public worship of God. Moses, at the head of an assembly worshipping God, was as truly great as Moses at the head of an army...

V. The introductions to the service were thunders and lightnings. These were designed to strike an awe upon the people and to engage their attention. Were they asleep? The thunders would awaken them. Were they looking another way? The lightnings would engage them to turn their faces towards him that spoke to them. Thunder and lightning have natural causes, but the Scripture directs us in a particular manner to take notice of the power of God, and his terror, in them. Thunder is the voice of God, and lightning the fire of God, proper to engage the senses of sight and hearing, those senses by which we receive so much of our information.

VI. Moses is God's minister, who is spoken to, to command silence, and keep the congregation in order: *Moses spoke*. Some think it was now that he said, *I exceedingly fear and quake* (Heb. 12:21); but God stilled

his fear by his distinguishing favor to him, in calling him up to the top of the mount (v. 20), by which also he tried his faith and courage.

No sooner had Moses got up a little way towards the top of the mount than he was sent down again to keep the people from *breaking through to gaze*, v. 21. Even the priests or princes, the heads of the houses of their fathers, who officiated for their respective families, and therefore are said to *come near to the Lord* at other times, must now keep their distance, and conduct themselves with a great deal of caution. Moses pleads that they needed not to have any further orders given them, effectual care being taken already to prevent any intrusions, v. 23. But God, who knew their willfulness and presumption, and what was now in the hearts of some of them, hastens him down with this in charge, that neither the priests nor the people should offer to force the lines that were set, to *come up unto the Lord*, but Moses and Aaron on, the men whom God delighted to honor.

Observe, 1. What it was that God forbade them—breaking through to gaze; enough was provided to awaken their consciences, but they were not allowed to gratify their vain

curiosity. They might see, but not gaze. Some of them, probably, were desirous to see some similitude, that they might know how to make an image of God, which he took care to prevent, for they *saw no manner of similitude*, Deut. 4:5.

Note: In divine things we must not covet to know more than God would have us know. He has allowed us as much as is good for us. A desire of forbidden knowledge was the ruin of our first parents. Those that would be wise above what is written, and intrude into those things which they have not seen, need this admonition—*break not through to gaze*.

2. Under what penalty it was forbidden: *Lest the Lord break forth upon them and many of them perish*. Note: The restraints and warnings of the divine law are all intended for our good, and to keep us out of that danger into which we should otherwise, by our own folly, run ourselves. It is at our peril if we break the bounds that God has set us, and intrude upon that which he has not allowed us... Even when we are called to approach God, we must remember that he is in heaven and we upon earth, and therefore it behooves us to exercise reverence and godly fear.

What thought from Matthew Henry's words stands out to you the most? Why?

DAY FIVE
APPLICATION

Go back and re-read Exodus 19. Take time to look over and reflect on the things that you learned from your Bible study this past week.

Write down one truth that impacted you from your study of Exodus 19.

Israel was redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, carried by God on *eagles' wings*, and brought into relationship with Him in order to be a *holy nation* and a *kingdom of priests*. They were redeemed for a purpose. They were redeemed to be a people. They were redeemed to represent God on earth—reflecting His character, teaching His Word, pointing people to Him.

But Israel failed in this mission. Though they said—*All that the Lord has spoken we will do*—and may have even believed that they could obey Him perfectly, they simply could not. They not only needed God to save them, they also needed God to sanctify them and strengthen them to obey. They needed His Spirit!

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

This is the promise of the new covenant—the covenant fulfilled and instituted by Jesus Christ! In Christ, we are grafted into the Abrahamic Covenant and we become this kingdom of priests.

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Thus, if you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, then *you* are God's special treasure above all other treasures, and *you* are part of His holy nation, His kingdom of priests.

Reflect the fact that you are God's special treasure, that He sees you as beautiful and valuable, that He loves you beyond what you can possibly imagine. How does this truth impact you?

As a priest, you are called to reflect His character, proclaim His Word, and point people to Him. You are to *proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light!*

Who is someone that you know that does not know Jesus as Savior? Pray for them now and ask God for an opportunity to minister to them and to be a witness to them of His marvelous grace.

Write out your thoughts or your prayer for them below.

Read and reflect on Hebrews 12:18-29. This passage takes us back to the experience of the Israelites at Mount Sinai so that we can better appreciate our relationship to God now in Jesus Christ.

You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death." The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."

What can you be thankful for today? What can you praise God for in your life?

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

The elect covenant people are citizens of the kingdom of the divine King, but within that kingdom, ideally considered, each citizen is a priest, with the privilege of priestly access to the King's presence.

J. Alec Motyer

It is extremely important to remember that the Law of Moses was given to a redeemed people, not to redeem a people.

J. Dwight Pentecost

An eagle, when training a youngster to fly, pushes it out of the nest but flies with it and catches it to bear it upwards again when needed.

Tony Garland

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- What is one of the most fearful moments that you can remember in your life? What made it so terrifying or nerve-wracking to you?
- What word, verse, or thought stands out to you as you read Exodus 19? Why?
- Focus on Exodus 19:3-6 as a group. What observations can you make from these verses? What do you learn about God? About His purpose for Israel? About Israel as a people?
- Describe this experience of Mount Sinai in your mind. What do you think that it would have been like if you were there? What would you see, hear, feel, do?
- Why do you think God repeats the same warning to Moses even after Moses seems to try to reassure God that the additional warning is unnecessary (19:21-25)?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of Matthew Henry? If so, what?
- What is your picture of the holiness of God? Do you feel like you have a proper awe of Him? Or do you feel like it is easy to “tame” Him or lower Him to a manageable level? How can you better understand, revere, and respond to the holiness of God?

FINAL THOUGHTS FROM EXODUS 14-19

Things that I have learned during this study:

Who is Jesus to you? Have you acknowledged Him as your only Savior and Lord? There is no other name under heaven by which people can be saved (Acts 4:12). Jesus entered our world to save us from our sins. He died on the cross for you and for me. He rose again to give us eternal life. Have you placed your trust in Him? If not, do so today!

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. —Romans 10:9-10

This study guide was written and compiled by Pastor Steve Foster for use with the Exodus sermon series at Community Bible Church, Baton Rouge, LA. You are welcome to reproduce any part of it for your own personal study. For any other use, please contact pastor@516church.org.



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