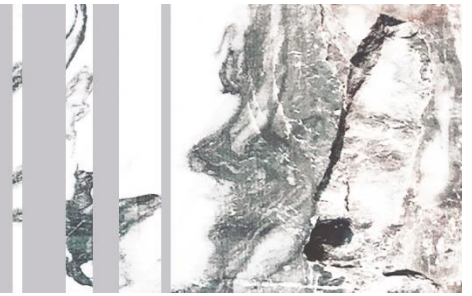


EXODUS

Daily Devotions Week 1



DAY 1

The story of Exodus begins before the book of Exodus ever even gets started. It actually begins with the first book in the Bible: Genesis. The story of Exodus is a continuation of the story of Genesis. Just as one brick is laid on another to build a house, the story of Exodus builds on the story of Genesis as one seamless narrative. In fact, Exodus 1:1-6 actually recaps Genesis 46:8-27 for us to make sure that we know there's a connection! (Feel free to drop that bible nugget on your friends at your next dinner party.) Because of this, it's important to be familiar with the storyline of Genesis before moving any further.

Genesis tells us the story of God creating the entire universe. As God brings life into existence from nothing, he calls it all "very good." In the midst of this creation, God made man and woman – Adam and Eve. These first humans were tasked with ruling over and cultivating God's good creation on His behalf as His image bearers. Unfortunately, they rebelled. Sin entered the picture, their relationship with God and each other was spoiled, and they were expelled from paradise.

As humanity grows in number, evil and corruption follow suit. Genesis 6:11 tells us that, "The earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence." Because God is just and holy, He judged the violence and corruption of the world with a flood, saving only a man named Noah and his family.

As time went on, God made a promise to a man named Abram that he would make Abram's offspring into a great nation, that they would dwell in the Promised Land, and that their nation would be a blessing to every other nation.

Genesis 12:1-3 says, "The Lord had said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'"

As the years passed, Abram (also known as Abraham) had a son named Jacob. Jacob had 12 sons, the youngest of which was named Joseph. Joseph was Jacob's favorite which made his brothers jealous. This jealousy led them to sell Joseph into slavery where he wound up in Egypt. The Lord was ultimately good to Joseph through this as he won favor with Pharaoh and rose to a high position of authority in the land.

When a severe famine arose, Joseph's family (including his brothers) came to Egypt needing food and supplies. Joseph forgave his brothers and helped them get what they needed. Genesis ends with Joseph and his family choosing to remain in Egypt, enjoying the provisions that a successful nation like Egypt could give them.

And that is where Genesis ends. Now, pause right there.

Even with just this ever-so-brief foray across the terrain of the first book in the Bible, immediately after God makes his promise to Abraham about making a great nation out of him to be a blessing to every other nation, problems ensue. There were sibling rivalries, famines, foreign nations to deal with, and so much more that we couldn't even get into! Just one of these things had the potential to thwart God's promises to Abraham.

But... they didn't. God works in the background to make sure His promises will reach their fulfillment. He is faithful.

And with this story in mind, Exodus begins.

Read Exodus 1:1-7.

Notice what the Scripture says in verses 6-7: "Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, but the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them."

So even though Joseph and his family had passed away, the Israelites continued to grow in number. This is important because the writer of Exodus wants his readers to know God is faithful to fulfill His promises – that nothing can ruin them.

That's also an important lesson for us to consider today. God is faithful. Just think about that. No matter who you are, no matter what you do. God is faithful. He will keep His promises to us. He will keep his promises to you.

As this first day of material wraps up, spend some time reflecting on the questions below.

- How have you seen God's faithfulness at work in your own life? In the past year?
- When do you feel as if you are most aware of God's faithfulness in your life? What tends to hinder your awareness of God's faithfulness?
- How has God's faithfulness to you impacted you spiritually? Emotionally? Mentally?
- Spend time praying to God. Thank Him for His faithfulness to you.

DAY 2

One aspect of our western society that we sometimes take for granted is our Judeo-Christian heritage. We, as a people, balk when we hear of people being mistreated, maligned, oppressed, enslaved, and hurt through violence.

Why is it that we recoil at the mistreatment of others? Throughout history, nation has warred against nation, group has fought against group, and people have clashed with other people. Historically, some cultures have condoned harming others outside their tribe or group. We see that this is the case in the passage below.

Read Exodus 1:8-22.

- What do these verses reveal about Pharaoh's regard for human life?
- What do you think undergirded Pharaoh's mental and emotional life that led him to inflict such brutality on human life?

While we may not ever harm people physically through forced labor, enslavement, or murder, there are perhaps even subtler ways in which we exploit and abuse others. Gossip, slander, lust, judgment, anger, yelling at a spouse, harboring bad feelings towards others are all ways in which we bring harm to others.

Jesus makes it clear that while we may not harm people physically, the thoughts and feelings we hold against others are just as deleterious. In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, Jesus makes this case. He brings up several examples in which we harm and dehumanize others through our words, feelings, and thoughts (see Matthew 5:20-6:4).

- On what is your ethic of life based on? Do you feel as if you have a consistent ethic of life? Why or why not?
- Are your feelings and actions consistent with your thoughts on having a concern for life? Why or why not?
- In what ways are your feelings and actions inconsistent with the value you place on human life and dignity?

Bring your reflections on these questions to God. Ask Him about them. Where might God be inviting you to grow?

DAY 3

Re-read Exodus 1:1-22.

What started out as a blessing, quickly became a curse. While God's people enjoyed the fruits of the Egyptian economy for a short time, Israel quickly found out this would not always be the case. Egypt oppressed them. A new pharaoh became king over Egypt – one who did not know Joseph and one who became concerned at the numerical growth of the Israelites (see Exodus 1:8-10).

- As you reflect on this chapter, what thoughts and feelings do you think Israel had about God during their slavery? What do you think they thought about God's character during this time?
- When was a time in your life where you felt captive to a sin, a situation, or a circumstance? What was that like?
- How did this affect your relationship with God? How did this affect your relationship with others?
- What was your view of God's character during this time?
- How does the truth about God impact your thoughts, behaviors, and feelings in the midst of struggle?

Notice, too, the progressive decline in the nature of the oppression God's people faced.

First, the Egyptians force labor upon the Israelites (Exodus 1:11). Next, the Egyptians enslave the Israelites and make their work even harder (Exodus 1:13). Then, the Egyptians plot secretly to kill the Israelite male children (Exodus 1:15-16). Finally, the Egyptians plot openly to kill the Israelite male children (Exodus 1:22).

In many ways, the oppression God's people underwent is indicative of the way sin can work in our lives. Many times, it has a progressive decline, it tightens its grip, and it gets worse until we are brought to the end of ourselves.

- What thoughts and feelings do you think Israel had about God as their oppression worsened over the course of their 400 years in bondage?
- Describe how you have seen this "worsening" reality at play when dealing with a stronghold in your own life. How did this feel? What was your experience of God like in this time?
- In what ways have you been experiencing this recently?

Read Exodus 3:7-8.

How does knowing God sees and hears you in the midst of your struggles make you feel about Him? What new perspectives does that bring you in the midst of your circumstances?

Spend time with God in prayer and reveal to Him your thoughts and feelings regarding these stronghold areas in your life. Thank Him for freedom you've experienced in your life up to this point, but also feel free to take your frustrations, anxieties, desperation, and tears to Him. God wants to meet you in your struggle.

DAY 4

Re-read Exodus 1:1-22.

There is a really interesting verse right in the middle of chapter one of Exodus. Verse 17 says, “The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live.”

Sometimes following God requires great courage because following His commandments requires us to go against the grain of the society around us. It is fascinating to note that it was the women in chapter one of Exodus who displayed their “fear” of God in how they acted (to “fear God” meant they revered and respected His ways above everyone else’s). This isn’t an insignificant detail in the text. The author of Exodus wants us to see the valor of these midwives so we might be emboldened to potentially follow their lead should the need arise.

- The Israelite women stepped up because of their fear of God. How does a reverence (biblical fear) of God help the midwives to pursue holy disobedience?
- What do you think the potential consequences could have been for the midwives and their disobedience?

Read Proverbs 1:7.

- What does this verse say about “fearing God?”
- What does a healthy fear of God look like today for you? Do you have reservations when thinking about having a “fear of the Lord?” Explain.
- How might having a healthy fear of the Lord be spiritually beneficial to you?

As followers of Jesus, we are called to pray for and submit to our governing authorities, but only up to a certain point. If there ever comes a point in time when we are asked to do something contrary to the way of Jesus, then we are called to act just as Peter does when he states, “We must obey God rather than human beings!” (Acts 5:29)

It takes great discernment to decipher when this is the case. Life is not always black and white. Life is nuanced. Life can be grey.

- How do you discern the right thing to do in the midst of life’s uncertainties?
- When in your life have you had great courage for the Lord?
- What might the Lord be inviting you into today that you need courage to do? What is keeping you from acting on this invitation?
- To “encourage” someone literally means to “put courage into” someone. How can your life group do this for you?

DAY 5

As we end this first week of devotionals, here is a practice to hear from God in these verses. There may be something that both the sermon and these daily devotionals failed to bring out that God wants you to hear.

As you prepare to re-read Exodus 1:1-22 and Exodus 3:7-8, spend 10 or so minutes in stillness before God. Know that God longs to meet with you. Find a quiet place, turn off your cell phone, remove as many distractions as you can, settle into a comfortable position, close your eyes, and focus on your breathing. Invite God to speak to you in your silence. Acknowledge His presence. You are about to read and hear the Word of God.

LISTEN

Sit quietly for a moment before you begin. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak and show you what the Lord wants for you in this passage. **Read Exodus 1:1-22 and Exodus 3:7-8.** Mark words or phrases that stand out as you read.

LINGER

Read the passage again out loud. Are the same words or phrases you marked the first time still standing out? Write them down. How do these words or phrases apply to your life right now?

LEARN

As you read the text for a third time, ask yourself, "How is God inviting me to respond? What does He want me to be learning from this? What is God calling me to?" Write out what comes to mind.

LIVE

Read the passage one last time and respond to these questions: Why is God showing me this now? What does this mean for my life? What needs to change in my life? How do I need to live differently?