

Journey to Freedom

Studies from Exodus 1-20

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Foreword

Welcome to this life-enriching seminar for men and women who already know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and others who may be seeking Him.

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Seminar
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Journey to Freedom
Studies from Exodus 1-20

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PART I
FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE

LESSON 1

INTRODUCTION

The Hebrew Bible uses the opening words, *we'llah shemoth*, "Now these are the names..." as the title for the book that we call *Exodus*. These words echo the listing of the sons of Israel who went down to Egypt in Genesis 46:8 and connect Exodus to the previous book of Genesis.

Genesis concerned itself with the beginnings of the world, of human beings and their institutions, and of the people of Israel as a tribal family. The focal point of Genesis was the covenant that God made with Abraham¹ in which God promised two things: to make Abraham's descendants into a great nation through whom the whole earth would be blessed, and to give Abraham's descendants the land extending from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates River.

On the day that God sealed His covenant with Abraham, He also foretold that his descendants would be strangers in a foreign land where they would be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years. "But I will also judge the nation that they will serve," God promised, "and afterward they will come out with many possessions" (Genesis 15:13-14).

In the years to come, the promises and predictions of God began to unfold in amazing ways. The end of Genesis records that Abraham's grandson, Jacob (later renamed "Israel" by God), had twelve sons.

Because ten of Jacob's sons were greatly jealous of their brother, Joseph, they sold him as a slave to a passing caravan traveling to Egypt. But God was with Joseph, and he gained tremendous favor with the king of Egypt, Pharaoh,² who eventually made Joseph his prime minister in charge of the whole land.

Later, when famine threatened to wipe out Jacob's entire family in Canaan, God had placed Joseph in a position to rescue them from extinction. He brought his father Jacob and family, seventy persons in all, out of Canaan and to the land of Goshen where he provided for them from the storehouses of Egypt. The book of Genesis closes with Abraham's offspring firmly planted in the land of Egypt as God had foretold and orchestrated.

The book of Exodus picks up on the dramatic story of Abraham's offspring some 400 years later. The Israelites, or Hebrews as they were called, had increased in numbers to about two million. God had indeed made of Abraham's offspring a great nation as He had promised. But, as foretold, they were now slaves in a foreign land with a new Pharaoh who was threatened by their numbers and who oppressed them with hard labor and cruelty.

The title *Exodus* comes from the Greek word, *Exodos*. The name means "going out" or "departure" and was given by the translators of the Septuagint³ in the third century B.C. because it reflected the theme of the book.

The first "going out" for the Israelites was their departure from Egypt,⁴ being freed from slavery and oppression to become the people of God. On this journey Moses, God's chosen leader, and the people began to receive God's revelation of Himself through His mighty acts of deliverance.

A second "going out" took place through Israel's forty years of wilderness wanderings. There the fledgling nation learned to put aside her old life and live a new life of trust and obedience to God.

The final "going out" for God's people occurred as the nation left the wilderness and entered the Promised Land. The book of Joshua recounts the incredible story of how God led Israel in the supernatural conquest of the very land He had promised Abraham centuries before. There, the people of God found peace and freedom as they worshipped the one true God and made Him known to the world.

Israel's journey to freedom holds many applications to the development of our own faith in God. Studying God's direct involvement in the history of His people will help us see and trust His involvement in our complex lives today. As we watch God sanctifying His people through many experiences over a long period of time, we will better appreciate how God uses everyday circumstances to produce holiness in us. As we observe God's workings with Israel in the midst of a hostile world, we will learn to expect opposition to our faith, and learn to face the challenges of life with courage and certainty of God's ultimate victory.

As we embark on this fascinating study of ancient history, we will above all become more aware of His faithful hand on our lives and find new freedom in trusting Him more.

THE BIRTH OF A DELIVERER

Exodus 1-2

Joseph had died and a new king, who did not know Joseph and therefore had no sympathy toward his people, ruled the nation of Egypt. This king enslaved the Israelites and forced them to do hard labor to further build his kingdom. Yet God was blessing Abraham's descendants, as He had promised, even while they were slaves in a foreign land. The Israelites became so numerous that the new Pharaoh was threatened by their potential power and set out to weaken them by increasing their forced labor.

But the more oppressed they were, the more the Hebrew people multiplied and spread until they were all over the land! One translation of Exodus 1:6 reads, "Yet the Children of Israel bore fruit, they swarmed, they became many, they grew mighty in number--exceedingly, yes, exceedingly; the land filled up with them."

Because hard labor and ruthless treatment failed to curb the Israelites' growth in numbers, the king resorted to violence. He instructed the Hebrew midwives to kill all male babies at birth. However, the Hebrews midwives proved more shrewd than Pharaoh. Out of fear and respect for God, they disobeyed the king. When he required an explanation, they told him that the Hebrew women were so vigorous that they gave birth before a midwife could get there. Clearly obsessed with a perceived power struggle between him and the Hebrew slaves, Pharaoh responded with the order that all male babies be thrown in the Nile.

It was against this backdrop that Israel's future deliverer, Moses, was born. When he was born, Moses' parents sensed that he was special and hid him for three months (Hebrews 11:23). When he could no longer be hidden, his mother, Jochebed, made a waterproof basket in which she placed her son wrapped in a blanket. As Jochebed set the basket afloat on the Nile, Moses' sister, Miriam, ran along the bank to watch. It so happened that Pharaoh's daughter, who was out bathing in the Nile, discovered

the basket and decided to adopt the beautiful Hebrew infant. Miriam stepped forward to offer to find a nursemaid among the Hebrews. Pharaoh's daughter agreed and ended up paying Jochebed to nurse Moses through infancy (probably about three to four years).

Both Pharaoh and the Nile River were worshipped as gods in Egypt but were unable to prevail against the God who was with the Hebrew slaves. Indeed, Pharaoh had no idea of the power that stood against him on behalf of these people. In His providence, God used the natural love of a mother for her child and the tender heart of Pharaoh's own daughter towards a baby's cry to thwart the evils of Pharaoh. God would deliver His people, and the deliverer would be raised in Pharaoh's palace by his own daughter!

After he had grown up, Moses went out to where his own people labored and saw an Egyptian beating a slave. Moses came to the defense of this fellow Hebrew by killing the Egyptian and hiding the body in the sand! The next day when Moses went out to his people, he came upon two Hebrews fighting. When he stepped in to try to settle the differences, the man in the wrong rejected Moses' authority, saying, "Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?" This taunting statement told Moses that the murder was public knowledge, and he fled Egypt in fear. Sure enough, Pharaoh determined to kill Moses when he discovered what had happened. Moses traveled through the Sinai Desert on foot, finally stopping in Midian,⁵ some two hundred miles from Egypt. As he sat down to rest by a water well, Moses encountered yet another incident of injustice, this time among foreigners. When the daughters of Reuel, a priest of Midian,⁶ came to water their father's flocks at the well, some shepherds came and pushed them aside. But Moses stepped in, forced the shepherds back and watered Reuel's flocks himself. Consequently, the girls' father asked Moses to stay at his home. Later, Moses married Reuel's daughter, Zipporah, and had a son whom he named Gershom. Moses would have another son and reside in Midian for some forty years (cf. Acts 7:29-30).

During this time, the king of Egypt died, and the new Pharaoh intensified the oppression of the Israelite slaves. In desperation, they cried out for help. Chapter 2 closes with the spotlight turned toward God and what He would do. The author of Exodus⁷ used four short phrases to describe God's response: God *heard* their groaning; God *remembered* His covenant with Abraham; God *saw* the Children of Israel; and God *knew*. God was intimately aware of their sufferings and was working behind the scenes to bring about their promised deliverance.

Read Exodus 1:1-2:10.

1. God had promised Abraham innumerable descendants who would form a nation. Even though enslaved and oppressed in Egypt, what indicated that God was working out His promise to Abraham in spite of the circumstances (1:7, 12)?

Reference: Note 1, *Abrahamic Covenant*, p. 11.

2. a. Why did Pharaoh fear the increase of the Hebrew slaves (1:9-10)?

b. What first attempts did Pharaoh make to try to curb the Hebrew population growth (1:14, 16)?

3. a. How did the midwives respond wisely to the Pharaoh's command (1:17-19)?

Note: Biblically, *fear* of the Lord (vs. 17) denotes "reverent trust" in the Lord.

b. How did God reward the courage and godly choices of the midwives (1:20-21)?

4. What final attempt did Pharaoh make at thwarting the Hebrew population growth (1:22)?

5. Women were regarded as the most weak and powerless in ancient society. Even so, what women did God use to confound the powerful Pharaoh's plans (1:17-21; 2:1-10)?

Read Exodus 2:11-25.

6. a. Moses would become God's chosen leader and judge for Israel as they became a nation. What attitudes and character traits were evident in his life which would equip him for these tasks (2:11-13, cf. Acts 7:23-28, esp. v. 25)?

b. Why did Moses flee Egypt, and where did he go (2:14-15)?

Reference: Note 5, *Midian*, and Note 6, *priest of Midian*, p. 12.

7. a. What did Moses' response to the situation at the Midian well say about his character (2:16-17)?

b. What resulted from Moses' actions at the well (2:18-22)?

8. a. The situation in Egypt intensified while Moses was in Midian. What did the Israelites do (2:23)?

b. What was God's response (2:24-25)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

When God Seems Distant

During their terrible bondage, the Israelites had only the promise of God to their forefather, Abraham, to hold onto for hope. But as the years passed, their prayers remained unanswered, and the situation became unbearable. There seemed no end in sight, and God seemed distant, if there at all.

We all go through times when things seem to only get worse, and we are tempted to believe God has distanced Himself from our great need. Prayers of faith and hope may become groans of pain accompanied by a growing lack of faith in God's ability to help or that He is even aware or concerned about our distress.

These are times to remember the story of Israel's deliverance. During Israel's suffering, God was not distant nor detached, but silently working to bring about the promised freedom from bondage. Despite Pharaoh's cruelty, God continued to build the Hebrew nation and raise up their deliverer, Moses, in Pharaoh's own palace! Although God may have seemed nonexistent or uninvolved, He was in fact preparing to move in a phenomenal way to fulfill His promises to Abraham and his descendants.

Perhaps the most important truth to be learned here is that it is always too soon to stop trusting God. When we are in distress and the answers to our prayers seem delayed, He is not distant, but near. He is working silently toward deliverance and the fulfillment of His promises to those who love Him.

As we begin our study of *Journey to Freedom*, let's make some observations about the wonderful implications of these truths and examine other Scriptures that have to do with times when God seems distant.

1. a. What are some long-term "bondages" or recurring distresses that are common to our human experience?

b. What negative thoughts about God might result from enduring the pain of these issues?

2. What do these Scriptures encourage us to believe even when we cannot see what God is doing?
Psalm 34:18

Psalm 121:2-3

Isaiah 33:6

3. Psalm 68:19 promises that the Lord daily bears our burdens. What does Hebrews 7:24-25 promise those who come to God through His Son, Jesus Christ?

4. As Jesus prays for us, what are we to do?
Philippians 4:6-7

I Peter 5:7

Deuteronomy 31:6

Psalm 27:14

Psalm 55:22

5. What is the promise God will surely fulfill as we trust in Him?
Jeremiah 29:11

Summary

6. In what ways was God at work on behalf of His people even though they may have felt He had abandoned them?

7. a. What areas of trust are you confronted with in your life today?

b. What does this story say to you about your own situation?

8. Psalm 86 is a beautiful guide for prayer in times of difficulty. List the attributes of God that are proclaimed in this Psalm. Then list the attitudes and choices we can make to experience the freedom of faith to be discovered in times of adversity.

LESSON 1 NOTES

1 *The Abrahamic Covenant* (Genesis 12:1-4). God's promise to Abram was first given to him when God called him to leave his father's household and his own country to follow Him into a new land. The promise involved two things: 1) Abraham would have numerous descendants and become a great nation which would be blessed by God; 2) Through his descendants, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Later, the promise was confirmed with an everlasting covenant, and a third promise was added: 3) God would give Abraham and his descendants the land of Canaan, where he then lived as an alien, as an everlasting possession (17:1-8).

God's original blessing on all mankind (Genesis 1:28) would be restored and fulfilled through Abram and his offspring. In various ways and degrees, these promises were reaffirmed to Abram (15:5-21; 17:4-8; 18:18-19; 22:17-18), to Abram's son Isaac (26:2-4), to Isaac's son Jacob (Genesis 28:13-15; 35:11-12; 46:3) and to Moses (Exodus 3:6-8; 6:2-8).

The promise to bless the world through Abraham's descendants is quoted in Acts 3:25 with reference to Peter's Jewish listeners (see Acts 3:12)--Abram's physical descendants--and in Galatians 3:8 with reference to Paul's Gentile listeners--Abram's spiritual descendants.

2 Pharaoh. This meant "great house" in Egyptian. It was a royal title, not the king's personal name. (*The NIV Study Bible*, p. 88). Pharaoh was considered a god in Egypt, along with many other gods such as the Nile.

3 Septuagint. The first and most important of a number of ancient translations of Hebrew Old Testament into Greek between 280 and 180 B.C.

4 The date of the exodus, or departure from Egypt, "seems to be fixed with a fair degree of accuracy by 1 Kings. We are told that 'the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel' was the same as 'the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites had come out of Egypt' (1 Kings 6:1). Since the former was c. 966 B. C., the latter--and thus the date of the exodus--was c. 1446 (assuming that the 480 in 1 Kings 6:1 is to be taken literally). The 40-year period of Israel's wanderings in the desert, which lasted from c. 1446 to c. 1406, would have been the most likely time for Moses to write the bulk of what is today known as the Pentateuch" (see Note 7 below). *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 2. Also see note on Exodus 1:11, p. 105, *The NIV Life Application Bible*.

5 Midian. The Midianites probably descended from one of Abraham's younger sons (Genesis 25:2). They lived in southeastern Sinai and west central Arabia on either side of the Gulf of Aqaba (an arm the Red Sea).

6 Priest of Midian. His personal name was Reuel, which means, "friend of God." This name is used interchangeably with Jethro, which may have been a title meaning, "his excellency." (2:18; 3:1). *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 90.

7 The author/compiler of Exodus and the other four books of the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) is historically believed to be Moses by Jews and Christians alike. Several statements in Exodus indicate that Moses wrote certain sections of the book (see 17:14; 24:4; 34:27). Joshua 8:31 refers to the command of Exodus 20:25 as having been "written in the Book of the Law of Moses." New Testament passages, such as Mark 7:10; 12:26 and Luke 2:22-23, point to Moses as the author of Exodus. Taken together, these references strongly suggest that Moses was largely responsible for writing the book--a traditional view not convincingly challenged by the commonly held notion that the Pentateuch as a whole contains four underlying sources. *The NIV Study Bible*, pp. 2 and 84.

LESSON 2

DIVINE CALL AND HUMAN RESPONSE

Exodus 3:1-4:17

In our previous lesson we left Moses in Midian with a wife and child, working for His father-in-law, Jethro. According to Acts 7:30, about forty years had passed since he had fled Egypt, where his fellow Hebrews continued to suffer cruel slavery. Perhaps Moses had tried to forget his intense desire to help his people. But things changed one day as he was tending Jethro's flock near Mt. Horeb. There, from a burning bush miraculously unconsumed by the flames, God revealed Himself to Moses and commissioned him to return to Egypt to lead his people out of bondage and into the promised land!¹ For Moses, his old life of shepherding was over, and a new life as deliverer was about to begin.

But Moses did not follow without resistance. He knew the power of Egypt and that the task before him was humanly impossible. "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" was Moses' earnest response. What followed was a dialogue during which God patiently dealt with Moses' objections one at a time.

One of Moses' major concerns was going to the leaders of Israel with such limited personal knowledge of God. The people might ask him, "What is His name?" Perhaps Moses feared that he would be exposed for his spiritual immaturity in the face of men intimately acquainted with the God of their fathers. Moses did not know himself who God was. How could he represent Him? To Moses' question, God answered "*I AM WHO I AM*," or, "*I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE*."² This name by which God identified Himself to Moses signified His presence with His people in both the present and future. They would not need to be concerned about divine arbitrariness or capriciousness; God could be depended upon to be unchanging and faithful. God told Moses that the sign of this truth would be that after being supernaturally delivered from bondage in Egypt, they would return to worship on the very mountain on which Moses now stood. Moses could only really grow to know the character and saving power of the ever-present God as he walked with God through the acts of deliverance He was about to perform for Israel.

God instructed Moses to take the divine message he had received to the elders³ of Israel, who would listen to him. He was to go to Pharaoh to tell him that the LORD had met with him and instructed the Israelites to take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to Him. When Pharaoh refused, God would "stretch out His hand" and perform such wonders among the Egyptians that they would be eager for the Israelites to leave, gladly giving them their Egyptian wealth to take with them.

Then God gave Moses three miraculous signs to perform which would prove God had met with him and was with him. When thrown to the ground, Moses' shepherding staff turned into a snake, then back to a staff as Moses retrieved it. Then as Moses reached inside his cloak, his hand would turn leprous, then would be healed again. Finally, God promised Moses that if further proof were needed, he should take water from the Nile, and it would turn to blood when he poured it on the ground.

But even in the face of these miracles, Moses expressed another great concern: his lack of eloquence. Although God promised to help him to speak and teach him what to say, Moses pleaded, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it." Moses felt so inadequate as a spokesman for God that even God's promise of help did not encourage him. So God permitted Moses' brother, Aaron, to speak for Moses; Moses would tell Aaron what to say as God revealed it to him (4:16).

God had chosen and prepared Moses to be His instrument of deliverance for Israel; the message of God and responsibility would be entrusted to Moses alone. So, with staff in hand, Moses set out to Egypt with God's name as a pledge that the LORD would be with him.

Read Exodus 3:1-10.

1. What were God's first words to Moses? How did Moses respond (3:4-6)?

Reference: Note 4, *angel of the LORD* (VS. 2), p. 19.

2. What did God tell Moses that He wanted to do for His people and why (3:7-8)?

3. What did God commission Moses to do (3:10)?

Read Exodus 3:11-4:17.

4. What objections did Moses make regarding God's direction for his life?

a. 3:11

b. 3:13

c. 4:1

d. 4:10

e. 4:13

5. What assurance did God give Moses in response to his first objection (3:12)?

6. How did God answer Moses' second concern (3:14-15)?

Reference: Note 1, *I AM*, p. 19.

7. Summarize the directions and promises of future events God gave Moses.
3:16-18a

3:18b-20

3:21-22

8. Describe the signs God gave Moses to prove He was from God (4:2-9).

9. a. How did God finally resolve Moses' fourth objection about his lack of eloquence (4:14-16)?

b. What were the LORD's final instructions to Moses (4:17)?

10. What do you observe about the character of God in this dialogue with Moses?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

When We Feel Inadequate

Moses was ready to be used by God to free his people at age forty when he was a prince in Egypt. But his response to God's call at age eighty, after having been a humble shepherd for forty years, was a very different: "O Lord, please send someone else to do it."

Why did God call Moses in the second state rather than the first? Why as a humbled shepherd but not a confident prince of Egypt?

Throughout Scripture, we see God calling the most unlikely people to do His tasks...choosing "the weak things of the world to shame the strong...so that no one may boast before Him" (I Corinthians 1:27, 29).

In His own way, God had prepared Moses. Within the courts of Pharaoh, Moses had learned about leadership of a nation from the world's most powerful leaders of the day. He had attended the most elite schools of Egypt to prepare him to pen most of the first five books of the Bible.

Moses had also been prepared by God on the back side of the desert while tending Jethro's flocks. There he learned to exist in the wilderness where he would later carry the responsibility of leading the nation of Israel in their long pilgrimage to the Promised Land. Most importantly, the wilderness experience would build the humility Moses needed to be greatly used of God. His sense of inadequacy enabled Moses to trust in God's strength and wisdom, rather than his own.

Like Moses, God will use all aspects of our past and present circumstances to equip us for the tasks He calls us to. He wastes nothing if we turn our lives over to Him moment by moment. God only asks for us to be available, and when we recognize our own inadequacy, we are more sensitive to his leadership in our lives. It is from this position of humility and faith that God can best use us to achieve His purposes for our lives.

God's desire was to use Moses as His instrument to rescue the needy Israelites. Moses would only grow to know and trust God as he chose to submit to His training program and take steps of faith in following Him. Like Moses, on our journey toward freedom there are steps of faith and consequent fears we will experience. But God understands these fears, and deals with us graciously, as He did with Moses, always promising "to be there with us."

In this lesson, we will look at some principles that encourage faith in the face of our inadequacies.

1. How does Numbers 12:3 describe Moses?

2. a. What do the Scriptures promise the one who is humble in spirit?

Psalm 18:27

Psalm 25:9

Proverbs 3:34

Proverbs 11:2

b. Exodus 33:11a states that God could speak to Moses face to face, as to a friend. Why do you think humility is necessary for intimacy with God and for receiving His strength for service?

3. Humility in the biblical sense is not a place of weakness. It is a disposition of yieldedness to God's guidance and authority that allows God to give us His strength (cf. 2 Chronicles 16:9). This was the strength He would provide for Moses to face the powerful Pharaoh of Egypt. The same strength is modeled perfectly in the life of Jesus Christ (cf. Matt 11:29; John 6:38; Phil 2:5-8). Moses reached a place of humility, and therefore strength, through the experiences of his life.

a. What are some ways Moses was humbled throughout his life?

b. What types of experiences can teach us invaluable lessons about our need for God's strength?

4. Humility, or submission to God's leadership, is developed in our lives through various means, and leads to freedom from dependence on ourselves. What does God promise when we realize our need for His grace?

Proverbs 3:5-6

2 Corinthians 9:8

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Ephesians 2:8-10

5. a. John 15 records how Jesus Christ described a life of submission to God. What does He promise?
John 15:5, 7-8, 9-10

John 14:15-17

Reference: Note 5, *Holy Spirit*, p. 20.

b. According to the following, what freedom will we experience as we learn to abide in Christ?
John 15:11

Galatians 5:6b

Galatians 5:22-23a

Summary

6. a. Over the years of your life, what experiences have caused you to see your own helplessness?

b. How can the failures and struggles of your life actually better equip you to be used of God to help others?

7. a. What strengths has God built into your life over time?

b. How can these strengths be used for His redemptive purposes in others' lives?

8. a. Whether you have known the Lord for a long time or are just beginning to study His Word, what is key to finding His purposes for your life?

b. What favorite Scripture verse from this lesson best relates this principle to you?

LESSON 2 NOTES:

1 Reference: Note 1, *Abrahamic Covenant*, p. 11.

2 *I AM WHO I AM* or *I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE* is the name by which God wished to be known and worshipped in Israel--the name that expressed his character as the dependable and faithful God who desires the full trust of his people (see v. 12, where "I will be" is completed by "with you"; see 34:5-7).

In 3:15 God told Moses to say to the sons of Israel that "YHWH, the God of your fathers... sent you." YHWH is the third person form of the same verb, *to be*, and means *He is* or *He will be* which is the form of the verb used when *we* speak of God. (i.e. God says, "I AM," and we say, "He is.")

While correct pronunciation of the Hebrew word YHWH has been lost, "Jehovah" is an incorrect spelling that developed from combining the consonants of the name with the vowels of a word for "Lord" (Adonai). "Yahweh" is probably the original pronunciation. The name eventually ceased to be pronounced because later Jews thought it too holy to be uttered and feared violating Exodus 20:7 and Leviticus 24:16. It is translated LORD in the NIV translation. *The NIV Study Bible*, pp. 91, 279.

3 *elders* (3:16). "The Hebrew for this word means literally "bearded ones," perhaps reflecting the age, wisdom, experience and influence necessary for a man expected to function as an elder. As heads of local families and tribes, "elders" had a recognized position also among the Babylonians, Hittites, Egyptians, Moabites and Midianites. Their duties included judicial arbitration and sentencing as well as military leadership and counsel." *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 91.

4 *angel of the LORD* (3:2) is used synonymously with "the LORD" and "God" in Exodus 3:4. Because of this, traditional Christian interpretation has held that this and other similar narratives in the Old Testament of this "angel" were theophanies, or a preincarnate manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ as

God's Messenger-Servant. But whether this "angel" was the second person of the Trinity or the Lord's personal messenger who spoke on His behalf (and so was identified with the One who sent him) remains uncertain. *The NIV Study Bible*, pp. 29, 90.

5 Holy Spirit. God has made Himself known in the Bible as a Trinity; three divine persons with the same essence as God. The Holy Spirit, known as the Third Person of the Trinity, indwells every person who personally receives Jesus Christ (John 1:12, 14:16-17). The Scriptures reveal the Holy Spirit not as an "it," but rather a "He," a distinct personality. He might also be referred to as the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:3; Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6). In John 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus that the Holy Spirit brings about regeneration or spiritual birth in the believer. While the Holy Spirit cannot be seen, we can see the evidence of His work (3:8). The Scriptures further tell us that when we ask God (Luke 11:13) to "fill" us with His Spirit (Ephesians 5:18b), He responds by supernaturally instructing and empowering us to live the Christian life (Ephesians 3:16-20; Ezekiel 36:26-27). Sometimes the Bible refers to this as "Christ in you," as in Colossians 1:27b.

LESSON 3

IT'S ALL IN A NAME

Exodus 4:29-7:7

Having accepted God's commission, Moses returned to his people in Egypt, and, with Aaron as his spokesman, called together the elders of the Israelites. As God had promised, the people believed that God had spoken to Moses and the signs God had given Moses to confirm his leadership. With hope and unity, they spontaneously bowed down and worshipped the LORD, for He had seen their suffering and had promised to become active on their behalf.

In this strength of spirit, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and confronted him with God's message: "This is what the LORD (YAHWEH), the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go.'" Pharaoh's response was to belittle the God of the Hebrew slaves. He established his position clearly: "I do not know YAHWEH, and I will not let Israel go." Furthermore, he accused Moses and Aaron of distracting the people from their work and increased their workload to an unbearable level.

With this turn of events, the high point of faith and worship quickly faded into division and discouragement. Moses was renounced again by the people, who were ready to trade any thought of deliverance for a return to the previous state of affairs, which now seemed tolerable! Moses complained to God, questioning his whole mission and accusing God of bringing trouble upon the people instead of the promised deliverance.

God offered no defense or comment in response to Moses' accusation, but simply restated His plan: "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh..." (6:1), and He again promised to force Pharaoh to drive the people out of Egypt. But more importantly, the LORD promised Moses that their deliverance would give the Israelites a great revelation of God, greater than their forefathers had known. Those gone before knew Him as God Almighty, *El Shaddai*, but not as YAHWEH¹ the ever-present and faithful God who would be with His people. Exodus 6:6-8 reflects the actions with which God promised to reveal His character as YAHWEH to Israel: "*I will bring you out.. I will deliver you.. I will redeem you...I will take you as my people...I will be your God...I will bring you to the land...I will give it to you...then you will know that I AM YAHWEH, your God.*"

Sadly, when Moses reported God's message of promise to the Israelites, they could not hear it because of their overwhelming discouragement and cruel bondage. Even so, Moses continued to listen to God for his people.

In contrast, Pharaoh's heart was already hardened. God told Moses that even though he would do incredible signs and wonders in Egypt, Pharaoh would refuse to listen. But God's plan for Israel would not be thwarted. Through His mighty deliverance, all of Egypt and Israel would know the name of the LORD -- all would know YAHWEH, the great I AM of Israel.

Read Exodus 4:29-5:21.

1. How did the Israelites respond when Moses and Aaron first told them of God's concern for their affliction and His plan for deliverance (4:31)?

2. a. How did Pharaoh receive Moses' statement from God (5:2)?

b. How did Pharaoh respond to their request to go to the wilderness to worship God (5:3-14).

3a. How did Pharaoh receive the reasonable appeal of Israelite foremen (5:15-18)?

b. As a result, what was the attitude of the Israelite foremen toward Moses and Aaron? (5:19-21).

Read Exodus 5:22-6:12.

4. a. What complaint did Moses bring to God (5:22-23)?

b. In response, what did the LORD declare to Moses (6:1)?

5. a. Exodus 6:2-8 could be titled, "The Gospel of Exodus." How did the LORD begin and end this dialogue with Moses (6:2, 8c)?

Reference: Note 2, *I AM...*, p. 19.

b. What aspects of God's name did the founding fathers of Israel-- Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob-- understand (6:3)?

c. What ancient promises was God being faithful to in the promised deliverance of Israel (6:3a, 4, 5c, 7a, 8; Genesis 17:1-8; 15:13-14)?

Reference: Note 1, *Abrahamic Covenant*, p. 11.

6. In Exodus 6:6, God gave Israel further revelation about His name. What do the first three verbs reveal about what God would do for Israel?

7. How did the people respond to this great revelation of God to Moses (6:9)?

Read Exodus 6:28-7:7.

8a. Describe the relationship between Moses & Pharaoh from God's perspective (7:1).

b. Describe the relationship between Moses and Aaron in Exodus 7:1.

Note: A prophet's responsibility was to receive and then communicate the message of God to the people. Moses was God's chosen prophet, but because of Moses' deep sense of inadequacy in public speaking (4:10-16), God would give Moses His message, and Moses would then tell Aaron what to say (making Moses "as God" to Aaron).

9. Pharaoh made the claim that he did not know Israel's God (5:2). How would he and Egypt come to know the name of the LORD (7:5)?

10. What characteristics of Moses / Aaron does the passage highlight (7:6-7)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

The Grace We Need in Desperate Times

The people of Israel hoped for an instant deliverance. . . obviously, so did Moses. They expected God to quickly deliver them from their painful circumstances as a result of their obedience. But instead, He allowed the situation to become far worse. To the people, Moses and Aaron seemed to have deluded them. To Moses, God looked cruel. Faith vanished in the face of their terrible disappointment and increased suffering.

But God understood their confusion and graciously honored their steps of faith. He knew what they did not: their situation would have to get worse before it got better to provide them a more complete deliverance. Pharaoh's hard-hearted choices were necessary to bring about the mighty acts of God's judgment that would cause the king to free the Israelites. Also, these acts would make Israel's deliverance so spectacular that fear of Israel's God would paralyze the surrounding kings, protecting Israel during their wilderness travels and supporting their conquest of the Promised Land.

But more than this, God's way would help Israel come to experience His magnificent grace toward them. Their bondage, not caused by God, but rather by proud, ruthless and powerful Egyptian leaders, could in no way be ended by their own efforts. The more intensely the people felt their need, the more they would be able to comprehend God's faithfulness and grace as He intervened in history to bring about their deliverance. They would come to know Him not just as God Almighty, but as their personal Savior.

The parallels are many with our spiritual pilgrimage. First, we must be careful not to blame God for situations in our lives which human wrong choices have caused. And when we realize our desperate need, we are most able to recognize and receive the wonderful grace of God to deliver us. He will ultimately free the faithful from every bondage of this life, but the discovery here and now of His unchanging presence and infinite love can bring a lasting joy to the soul which cannot be touched by life's ups and downs.

The Israelites could not see the overall picture, but their obedience *had* begun the process of deliverance that would lead them to freedom. What a story for us to keep in mind when we take steps of faith and obedience only to meet obstacles greater than those from which we sought relief. This is not, as we can see from the story, a time to give up, but rather to know that God is using the worsened circumstances to bring about a more complete deliverance. As we continue our study, let's make some observations from the Scriptures related to God's grace found in desperate times.

1. a. What situations in life can cause us to see our need for God's grace?

b. How might our response be similar to Israel's in Exodus 6:9?

2. a. How was Moses' response a better one? What did he do in Ex 5:22-23?

b. What do the Scriptures instruct us to do in times of despair? Psalm 62:8

c. In his book, *Why Us?*, Warren Wiersbe states that what we need most in times of suffering is not an explanation of why, but rather a fresh revelation of God's goodness and faithfulness to us. What does God promise those who approach Him honestly, as Moses did?

Psalm 34:18

Jeremiah 33:3

Isaiah 42:16

3. What was the Psalmist's discovery as he drew close to God in desperate times? Psalm 16:8, 11

Psalm 73:23-24

Psalm 73:25-26

4. What do these Scriptures instruct us to do in desperate times?

Psalm 27:13-14

Psalm 37:3a, 4

Psalm 37:5-7

Psalm 37:8-9

1 Peter 5:6-7

5. Of what do the following verses assure those who trust God through hard times?
Exodus 14:14

Romans 8:28

1 Peter 5:10

Summary

6. What have you learned from Moses about honesty with God regarding your needs?

7. Why is it important to wait on God when we are discouraged by the results of a step of faith?

8. a. How is the grace of God extended to you today? What promises does He ask you to put faith in in desperate times?

b. What are the greatest results of drawing near to God and trusting Him in desperate times?

LESSON 3 NOTES

1 Reference: Note 2, *I AM...*, p. 19.

2 Redemption. "The concept of redemption can only be fully understood by glimpsing the Biblical context of human beings held captive by the power of forces they cannot defeat. Only through intervention can that slavery be broken and freedom accomplished, often by paying a ransom. In the Old Testament, God intervened on behalf of Israel, taking the initiative in the great redemptive event from Egypt, the exodus (see Genesis 15:13-14; Exodus 1:11-14; 12:31-42; Psalm 105:23-39), where the goal was the enjoyment of life in the Promised Land. References in the Old Testament to redemption from sin point forward to the redemption from sin accomplished in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:24; Colossians 1:13-14). Though in the human arena freedom can be purchased through money, no human being can break the bondage of another human being to sin. No person can redeem another human being. We are all slaves to sin: Christ, however, paid the ransom with His blood, His death (Exodus 12:12-13; Leviticus 11,14; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 1:7; I Timothy 2:6). The goal of our redemption is to enjoy freedom from the guilt and power of sin and to live a life of service that reflects our new standing (Romans 3:24; 6:7, 22; Galatians 5:1, 13; I Peter 2:16). The goal will be fully achieved only at the resurrection on the last day (Romans 8:23; Ephesians 1:14)." *The NIV Topical Study Bible*, pp. 137-138, 1391.

LESSON 4

GOD'S REVELATION THROUGH JUDGMENT THE PLAGUES: PART I

Exodus 7:8-9:7

In the previous lesson, the Israelites were in such a state of bondage and discouragement that they were unable to hear the good news of God's name, *I will free* you and *I will redeem* you, which He had revealed to Moses. Pharaoh had flaunted his power over them by increasing their labor to an intolerable state and by taking a stand against their God, saying, "Who is the LORD that I should obey him?"

Now, as the LORD had instructed, Moses and Aaron approached Pharaoh a second time, who asked for a sign of their God. In response to Pharaoh's request, Aaron threw down his staff, which became a snake. When Pharaoh's sorcerers duplicated the miracle, Aaron's snake swallowed all of theirs. The miracle served to demonstrate the genuine conflict of powers between Moses' God and Pharaoh, as well as to foreshadow the outcome of the battle. Moses and Aaron were obvious victors in the contest, but Pharaoh chose to harden his heart,¹ just as the LORD had predicted (7:8-13). God knew from the beginning that Pharaoh would continue to resist and that all the powerful signs would not evoke belief. By the hard route, Pharaoh would come to know God's name, and that there was no one like Him in all the earth (9:14).

So the stage was set; the battle lines were drawn, and soon ten incredible plagues would reveal the existence and awesome power of Israel's God.

In the first plague, the touch of Moses' staff turned the water of the Nile into *blood*. Because the Egyptian magicians were able to duplicate this plague, Pharaoh was unmoved. The people were forced to dig beside the Nile for their drinking water. Seven days later, Moses stretched out his staff, and *frogs* covered the land. The magicians used sorcery to duplicate this miracle, so once again Pharaoh was unyielding. Continuing to follow the explicit directions given him by the LORD, Moses' staff caused the dust of Egypt to become *gnats*, a miracle which the magicians could not reproduce. They acknowledged the victor in the contest, confessing to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God" (8:19). Even so, Pharaoh's heart remained hard.

In the fourth plague, *flies* covered the land of Egypt. But, as the LORD had promised, this plague would not touch the land of Goshen where the Hebrews lived. The same distinction occurred with the fifth plague, in which all the Egyptian *livestock* died. But, as the LORD had promised Pharaoh, not one Hebrew animal died. These plagues highlighted God's intent to help and protect His people while judging Egypt. In the revelation of His name to Moses (6:6-8), God had said that through mighty acts of judgment, He would become their God, and they would become His people. Israel also was coming to know the name of YAHWEH and His special relationship to them.

After the land was ruined by flies, Pharaoh offered his first compromise to Moses: they could sacrifice to their God right there in the land of Egypt. Moses responded that the Egyptians would be repulsed by this and predicted they would stone his people. Then Pharaoh agreed to let the people go a short distance into the desert to worship. However, after God removed the flies, Pharaoh retracted his promise. The livestock plague brought no change in Pharaoh's stance, either. His heart remained "unyielding, and he would not let the people go" (9:7).

Read Exodus 7:8-14.

1. a. What happened when Aaron threw down his staff as the LORD had commanded (7:10-12)?

b. What did this foreshadow about the results of the battle to come between Pharaoh and God?

2. Describe the attitude of Pharaoh's heart before God sent the 1st plague (7:13-14).

Reference: Note 1, *Pharaoh's hardened heart*, p. 42.

Read Exodus 7:15-24.

3. a. How did the LORD describe the first plague to Moses so that the prophet could warn Pharaoh of its coming (7:17b-18)?

b. What did God intend Pharaoh to learn from this plague (7:17a)?

4. a. By what power did the Egyptian magicians duplicate the plague (7:22)?

Reference: Note 2, *secret arts*, p. 42.

b. What was Pharaoh's response (7:22-23)?

Read Exodus 7:25-8:15.

5. a. How did the LORD describe the second plague exactly as it would happen (8:2-4)?

b. What did Pharaoh request (8:8)?

6. a. What was Moses' intention in allowing Pharaoh to set the time that he would pray to God for the frogs to be taken away (8:9-10)?

b. What was Pharaoh's amazing response to God's answer to prayer (8:12-15)?

Read Exodus 8:16-19.

7. a. What did the magicians concede when they were unable to reproduce the plague of gnats (8:19)?

b. Did this have any effect on Pharaoh's heart (8:19b)?

Read Exodus 8:20-32.

8. a. What did God intend Pharaoh to learn from the distinction He made between peoples in the plague of flies (8:22-23)?

b. What would Israel also learn through this distinction as God spared them from not only this plague, but also the fifth (9:4,6), the seventh (9:26), the ninth (10:23) the tenth (11:7), and probably also the sixth and eighth plagues (9:11; 10:6)?

9. a. How did Pharaoh attempt to make Moses and the people compromise what God had told them to do (8:25, cf. 8:27)?

b. What did Moses think would have resulted (8:26)?

10. What did Pharaoh promise so God would remove the flies (8:28), then what did he do (8:30-31)?

Read Exodus 9:1-7.

11. What did the LORD promise Pharaoh that came to pass in the plague of the livestock (9:7)

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Freedom from Stubbornness

As we observe Moses and Pharaoh, we see two men in contrast standing firm. But for Moses, his stand was one of persevering, or persisting, in the way of faith. Pharaoh's stand, on the other hand, was one of stubbornness, a headstrong resistance toward God and His way. After giving Pharaoh many opportunities to change his mind, the LORD allowed Pharaoh to have his way, confirming Pharaoh's decision to resist Him and responding accordingly.

God knew Pharaoh's stubbornness would not change and therefore incorporated Pharaoh's decision into His eternal plan of redemption. But Pharaoh was destroyed by his resistance toward God, and an entire nation suffered as a result.

While it is easy to stand in awe of Pharaoh's obstinacy, we can learn from him about the need for freedom from this common human trait. Let's look at the price to be paid for a stubborn spirit, and God's desire that we would not be held under its bondage.

1. How would you define stubbornness?

2. a. What do you think were the main causes of stubbornness in Pharaoh?

b. The following Scriptures describe Pharaoh and his eventual downfall. What do these also suggest may cause stubbornness?

Proverbs 16:18

Proverbs 15:27a

Jeremiah 17:11

2 Peter 2:10

3. a. Later, we will see how Israel, as God's people, also exhibited stubbornness toward God. What characterized their stubbornness?

Psalm 78:8

Jeremiah 32:33 (Isaiah 48:4)

b. What warnings did the LORD give Israel?

Psalm 32:9

Malachi 2:2

4. a. What causes people to be resistant or stubborn toward God's leadership in their lives?

b. What are some subtle ways we ignore God and His leading for our lives?

c. What general results of ignoring God and His principles for life are exemplified in Pharaoh's story?

5. What effect does stubbornness have on our relationships with other people?

6. a. The Bible states that we each have a "fleshly" or "sinful" nature that insists on its own way and is always at war against our desire to do right. How is this battle described in Romans 7:15, 18-23?

Galatians 5:17

b. How is the battle against this stubborn nature won? What choices give power to overcome stubbornness according to the following?

Galatians 5:16

Romans 8:5-7

Reference: Note 5, *Holy Spirit*, p. 20.

7. a. What kind of wisdom does the Spirit of Christ produce in us when we ask Him to control our lives? James 3:17

b. The Holy Spirit also constrains us to make a firm stand for right, as Moses did. How is this encouraged in 1 Corinthians 15:58?

Summary

8. a. How did stubbornness keep Pharaoh in bondage, even though he was the king of a great and wealthy nation?

b. How can stubbornness put a person in bondage? Why is it important to combat stubbornness with God and others?

9. a. While stubbornness in relationship with God or others may give a sense of maintaining power and control, how might the opposite really be true?

b. What is the difference between being stubborn and setting healthy boundaries with other people?

10. a. If there are situations in your life where you are wrestling with a stubborn spirit toward God or other people, what choices can you make to overcome it?

b. How will these choices affect your relationship with God and other people?

11. Is there a favorite verse from this lesson you want to remember?

LESSON 4 NOTES

1 *Pharaoh's hardened heart.* In the first five of the plagues God brought on Egypt, Pharaoh willfully chose to *harden his heart* toward God (see 7:13-14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34-35). With the sixth plague, God confirmed the Pharaoh's choice to disregard Him. At that point, God began to fulfill the prophecy He had given Moses in 3:20 and 4:21: "I will harden his heart" (cf. 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8). *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 92.

The problem of human opposition to God remains a mystery which the Bible does not attempt to resolve logically. Common to Hebrew thought is the idea of two seemingly contradictory ideas held together in tension. It is a *both/and* way of thinking as opposed to the Greek's more logical *either/or* way of thinking. *Both* God's power is supreme and overcomes the forces of evil, *and* each individual retains the power to make real decisions for or against God. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility mysteriously co-exist in this question of Pharaoh's hardened heart. Certainly in the

beginning, the expression, "Pharaoh hardened his heart," referred simply to the resistance he had toward the miraculous signs that God demonstrated to achieve the freedom of His people. Each time that a plague was removed, Pharaoh would again feel in control of the situation and resist God's purpose in the sign. Clearly in Exodus 9:2, there is still an *if-then* situation; *if* Pharaoh refuses to let the people go, *then* the LORD will bring a terrible plague. He had a choice. Eventually, after repeated opportunities to let the people go and the resulting signs that demonstrated God's strong hand were resisted, Pharaoh's hardened heart became part of the judgment on Egypt. *Both* Pharaoh resists God according to his own free choice *and* God's judgment on Egypt is such that Pharaoh will not listen. Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* p. 153. See also Note 1, *The LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart*, on page 35.

2 *secret arts*.(7:11, 22). The Egyptian sorcerers and magicians were able to duplicate Moses' miracles by trickery or illusion, or some may have used satanic power since worshipping gods of the underworld was part of their religion. Ironically, whenever the sorcerers duplicated one of Moses' plagues, it only made matters worse. If the magicians had been as powerful as God, they would have reversed the plagues, not added to them." *The Life Application Bible*, p. 114.

LESSON 5

GOD'S REVELATION THROUGH JUDGMENT THE PLAGUES: PART II

Exodus 9:8-11:10

In the sixth plague, *boils* broke out on Egyptian men and animals, causing the magicians to crumble before Moses. Still Pharaoh was unyielding, and now God hardened Pharaoh's heart.¹ After many opportunities to heed Moses' warnings, God allowed Pharaoh's proud and resistant heart to become permanently set.

As the battle intensified, the LORD warned Pharaoh that now He was going to send the full force of His plagues against Egypt. "For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth," He declared. "But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth" (9:14-16). Pharaoh's belligerence, far from being a threat to God, had been foreordained to bring about the revelation of God in all the earth!

After this proclamation, Moses announced the seventh plague: a fierce *hailstorm*. In this plague, not only would God make a distinction by sparing His people's land of Goshen from the hail, but another distinction was made. This time, Pharaoh's officials were given a choice to obey or disobey God. They were told to bring their livestock and possessions to a place of shelter because everything in the fields would die from the hail. Those who feared the word of the LORD obeyed, and their livestock and servants were spared. But the officials who ignored the LORD's warning were destroyed. It appeared that even some Egyptians were blessed with a knowledge of and belief in God through the plagues, fulfilling God's promise to bless all peoples of the earth through Abraham's descendants.²

Desperate to stop the hail, Pharaoh experienced a brief moment of repentance. However, when the LORD ended the storm, Pharaoh broke his promise to let the Israelites go. This time, the Scriptures record that Pharaoh *and* his officials hardened their hearts (9:34). Those officials who ignored the word of the LORD also shared the responsibility of Egypt's destruction with Pharaoh. Before going to Pharaoh to warn him of the next plague, the LORD expressed His purposes for Israel regarding the plagues: ". . . so that you may tell your children and grandchildren . . . how I performed my signs among them [Egyptians] . . . and that you may know that I AM the LORD (YAHWEH)" (10:2). Israel was also coming to know their God through the plagues, and His inclusion of their children and grandchildren was a wonderful promise to be with His people through every new generation.

After this, Moses warned Pharaoh of the eighth plague during which swarming *locusts* would devour every green thing left in Egypt after the hail. On hearing this, Pharaoh's officials pressed him to give in. "Do you not yet realize that Egypt is ruined?" they pleaded. So Pharaoh weakly offered a second compromise to Moses. He would allow the Hebrew men only to go and worship God. But this was unacceptable to Moses, and Pharaoh became angry, driving Moses and Aaron out of his presence. But the locusts brought another quick repentance and promise to allow the people to go worship God at their festival, a promise he once again broke.

The ninth plague was a *thick darkness* in Egypt, lasting three days and preventing anyone from seeing or going anywhere. But in Goshen, where the Israelites lived, there was light. This time, Pharaoh agreed to let the people go if they left their livestock behind.³ But Moses told him they needed all the livestock to

be prepared for sacrificial worship. Pharaoh became so furious with Moses that he retorted, "Get out of my sight! Do not appear before me again! . . .The day you see my face you will die" (10:28).

Moses agreed never to come to Pharaoh again and was also "hot with anger" (11:8) as he announced the tenth and final plague. In this plague, every *firstborn son* of man and beast in Egypt would die, including Pharaoh's son. This, Moses declared, would cause Pharaoh to demand the Hebrew people leave his land.

Read Exodus 9:8-35.

1. Why didn't God destroy Egyptians through the first 5 plagues (9:14-16)?

2. a. In the plague of hail, God protected His own people in the land of Goshen. Who else did He protect from the hail? What was special about these people (9:20)?

b. What had God promised Abraham, the father of the Hebrews that was fulfilled in Egypt? (Gen12:3b.)

3. a. Did Pharaoh truly repent when he asked Moses to pray for the LORD to stop the hail (9:27-28)? What did Moses know (9:30)?

b. What happened as soon as the hail stopped (9:34-35)?

Read Exodus 10:1-29.

4. God used Pharaoh's stubborn arrogance for His purposes (9:16b; 10:1). What did God want Israel to know and do as a result of the miraculous signs done among the Egyptians (10:2)?

Reference: Note 1, *The LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart*, p. 35, and Note 2, *I AM*, p. 19.

5. a. How intense was the plague of locusts (10:14-15)?

b. How immense was the plague of darkness (10:21-23a)?

c. The contrast between Goshen and Egypt during the plague of total darkness might have symbolized the struggle of powers that continued throughout the plagues. What was the condition of Israel in the midst of the struggle with Pharaoh (10:23b)?

Reference: Note 4, *I will deal differently*, p. 43.

6. a. What three compromises did Pharaoh offer Moses to allow the people to go and worship their God (8:25-28; 10:8-11, 24-27)?

Reference: Note 3, *leave livestock behind*, p. 42.

b. What was Moses general response to Pharaoh's offers?

Read Exodus 11:1-10.

7. In battle, the victors usually plundered the valuable belongings of the losers. What aspects of a total victory in battle would be evidenced as Israel left Egypt (11:2-3)?

8. How did God describe the difference between the condition of the Egyptians and the Israelites as He gave warning of the last plague (11:6-7)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Freedom from Greed

For years, the Hebrew people had spent their lives building the material grandeur of Egypt and Pharaoh. Pharaoh's stubborn refusal to release the Hebrew slaves was greatly motivated by his greed for power and the riches the slaves afforded him and his kingdom. Greed had not only enslaved the poor Hebrews, but also the rich Egyptians. Finally, as the Israelites left the city, the Egyptian people

would be so favorably disposed toward the slaves that they would freely give them their cherished possessions to take with them.

Materialism through the centuries has blinded people to their inhumane treatment of others and from coming to know God. In His teachings, Jesus addressed the issue of money and material possessions more than almost any other topic. As He taught rich and poor alike, He showed that money is not morally neutral, but a power that seeks to dominate people of all economic levels. But God's desire is to set us free from being controlled by possessions. In this lesson, we will review biblical principles that can help us experience freedom from the domination of material possessions.

1. a. God has gifted some people at investment and money making. What is the focus necessary to be right with God regarding giving and our possessions?

b. What part does heart attitude play in the giving that pleases God and blesses us?

2 a. Why is the topic of greed such a difficult one for us to discuss?

b. How would you define greed?

3. a. Why did greed have a major part in Pharaoh's refusal to let the Hebrew slaves go?

b. How do the following biblical principles related to greed reflect Pharaoh's experience?
Proverbs 11:28

Proverbs 14:31

Proverbs 18:11

Proverbs 28:27

4. a. What attitudes can save us from Pharaoh's plight?

Proverbs 11:24-25

Proverbs 15:16

Proverbs 19:17

Proverbs 23:4

Jeremiah 9:23-24

b. What other principles about material possessions are given in the following passages?

1 Timothy 6:6-7

1 Timothy 6:9-10

Hebrews 13:5

4. Summarize the principles from Jesus' teachings that set us free from the domination of things.

Luke 12:15-21

Matthew 6:19-21

Matthew 6:31-33

5. What freeing perspectives on possessions, which apply to rich and poor, are found in 1 Tim 6:17-19?

Summary

6. Pharaoh was enslaved by greed, even though a king. What do you learn from Pharaoh with regard to material possessions?

7. What do you desire to maintain in your life in order to stay free of the domination of material things?

LESSON 5 NOTES

1 *The LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart* (9:12; 10:20; 11:10). "Did God really harden Pharaoh's heart and force him to do wrong? Before the ten plagues began, Moses and Aaron announced what God would do if Pharaoh didn't let the people go. But their message only made Pharaoh stubborn--he was hardening his own heart. In so doing, he defied both God and his messengers. Through the first six plagues, Pharaoh's heart grew even more stubborn. After the sixth plague, God passed judgment. Sooner or later, evil people will be punished for their sins. When it became evident that Pharaoh wouldn't change, God confirmed Pharaoh's prideful decision and set the painful consequences of his actions in motion. God didn't force Pharaoh to reject him, rather, he gave him every opportunity to change his mind. In Ezekiel 33:11, God says, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked." *The Life Application Bible*, p. 121. See also Note 1, *Pharaoh's hardened heart*, p. 35.

2 Reference: Note 1, *Abrahamic Covenant*, p. 11.

3 *leave livestock behind* (10:24). Pharaoh wanted to be sure if the Hebrew slaves left, they would come back, thus the insistence that only the men go (10:11), or that they leave livestock behind. Pharaoh's reluctance to let the Hebrew people go was because they were free labor, the builders of

Egypt's great cities. It was hard for the ruler of Egypt to let such a great resource go. *The Life Application Bible*, p. 120.

4 *I will deal differently, the LORD makes a distinction* (8:22; 11:7). See also Exodus 33:16. God made a 'distinction' (8:23; 11:7), between Moses' people and Pharaoh's people in the fourth, fifth, seventh, ninth, tenth, and probably also the sixth and eighth plagues, demonstrating that the LORD could preserve his own people while judging Egypt. *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 97.

LESSON 6

PASSOVER: PAST AND PRESENT

Exodus 12:1-13:16

When Pharaoh angrily ordered Moses to leave his presence and never come back, Moses announced the tenth plague that would come on Egypt. In this final judgment, which would cause Pharaoh to submit to God, all firstborn sons of both men and animals in Egypt would die.

Then the LORD gave Israel instructions for their protection during the plague, a protection which would forever be called the Passover. The ritual they would perform would allow God to pass over the households of the faithful in Israel as death visited every other family in Egypt.

The narrative on the Passover in Exodus 12 can be confusing unless you understand that it included (1) instructions for that night, and (2) instructions for the yearly celebration which would forever commemorate God's deliverance (see note 7, p. 60 for the breakdown of these two within the passage).

The celebration of the Passover would have such importance in the religious life of the Hebrew community that the LORD instructed Moses to make this the first month of the year for Israel.¹ This would serve as a reminder to Israel that the beginning of her life as the people of God was marked by God's redemptive act in delivering them from the domination of the Egyptians.

In the previous plagues, God had protected His people. But this time there was no automatic exemption for Israel. Instead, God gave Moses and Aaron very specific instructions for the appropriation of His protection. Each family was told to quickly slaughter an unblemished lamb. They were then instructed to take a bunch of hyssop,² dip it into the basin of blood, and place the blood on the top and both sides of the door frame of their houses. Moses told them that when the LORD went through the land to strike down the Egyptians, He would "pass over" and not destroy the occupants of the houses that were under the sign of the blood.

The distinction made in this plague was not based on the fact that these people were descendants of Abraham, nor on their individual righteousness, but completely on their obedience to God's plan as given through Moses. No one questioned the reasonableness or unreasonableness of the ritual. Instead,

the Israelites responded by bowing down in worship and "they did just what the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron" (12:28).

At midnight, death struck all the firstborn in Egypt, including Pharaoh's son. So Pharaoh summoned Moses, commanding him, "Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go." (12:31--32).

Fearful for their lives, the Egyptians were eager for the Israelites to leave, and freely gave them their silver, gold, and clothing, which Moses had instructed his people to request. The writer of Exodus describes their departure as if they were conquerors, having "plundered the Egyptians" (12:36).

For Israel, the Passover was a memorial to the deliverance from Egypt which had displayed God's redemptive nature toward His people. But the New Testament also explains this great event as a foreshadowing of God's true redemption in Christ. The Israelites' struggle for liberation from an Egyptian tyrant was like Christ's struggle and victory over sin and death, allowing those who believe to experience freedom from these evil destructive forces. The imagery of the perfect lamb which was slaughtered became the symbol for the sinless Son of God, slain on the cross to demonstrate the tremendous price God had to pay for our redemption. Looking back to the events of Passover and Exodus from what Christ accomplished in the New Testament magnifies the intensity of the struggle and the immensity of the victory that was won on the cross.

Read Exodus 12:1-13.

1. a. Describe the lambs to be used for the Passover (12:5).

b. What sign did God give Israel to ensure them of His protection and deliverance (12:7, 13)?

Read Exodus 12:21-23; 27b-28.

2. a. What were the people also instructed to do in order to receive God's protection (12:22c)?

b. What was their response to Moses' instructions (12:27c-28)?

Read Exodus 12:14-20; 12:24-27; 13:1-16.

3. a. The LORD wanted *every succeeding generation* of Israelites to personalize their redemption through the exodus. What phrases in the following commands emphasize this (12:14, 17, 24-25; 13:3, 4-5, 10)?

b. Besides the Passover lamb, what were some of the other rituals that would make their salvation real to future descendants of Abraham? 12:14-20 (13:3-10)

Note: *no yeast* (12:19). Yeast later became symbolic of sin, like hypocrisy in Luke 12:1 and malice and wickedness in 1 Corinthians 5:8. The unleavened bread would also remind them of their hasty exodus (cf. 12:39).

Reference: Note 3, *firstborn redemption*, and Note 4, *The Passover and Feast of the Unleavened Bread*, p.49 . (13:1-2, 12-15)

4. a. What part would parents play in the ongoing understanding of God's redemptive love (12:26-27a, 13:14)?

b. How would the Hebrew people be set apart by practicing these rituals (13:9, 16)?

Read Exodus 12:43-49.

5. How could a non-Israelite celebrate the LORD's Passover (12:48-49)?

Reference: Note 5, *Circumcision*, p. 50.

Read Exodus 12:29-42.

6. The tenth and final plague caused all of Egypt to acknowledge the name of Israel's God: "I am YAHWEH." What was the ultimate power demonstrated in this plague (12:12, 29-30)?

Reference: Note 6, *judgment on all the gods*, p. 50.

7. a. Why were the Egyptians anxious for the people of Israel to leave quickly (12:33)?

b. How was Israel's exodus like the victory of a conquering people (12:35-36)?

8. Describe the procession out of Egypt (12:37-38).

Note: "The total number of people leaving Egypt is estimated to have been about two million. The 'many other people' may have been Egyptians and others who were drawn to the Hebrews by God's mighty works and who decided to leave Egypt with them." *The Life Application Bible*, p. 123.

9. What promises did God make to Abraham hundreds of years earlier which had now been completely fulfilled (Genesis 15:13-14)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Beginnings of Freedom: Making the Passover Personal

God's deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt was the salvation event of the Old Testament. This event, rooted in the faithfulness and love of God, would be celebrated annually in the Passover. Additionally, psalmists would write songs about it, and prophets would often point to God's grace, which had been so clearly revealed through the exodus.

The Scriptures reveal that the saving act of the New Testament was the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, beautifully foreshadowed in the Passover and Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Jesus, the perfect Passover Lamb, gave His life so that those who believe would be passed over, forgiven of their sins, in the day of judgment. The exodus looked forward to the freedom from sin's bondage which would be provided through faith in Christ.

The elements of the Passover meal--the sacrificial lamb, the unleavened bread and bitter herbs (representing bitter slavery in Egypt)--served to help every new generation of Israelites believe in God's redemptive grace. They also foreshadowed God's ultimate salvation through His Son. The sinless Christ (symbolized by the sacrificial lamb and unleavened bread) gave His life that we might be delivered from "bitter slavery" to sin and death (foreshadowed by the bitter herbs) and set free to live a new life.

As the annual Passover served to remind the Jewish people of God's redemption and deliverance, the LORD's Supper, instituted by Jesus on the eve of His crucifixion, was given to help us and our children understand and put faith in God's great gift of redemption and deliverance in Jesus.

As we contemplate the Passover and exodus of the Israelites, let's look more closely at the parallels in the New Testament which help us to personalize the Passover in our lives today.

1. a. The Scriptures teach that the great bondage common to man is a sinful nature, or inclination to do wrong, which separates us from a holy God and leads to death (Romans 7:21-23; 3:23; 6:23). How did John the Baptist refer to Jesus in John 1:29?

b. What redemption did Jesus, the sinless Lamb of God, bring about through His death & resurrection?
1 Peter 1:18-19 (2:22)

Isaiah 53:5-6

Reference: Note 2, *Redemption*, p. 27, and Note 3, *firstborn redemption*, p. 49.

2. How did Jesus explain the new promise of God as He ate the Passover meal with His disciples the night before His crucifixion?
Matthew 26:26-28

1 Corinthians 11:24-25

3. a. The celebrations commemorating God's salvation through the Passover and exodus were designed to make the faithfulness and love of God real and personal to individuals in each new generation. How is the celebration of the LORD's Supper similar?

b. Israelite parents were responsible to explain the rituals to their children to prevent Passover rituals from losing their meaning in succeeding generations. What is our responsibility as parents today?

4. a. What did the people of Israel have to do in order to receive God's salvation (Exodus 12:27c-28)?

b. What must we do to receive God's salvation through Christ?

Romans 10:9

Romans 3:22-24

5. a. What did the exodus teach the Israelites about God's character which the Passover celebrations reflected to their offspring?

b. What does God's salvation through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, teach about the character of God which we are to pass on to our children?

6. When we declare Jesus Christ to be our personal Lord and Savior, how do these verses describe the new freedom that begins?

2 Corinthians 5:17 (1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

Ezekiel 36:26-27

Summary

7. How was Israel's terrible bondage in Egypt similar to our human struggle with sin and death?

8. How is freedom in Christ different from any other freedom we can experience?

9. If this lesson has made clear for the first time what God has done for you in Christ, perhaps you would want to take a moment and receive the gift of salvation He offers. The following is a suggested prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you for becoming the sacrificial Lamb of God that I might be forgiven of my sin and set free to live a new life in You. I now acknowledge you as my Savior and declare you the Lord of my life.

LESSON 6 NOTES

1 *First month* (12:2). The initiation of the *religious* calendar in Israel started the new year on the 14th of Nisan (our April) and was a reminder to Israel that her life as the people of God was grounded in God's redemptive act in the exodus. During the time of the kings, the *civil* or agricultural calendar, which started in the fall, began to be used alongside the religious calendar. Judaism today uses only the calendar that begins in the fall.

2. *Hyssop*. It probably refers to an aromatic plant of the mint family with a straight stalk and white flowers. The hairy surface of the leaves and branches held liquids well and made it suitable for use as a sprinkling device. *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 102.

3 *firstborn redemption* (12:29-30). The verb 'redeem' means 'obtain release by means of payment.' Because of the economic importance of pack animals, firstborn donkeys (13:13) were redeemable through sacrificing a lamb. Humans, that is firstborn sons, were to be consecrated to the Lord by their life, not by their death (see Gen. 22:12; Num. 3:39-51, Romans 12:1). *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 105.

"Every firstborn child of the Egyptians died, but the Israelite children were spared because the blood of the lamb had been placed on their door frames. So begins the story of redemption, the central theme of the Bible. *Redemption* means 'to buy back' or 'to save from captivity by paying a ransom.' One way to buy back a slave was to offer an equivalent or superior slave in exchange. That is the way God chose to buy us back--he offered his Son in exchange for us. In Old Testament times, God accepted symbolic offerings. Jesus had not yet been sacrificed, so God accepted the life of an animal in place of the life of the sinner. When Jesus came, He substituted his perfect life for our sinful lives, taking the penalty for sin that we deserve. Thus he redeemed us from the power of sin and restored us to God. Our part is to trust him and accept his gift of eternal life. Our sins have been paid for, and the way has been cleared for us to begin a relationship with God (Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:13-15, 23-26)." *The Life Application Bible*, p. 123. See also Note 2, *Redemption*, p. 27.

4 *Passover* and *Feast of Unleavened Bread*. These two celebrations really constituted a double festival. These most important of all annual Jewish celebrations commemorated the redemption of the firstborn in Israel (see note 3 above), the deliverance of the Jews from Egyptian bondage, and the establishment of Israel as a nation redeemed by God. The Passover Feast took place in the evening. The Feast of the Unleavened Bread began on the day after the Passover and lasted seven days (Lev. 23:5-8).

5 *Circumcision* was the cutting off of the foreskin, a practice which originated in various western Semitic cultures as a religious act. The Hebrew rite was instituted by God as a sign of the covenant between Him and Abraham. God commanded Abraham and all his household to be circumcised. The rite was required of every male Jew (descendant of Abraham) and any foreigner joining themselves to the Hebrew nation. This act assured the recipient of admittance to the fellowship of the covenant people and of a share in the promises of God to Israel. Circumcision metaphorically symbolized cutting away pride and sinfulness of the heart" (Leviticus 26:41, Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4; Acts 7:51). Because circumcision predated the Laws of Moses, the heart attitude behind this act was first and foremost true faith in God.

6 *judgment on all the gods* (12:12). Each plague revealed the powerlessness of another Egyptian god. The Nile god (Hapi) could not keep the waters from turning to blood. The cow-goddess (Hathor) could not save the Egyptian livestock. The sun-god (Amon-Re), chief Egyptian god, could not prevent the three-day darkness over the land. "The Egyptian gods were (1) impersonal, centering around images like the sun or the river, (2) numerous, (3) nonexclusive. By contrast, the God of the Hebrews was (1) a living personal Being, (2) the only true God, and (3) the only God who should be worshiped. God was proving to both the Hebrews and the Egyptians that he alone is the living and all-powerful God." *The Life Application Bible*, p. 120.

7 *The exodus narrative* of Exodus 12:1-13:16 mixes (1) account of the exodus events and (2) instruction for future rituals and yearly celebrations commemorating those events. Rough breakdown:

Passover Celebrations	Events of Passover	Exodus Consecration of Firstborn
12:1-11	12:1-5,7-11	13:1-2
12:14-20	12:12-13	13:11-16
12:43-49	12:21-23	
13:3-10	12:27-42	
	12:50-51	

LESSON 7

VICTORY AT THE RED SEA

Exodus 13:17-14:31

God had brought about a great deliverance for His people; yet as they left Egypt with silver and gold, token signs of the spoils of victory, Israel must have wondered what lay ahead. They had come to know experientially the character of their God, YAHWEH or *I will be who I will be*, as He brought them out of Egypt with mighty acts of judgment against Pharaoh and his people. They were only beginning to comprehend what it meant to be God's people, and they must have wondered if He would truly fulfill His ancient promise to Abraham to give his descendants the land of Canaan (cf. 6:6-8). Now, as two million men, women and children walked into the wilderness, would God be as dependable and his character as unchanging as His name, YAHWEH,¹ depicted?

Certainly, their questions would be answered in the events of this lesson. From the beginning of Israel's journey out of Egypt, God was clearly and gently leading them. He knew their depleted physical and emotional condition well and purposefully led them on a longer route toward the Red Sea² to avoid possible war on the Philistine road to Canaan. Yet in the next sentence, the narrator describes the Israelites as going up from Egypt "armed for battle" (13:18). It is hard to imagine a large band of men with their women and children, leaving Egypt in haste with their kneading troughs on their shoulders as a nation armed for battle! Perhaps the writer was referring to the fact that they were organized for march or had spears, bows and slings for protection.

But what quickly becomes very clear is that the LORD was armed for battle, and His Presence was sufficient as He went before them in the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night.³ Like the commanding general of an army, the LORD directed Moses to turn Israel back and have them camp by the sea. Pharaoh would think they were confused and wandering, and He and his officials would ask themselves why they had been so foolish to let the Israelite slaves go. They would come after their easy prey, whose backs were against the sea, only to discover the second part of God's strategy for Israel: He not only planned to free His people from slavery in Egypt but also to totally destroy their enemy so that His name might become known throughout the earth.

God revealed this plan to Moses beforehand, but as Pharaoh's army, as expected, approached the Israelites, the people panicked like a band of slaves who had no hope for freedom. They asked Moses why he had not left them alone in Egypt. In their fear, they cried out that it would have been better to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert! Moses' patient response to the people: "Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today . . . The LORD will fight for you; you need only be still." (14:13, 14).

Then the LORD commanded Moses to lead the people on toward the sea and to raise his staff, stretching out his hand over the waters so that the Israelites could cross on dry ground. As Moses obeyed, the LORD brought an incredible east wind⁴ which parted the enormous waters and made a dry-ground passageway of such proportions as to allow two million people and their animals to pass through! The LORD also threw the Egyptian army into confusion and made the wheels of their chariots come off. Through the night, the Israelites passed through the sea by the light of the pillar of fire. The Egyptians followed, but were kept at distance by the dark side of the pillar of fire. The Egyptians finally concluded: "Let's get away! The LORD is fighting for them!" But when they tried to escape, Moses again stretched his hand over the sea, and it went back to its place, drowning the entire Egyptian army.

The victory at the sea was truly God's victory. Israel made no claim of being an active participant, but emerged from the sea as a people testifying that their deliverance was an act of God. Their response was a reasonable faith: "When the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in Him and in Moses His servant" (14:31).

Many years later, the Apostle Paul would interpret Israel's passing through the sea on dry land as a type of Christian baptism (I Corinthians 10:1-4). The Old Testament parallel helps us understand more clearly the radical change that is symbolized by baptism⁵ as a believer. On one side of the sea, Israel was pursued by her enemies, enemies who were completely destroyed by the LORD as He fought for her. On the other side of the sea, Israel became a free people who feared the LORD and trusted Him to guide the journey that lay ahead.

Read Exodus 13:17-14:31.

1. How did God initially protect His people (13:17-18)?

2. Hundreds of years earlier, God made promises to Abraham (Genesis 15:16) and later Jacob (Genesis 46:3-4). At his death, Jacob's son Joseph was firmly convinced of God's promises (Genesis 50:24-25). What stood as a reminder to Israel of God's faithfulness and this godly forefather's faith (13:19)?

3. a. What was God's battle plan as commanding general of Israel's army (14:2-4)?

b. What would result from Pharaoh's total defeat (14:4, 17-18)?

Note: *glory* is the display of God's divine attributes and perfections, the revelation of His true nature.

Reference: Note 1, *The LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart*, p. 42.

4. a. How does Exodus 14:10-12 display the vulnerability of God's people?

b. Whom did they blame for their troubles (14:11-12)?

c. What was Moses' response and declaration (14:13-14)?

5. a. Describe God's physical presence with His people (13:21-22; 14:19).

Reference: Note 3, *the pillar of cloud*, p. 57.

b. How did His presence protect them during the night (14:20)?

6. a. What did God do as He fought for Israel?
14:21-22

14:24-25a

Reference: *the Lord looked down* (14:24). See Note 6, *The Human God*, p. 66.

b. What was Egypt's response (14:23, 25b)?

c. God finally reckoned with Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who had carried out many barbarous acts toward His people and proudly defied God Himself. How did the battle end (14:26-30)?

7. What was Israel's very logical response to this awesome revelation of God's faithfulness and power (14:31)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Freedom from Fear

When the Israelites saw Pharaoh and his vast army and chariots coming, they were afraid, and they had reason to be! From a human perspective, they were hopelessly trapped with the sea at their backs. Surely many men, women and children would die by the Egyptian sword before the rest were returned to cruel bondage in Egypt.

But what Israel was about to learn is still true for us today. No matter how desperate our circumstances may appear, God is ever faithful to His promises and mighty to save. The more we gain confidence in these truths, the more freedom from anguish we will experience in the fearful and seemingly hopeless situations of life.

In light of the spectacular story of the Red Sea crossing, let's look at keys to finding peace and freedom from fear in our lives today.

1. a. What typical human experiences can produce fear in our lives?

b. What were some negative ways that the Israelites dealt with their fear?

c. How can unhealthy responses to fear only magnify or create more problems?

2. The first response of the Israelites was to look outward at their circumstances rather than turning upward toward God for help. Pharaoh and the Israelites quickly forgot God's power and authority which had been demonstrated in Egypt through the plagues. As we contemplate their reactions to the situation at the Red Sea and observe the following Scriptures, what healthy and unhealthy responses to fear do you see?

Healthy Response

Unhealthy Response

Proverbs 28:26

Proverbs 3:5

3. a. Another result of looking outward rather than upward in fearful times is that we often waste energy trying to gain control of the situation ourselves. The instinct is to *do* something rather than to first

wait on God to receive His direction. Moses instructed the people not to be afraid, but to stand still and watch for the LORD's deliverance. "The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still" (14:14). How is this principle reiterated in the following Scriptures?
Psalm 37:7-8

Psalm 46:10a

Isaiah 30:15a

1 Peter 5:6-7

b. What can we do as we determine to be still and wait for the LORD to lead us through the battle?
Psalm 5:3

Isaiah 40:31

James 1:5

4. a. The Twenty-Third Psalm, perhaps the most well-known passage in the Bible, depicts the LORD as a good Shepherd, who leads, guides and protects. What did the Psalmist declare as he focused on the LORD during fearful times? Psalm 23:4

b. How do the promises of the following verses also encourage us to trust God to lead, guide and protect as we face fearful situations?
Deuteronomy 31:6

Psalm 32:7-8

2 Chronicles 20:15b (Exodus 14:14)

5. a. The Red Sea miracle demonstrated the LORD's faithfulness to His people. What are His promises to us today as we face fearful situations?

Isaiah 43:2-3a

Zephaniah 3:17

b. In light of the story of the Red Sea crossing and the Scriptures we have studied in this lesson, what is the constructive response to situations in which we are afraid or feel despair?

Psalm 27:1-3

Hebrews 10:23

Summary

6. a. Are there fearful circumstances in your life right now?

b. What can be learned from the story of the Red Sea crossing that might also apply to your situation?

7. What principles in this lesson have helped you respond to fearful situations more constructively?

8. What Scripture promises from this lesson do you want to remember in seemingly hopeless situations? Perhaps you would want to commit one to memory.

LESSON 7 NOTES

1 Reference: Note 2, *I AM*, p. 19.

2 Red Sea. The Hebrew text of Exodus uses the term, *Yam Suph*, which means "Sea of Reeds" (papyrus reeds). The Greek translation of the Old Testament made in 200 B.C. rendered this "Red Sea." But since reeds do not grow in salt water, the Gulf of Suez (or Red Sea on Bible maps of the times) could not have been the body of water crossed. Any of the bodies of water north of the Gulf of Suez could have been called "Sea of Reeds." Some think it was Lake Balah or Lake Menzaleh, but since Egypt's geography may have changed in 3500 years, one cannot precisely pinpoint the exact location. Lifechange, *Exodus*, NavPress 1989, p. 76.

3 the pillar of cloud (by day) and fire (by night). This was the visible symbol of God's presence among His people during their wilderness journeys. The LORD often spoke to them from the pillar (see Num. 12:5-6; Deuteronomy 31:15-16; Ps. 99:6-7), and used it to light their path, protect them from their enemies, control their movements, reassure their faith, and inspire burning zeal for their God.

4 incredible east wind. God's victory at the Red Sea reflects His use of both natural and supernatural phenomena to accomplish His will. Israel could at once see the mighty hand of God in both supernatural and natural events in His great acts of deliverance. God commanded Moses to stretch out his hand, and the waters were miraculously divided. God used a mighty east wind to part the waters and turn the sea floor into dry land. He threw the Egyptian army into confusion, and He caused the wheels of their chariots to bog down and come off. The waters stood up like a wall, then, at Moses' command, began to flow normally again, sweeping Pharaoh and his army into the sea. Many of the greatest biblical events demonstrate this combination of the wonderful and the ordinary, so that the event can never be understood as only ordinary, nor does the supernatural ever completely absorb the natural!

5 baptism. Jesus inaugurated baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). Baptism, the sacrament of initiation, always quickly followed one's conversion in New Testament times (cf. Acts 2:41; 8:12; 8:36-38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:15; 16:33; 18:8; 19:1-7). The action symbolized identification of the new believer with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (see Romans 6:1-4); i.e., it depicted dying with Christ, being cleansed of sin, and being raised to newness of life in Him.

LESSON 8

SONG AT THE SEA

Exodus 15:1-21

"And when the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in Him and in Moses His servant" (14:31). The incredible drama at the Red Sea ended with Israel's response of faith. But faith certainly had not been the reason God saved them. Right up to the moment of their deliverance, they were terrified and would have chosen to go back to serving the Egyptians rather than face what they thought was certain death in the desert (14:10-12). However, Moses encouraged them, God fought for them, and the people at last responded in worship to God.

Their song of praise, usually called *The Song of Moses* (15:1-18), is thought to be one of the oldest hymns in Israel's liturgical life. Joyful praise was the response of this redeemed people, whose God had done such great things on their behalf! Only poetry could express the emotional exultation the people were feeling.

The poem focused on the LORD as the sole agent of Israel's salvation. The first twelve verses, which reflect on what He had done for them in the great victory over Pharaoh at the Red Sea, used phrases that describe a military victory: "The LORD is a warrior" . . . "Your right hand, O LORD, shattered the enemy" . . . "In the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who opposed you." The first four stanzas of the song climax in verse 11, in which Israel asks the rhetorical question echoed again and again in the Psalms:

Who among the gods is like you, O LORD?

*Who is like you--
majestic in holiness,
awesome in glory,
working wonders?*

The second part of the poem dealt with Israel's future, and their faith in the LORD's guidance and care. Verse 13 provided the transition to this section:

*In your unfailing love you will lead
the people you have redeemed.
In your strength you will guide them
to your holy dwelling.*

The Hebrew word, *hesed*, translated as *unfailing* or *everlasting love*, was used to describe the motivation of God's heart toward His people. At this high moment in Israel's faith, they proclaimed their trust in God, believing that the same love and strength that redeemed them would also guide them on the journey that was ahead.

They praised God for what He would do to their enemies as He brought them safely to His "holy dwelling," the Promised Land.¹ Its now terrified inhabitants were specifically named: the people of Edom, Moab, and Canaan. At the same time, this "holy dwelling" was a spiritual place: "the place, O LORD, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, O LORD, your hands established" (15:17).

The hymn ends with a refrain repeated many times in the Psalms:

*The LORD will reign
for ever and ever.*

This reflected how from their infancy and for many years as a nation, Israel was a theocracy, a people who confessed the kingship of God.

At the Red Sea, God had told Moses that He would gain glory⁵ for Himself through Pharaoh and his army (14:4, 17, 18). All Egypt would know the great I AM of Israel. Nations would hear and tremble as God's people passed through their land. But the revelation of God's love and majesty would become known throughout the world for generations to come through Israel's praise to God for what He had done for them. Their response to His marvelous salvation would bring God glory, and He would forever be "enthroned in the praises of Israel" (Psalm 22:3).

Read Exodus 15:1-21.

1. a. What words and phrases did Moses and the people use to express God's relationship to them (15:2)?

b. What was their response to Him (15:2)?

2. a. The name of God, YAHWEH (translated LORD), is mentioned ten times in this song of praise. What phrases paint a picture of the character of the LORD in the first half of the song, as it recounts the victory at the Red Sea (15:3-10)?

Ref: Note 2, *He has cast into the sea*, p. 65, and Note 6, *The Human God*, p. 66.

b. What was their final declaration (15:11)?

Reference: Note 5, *Glory*, p. 66.

3. What is the overall picture of the LORD you get from the first half of the song?

4. a. In the second half of the song, Israel reflected on her future. On what basis did the people exude confidence for their future?

15:13

15:14-17

15:18

b. What characteristics of God are highlighted in this section?

5. How did the knowledge of God's character and past faithfulness affect the people's perspective on the future?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Reason to Celebrate

Imagine the celebration and rejoicing that must have taken place as Israel sang the Song of Moses. At last they were truly free of the evil bondage they had experienced in Egypt, and after seeing the awesome display of God's power, they were fully assured that He would take them to the Promised Land where He would reign as their King.

As we review the story of Israel's deliverance thus far, we are reminded of several important truths. God, in His sovereignty, has given men the freedom of choice. Many heartaches result from the choices people make, as exemplified by the cruelty that the Israelites suffered at the hand of Egypt and the Pharaohs.

But Moses' song of praise emphasizes that when man's wrong choices cross God's eternal plan of redemption for mankind, God will act in force, and those who oppose God will find themselves to be no match. A major theme of this song is that God's plan will not be thwarted, and those who have the arrogance to oppose Him will be crushed.

The Bible from beginning to end resounds the plan of God, which is the redemption of mankind.⁴ In Genesis 3, we learn how man first chose to go His own independent way, breaking fellowship with his holy God. God's plan of redemption was to repair that broken relationship, by bringing man back into fellowship with Himself. The plan began to unfold as God promised Abraham that He would create a nation from his descendants, and give that nation a land, specifically Canaan, in which to thrive under His kingship. He also promised Abraham that the whole world would be blessed through this nation. We see now that God would do this by giving Israel the Old Testament Scriptures and revelation of Himself, and then by bringing His Son, the Messiah, into the world from their midst. Jesus Christ would pay the penalty for sin once and for all and provide a way for sinful man to be justly forgiven and restored to the heart and home of the Father.

When Pharaoh opposed God, he also opposed God's plan, and the anthem of Moses declares how God simply "blew" (15:10) on Pharaoh's mighty forces, and he was crushed. But God also used Pharaoh's resistance to reveal Himself to the world as He saved His people. This compares with Christ's death on the cross, where Satan (John 13:27) and evil men meant to do away with the Son of God once and for all. But God raised Him from the dead and used the evil act to overcome death (1 Corinthians 15:56-57) and bring salvation for the faithful of all time. What has been deemed the most evil event of history became, in God's hands, the means of mankind's redemption and ultimate freedom from sin and death.

The promise at the end of the song is that the LORD will surely bring His redeemed people to His Kingdom, and no foe will stand against Him in this. There He will reign forever and ever. The believer can be sure that the LORD's ultimate destination for us is with Him in His everlasting kingdom. Because of all He has done in the past, especially in the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can be sure we will be in His very presence and thrive under His kingship forever as He has promised.

Thus, the Song of Moses echoes that the LORD has a plan of redemption that cannot be thwarted by any turn of history or man's wrong choices. Instead, God will use history and man's choices to bring His plan to pass. As God is in control of history, He is also in control of our individual lives if we have chosen to follow Him. This does not promise that we will not experience difficulties, but it does mean that nothing will thwart the specific plans He may have for our lives. And ultimately we can be sure we will be with Him as He reigns in His everlasting Kingdom, so that we can sing with Israel:

*In your unfailing love you will lead
the people you have redeemed.
In your strength you will guide them
to your holy dwelling.*

As we continue our study of *Journey to Freedom*, let's look at the biblical support behind these reasons to celebrate.

1. a. Who did Pharaoh think was in control of history, and how did this perspective affect his life?

b. What are the dangers of man's sense of invincibility?

2. a. What can we be assured of as we read about the crises that face our world today?

b. What do the Scriptures reveal about the character of the One who guides history?

Psalm 33:5

Psalm 103:8

Lamentations 3:33 (Ezekiel 18:32)

Isaiah 33:6

c. What does Jesus Christ's death for our sins reveal about God's heart for mankind? John 3:16 (2 Peter 3:9b)

3. What do the Scriptures promise evildoers, those who oppose God and His righteousness?

Exodus 15:6

Psalm 34:16

Psalm 92:7-9

4. a. The Bible also promises that God will redeem, or work for good, all evil that touches the lives of His people. How did He bless Israel through the evils of Pharaoh?

b. How did He bless the world through the crucifixion of His Son?

c. What does His word promise regarding all evils we face as we trust Him?
Romans 8:28

Romans 8:38-39

5. As we observe God's sovereignty over Israel's life as a nation, what promises of God can you trust for your own life?
Jeremiah 29:11

Job 42:2

6. Because of God's awesome act on their behalf at the Red Sea, Israel could be sure that God would do the impossible: plant them as a loved and redeemed people in the land of Canaan (Exodus 15:13).

a. Because of God's faithfulness and miraculous power displayed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:3-6a), of what can those who believe in Christ be certain?
1 John 5:11-13

b. In John 8:58-59, Jesus identified Himself as the LORD, I AM, of the Old Testament. What did He tell us we could be absolutely certain of?
John 10:27-28

Summary

7. How do Exodus 15:13 and 15:18 relate to us today? What reason for celebration does the Song of Moses give you personally?

8. a. What have you observed about God's control of history from this lesson?

b. What related promises has He made regarding your life?

c. Are there certain situations or areas of your life today in which these truths provide hope and comfort?

9. Why can we be certain of God's promise to take us to be with Him eternally?

Reference: Note 3, *The reliability of the Scriptures*, p. 66.

LESSON 8 NOTES

1 Reference: Note 1, *Abrahamic Covenant*, p. 11.

2 *He has cast into the sea . . .* (15:3-4). "These are not expressions of vindictiveness, but of God's righteousness. The emphasis today seems to be "God is love" to the almost total exclusion of the fact that He is also a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29). God is loving, merciful and patient. He loves the

sinner, He hates sin. Because He is righteous and holy, He must punish sin. 'It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God' (Hebrews 10:31 NASB). Israel saw the situation from God's viewpoint, and they recognized that God had judged those who had so persistently defied Him. 'In the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who opposed you. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble' (15:7). Moses song was entirely free of selfishness or bitterness and thus was acceptable to God." Jean W. Randall, Joy of Living Bible Studies, *Exodus*, Lesson 9, p. 1.

3 *The reliability of the Scriptures*, suggested reading: *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, F. F. Bruce; *Objections Answered*, R. C. Sproul; *Inerrancy Answered*, Norman Geisler; *God's Inerrant Word*, John Warwick Montgomery.

4 Reference: Note 2, *Redemption*, p. 27.

5 *The glory of God* is the grandeur and majesty of God. His glory "is rooted in his very nature--majestic, awesome, holy. His glorious character is displayed in His active presence among His people. God reveals His glory to humanity both directly and through His works, and it is in those works that we discover and respond in awe to His splendor. Jesus Christ is the glory of God in human flesh (John 1:14; Hebrews 1:1-3), surpassing any glory seen in the Old Testament. He revealed God's glory by what He did and especially through His death and resurrection. He is now exalted in glory and will someday return in glory (1 Timothy 3:16; Matthew 24:30; 25:31)." *The NIV Topical Study Bible*, p. 672.

6 *The Human God*. The Song of Moses uses phrases such as "your right hand," "the blast of your nostrils," "your hands established." Although God is spirit, all-powerful, everywhere present, all-knowing and transcendent to man, the Bible often draws God in human colors, in order to help us understand his nature. With His face, He smiles at us in love and grace, His ears hear our prayers. His eyes see everything. His mouth and voice speak His word to us. His fingers have created all things, and most importantly, His hands guide, provide, protect and can administer chastisement or punishment. The Bible compare God to a father or mother because He has created everyone and is compassionate, nurturing, loves deeply and is wise.

Other human characteristics such as jealousy and anger, ones that we see negatively, are cast positively when they are applied to God. All of these human characteristics of God not only help us understand His character, but also help us better fathom the concept of being created in His image. *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 518.

PART 2

WILDERNESS WANDERINGS

The Song of Moses would be sung throughout Israel's history, commemorating the beginning of Israel's life as the people of God. It marked the high point of their trust in God and naturally separated their experience in Egypt from the period of their wanderings in the wilderness. The Song also became the backdrop upon which Israel's wilderness complaining proved the fickleness of the people and stood in stark contrast to God's continuing mercy.

The wilderness wanderings must have surprised Israel, who probably expected to move on a straight path from the exhilaration of the sea crossing to the milk and honey of the Promised Land! Instead they found themselves in the desert, saved from one kind of death but in fear of another; far removed from all that was familiar and routine in Egypt, but not yet in their own land. For them, the wilderness seemed permanent and their needs overwhelming. They had no resources of their own to cope with this new situation and were about to learn in a very different setting about the name of YAHWEH. The refrain that had been repeated throughout their deliverance from Egypt would be heard again in the wilderness: "Then you will know that I am the LORD your God" (16;6,11,12).

In both victory and defeat, as well as in their praise and in their grumbling, Israel would come to know their God. The wilderness wanderings serve as both a warning and an encouragement to Christians today, delivered from the bondage of sin, but not yet in the promised kingdom.

LESSON 9 MURMURING AND MANNA

Exodus 15:22-17:7

The LORD was leading Israel to Mount Sinai, a three-month journey through the wilderness. Israel's first trial in the wilderness took place on the third day of their journey into the Desert of Shur, where they first grumbled¹ to Moses about a very legitimate need--water that was fit to drink. After traveling for three days without finding water, they finally came upon water at Marah, only to find it too bitter to drink.

The problem was serious, and Moses cried out to the LORD for help. God showed Moses a piece of wood which he threw in the water, and God made the water sweet. The LORD used the "healing" of the waters to show Israel yet another facet of His character and providence. He promised them that if they listened and obeyed Him carefully, He would spare them the diseases suffered in Egypt.

This was the choice that would always be before Israel to test² their faith in God. Though stated in different words at different times, the choice was always the same: "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes...then *I will be* ... the LORD who heals you" (15:26). God wanted only Israel's obedience in response to the gracious gifts He desired to give His people. They soon experienced the lavish abundance of God's provision when they arrived at Elim, where they found twelve springs, one for each tribe,³ and seventy palm trees.

One month into their journey to Sinai, Israel's complaining escalated again. This time they grumbled that the food was more plentiful back in Egypt, with a veiled accusation against God that He had

delivered them from Egypt in order to starve them in the desert. This was flagrant unbelief in light of all He had done for them in Egypt and at the Red Sea. But God responded with the gracious offer to care for them with bread from heaven called manna.⁴

The gift of manna also came with instructions and a test to help Israel grow to know and trust the LORD, YAHWEH (16:12). First God provided manna strictly on a daily basis. Each day, the heavens would rain down just enough food for that day. Any extra would not keep until the next day, leaving the people to wonder if God would forget or be faithful to his promise to care for them the next day. God also used manna to teach His people how to treat others within the community. In the gathering of the manna, they learned about justice, equality and covetousness. By God's gracious hand, no matter how much or how little the people gathered, each person always had the exact amount that was needed.

Along with this, God's gift of the Sabbath, a day of rest each week, was given to Israel even before the Sabbath rest became one of God's Ten Commandments (cf. 16:23-26; 20:8). In His graciousness, so that all would have a day of rest, God provided enough manna for two days on the day before the Sabbath. Miraculously, it did not spoil overnight on this particular day of the week. But the LORD was grieved because some of His people refused His gift and did not listen to His instructions. Instead they labored on the Sabbath looking for manna but finding nothing.

In spite of Israel's murmuring and disobedience, God continued to provide manna for them throughout the forty years they were in the wilderness as a sign of His mercy and His gracious care. Although this time in the wilderness revealed the disobedient and rebellious human nature of God's people, it was also a time when God, as a father to his son, "bent down to feed them" (Hosea 11:1-4). As He cared for their daily needs for food and water, He sought to transform them from slaves who could trust no one to sons and daughters who knew the name of YAHWEH and could trust His character. God instructed Moses to save about two quarts of manna and to place it alongside the tablets of the law in the tabernacle to be a perpetual reminder to future generations that His grace belonged next to His law. The full significance of the gift of manna would be understood much later as the sign of the true bread from heaven, Jesus (John 6:31f). God's grace and provision were perfectly manifested in Jesus who made this claim about Himself: "Whoever eats of this bread will live forever!" (6:58).

The seriousness of Israel's complaining became apparent in the third story. The people were ready to stone Moses because once again they had no water. But it is clear to the reader that it was the LORD, not Moses, who was leading them from place to place. He had purposefully led them to camp at a place where there was no water in order to test and build their faith. Would they trust in His Name--in who He *had been* for them in the past? Sadly, they did not remember (Ps. 106:7). Instead, Israel defiantly put God to the test, saying "Is the LORD among us or not?" Faith had eroded, and they demanded a visible sign to prove whether or not the LORD was truly among them. God graciously responded by providing water from a rock at Horeb.⁵

Read Exodus 15:22-27.

1. What did the Israelites complain about at Marah (15:23-24)? What real fear lay behind their complaint (15:23-24)?

Reference: Note 1, *grumbled*, p. 74.

2. What choice did God introduce to His people through the miraculous healing of the waters (15:25-26)?

Reference: Note 2, *God tested them*, p. 74.

3. How did God demonstrate the abundance of His gifts and love for Israel when He led them to Elim (15:27)?

Read Exodus 16:1-36.

4. a. Where were the Israelites in their journey when these events took place (16:1)?

b. What was their complaint (16:2-3)?

c. What was God's gracious response to this complaint (16:4-5)?

5. a. What did Moses make clear about the people's grumbling against him and Aaron as their leaders (16:7-8)?

b. What did the whole community see as they came together before the LORD (16:9-10)?

Reference: Note 3, *pillar of cloud*, p. 57, also 24:15-17.

c. What was the LORD's gracious provision (16:11-15, 31)?

Reference: Note 3, *Manna*, p. 75.

6. a. What responsibilities and instructions did the LORD give along with His gracious provisions?
16:16, 19

16:22-26

b. Did all of the Israelites listen and obey God's instructions? What was the result? (16:20, 27-30)

Note: *you* (16:28) is plural in the Hebrew.

7. a. What lessons about God's character could Israel learn from the manna?

b. How would this be commemorated for generations to come (16:32-34)?

c. How long did God provide Israel with manna (16:35)?

d. *Optional.* A parallel story concerning the manna and quail in the wilderness can be found in Numbers 11:4-15; 31-34. Note the similarities and differences.

Read Exodus 17:1-7.

8. What was the crisis the Israelites experienced at Rephidim, and how did they respond (17:2-4, 7)?

9. How did God demonstrate His grace and faithfulness in spite of the people's arrogance and lack of faith (17:5-6)?

10. Even when things looked hopeless in the wilderness, God had a good plan for Israel, a plan which He had not kept to Himself. What had He promised Israel that each test of faith called for them to remember and believe in spite of their circumstances (see 3:7-8; 6:6-8)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Freedom from Complaining

In spite of the incredible miracles God had done--in raising up Moses, in the ten plagues of Egypt, in the spectacular crossing of the Red Sea--the people quickly lost perspective with the next crisis. Rather than looking back at God's faithfulness and trusting Him in the present situation, they fell into complaining which produced an angry, testy and demanding disposition toward the LORD who had graciously saved them. At Rephidim, they even accused Him of bringing them into the desert to starve them and began to wish they had never left Egypt! Complaining had indeed led them on a downward spiral to hopelessness and alienation from God.

It is not hard to relate to these people. How easy it is to forget God's past faithfulness when the crisis comes. Complaining can lead to negative thoughts about God's character and questioning about God's ways and rules. We can get lost in questions like, "Why did God do this?" or "Why doesn't God do this?" We might even begin thinking that life was better without the Lord.

The good news is that the Bible gives us wonderful alternatives to complaining amidst the crises of life. In such times, it is possible to have security, hope and peace. Not only this, but our attitudes in such times can bring hope, guidance and blessing to those around us. It is easy to be taken captive by complaining, but in this lesson we will look at choices that can free us from grumbling.

1. a. Why did complaining seem natural for Israel at Marah, in the Desert of Sin, at Rephidim?

b. Why did it seem unreasonable?

2. a. Why do we fall into complaining?

b. How does complaining affect our lives and the lives of those around us?

c. What is the challenging mandate of Philippians 2:14?

3. What could the Israelites have done rather than complain? What did Moses do during these times?

4. What did God want to teach the people as they faced one impossible situation after another?

5. a. The negative mindset produced by a complaining spirit can lead us to doubt God's awareness or involvement regarding our problem. What do the following Scriptures declare about God's awareness of the issues we encounter in our lives?

Psalm 139:1-4

Psalm 139:7-10

Isaiah 40:27-29

b. What does Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:31-33 add to this?

c. How does Matthew 6:34 relate to the lesson the LORD taught Israel through the daily distribution of the manna (cf. Exodus 16:4-5, 21, 35)? What did He want them to learn?

6. a. What can we be confident of in times of crisis?
Psalm 34:4-6

Psalm 37:25

Philippians 4:19

b. God promises to meet our needs, but it is easy for us to confuse needs with wants. How can we get into trouble demanding that God provide our wants?

7. a. What positive choices can we make rather than complaining during times of crisis?
Psalm 31:24

Psalm 62:8

Psalm 63:8

Psalm 130:5

b. What can we say to ourselves to combat a complaining spirit?
Psalm 42:5

Psalm 62:5-6

Psalm 116:7

c. What choices did David make in Psalm 131?

8. What can God produce in our lives as we make the right choices in times of crisis? Romans 15:13

Summary

9. What have you learned from the Israelites about complaining? Why is a complaining spirit detrimental to your life?

10. a. What positive choices can you make instead of complaining in times of difficulty?

b. How will these choices benefit those around you?

11. What promises of God can you rest in during times of crisis?

LESSON 9 NOTES

1 *grumbled* (15:24). "During their desert wanderings, the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron whenever they faced a crisis (see 16:2; 17:3; Numbers 14:2; 16:11, 41). In reality, however, they were grumbling 'against the LORD' (16:8). Paul warns us not to follow their example (see 1 Corinthians 10:10)." *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 109.

2 *God tested them* (15:25). "Not *tempted*, for God does not tempt (James 1:13). Satan tempts us (see 1 Corinthians 7:5b) in order to make us fall; God tests us in order to confirm our faith (Exodus 20:20) or prove our commitment (Deuteronomy 8:2)." *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 37.

3 *The twelve tribes of Israel.* See chart, p. 91. Each tribe was made up of all the persons descended from one of the sons of the patriarch Jacob (see Introduction, p. 3-4.). While the 12 tribes of Israel, or Jacob, were in Egypt, they were grouped according to their fathers' houses (Exodus 6:14). After they left Egypt, the whole company was conceived of as the 12 tribes of Israel (Exodus 24:4).

4 *Manna.* The Hebrew word literally means, "What is it?" Several natural explanations as to what it was have been proposed over the years and may offer some light on its possible substance but cannot explain away the supernatural provision of God. For example, some equate it with the sticky, often granular honeydew that is excreted in Sinai in early June by various scale insects which rapidly solidifies through evaporation. But no naturally occurring substance fits the entire description in the text. As was mentioned before, God often brings the natural and supernatural together in His activities; certainly the daily abundance for the entire nation over a period of forty years and the double amounts on the sixth day each week that did not spoil do not fit a natural phenomenon. *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 206.

5 *Horeb* is another name for Mount Sinai, but Israel did not camp at Sinai until later (19:1). Horeb could also mean the Sinai region. Rephidim was close to Sinai so that the mountain slopes reached there. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament*, p. 135.

The Tribes of Israel

Fathers of Tribes of Israel (*Wives in Italics*) and their Offspring

Abraham <i>Sarah</i>	Isaac
Isaac <i>Rebekah</i>	Jacob
Jacob (Israel)* <i>Leah</i>	Reuben, Simeon, Levi***, Judah, Isaachar, Zebulun
Jacob <i>Zilpah</i>	Gad, Asher
Jacob <i>Bilhah</i>	Dan, Napthali
Jacob <i>Rachel</i>	Joseph**, Benjamin, Ephraim, Manasseh

*Jacob was renamed *Israel* by God (Genesis 32:28;35:10). Sometimes the nation of Israel is referred to as Jacob by Old Testament writers.

**When Jacob adopted Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph became the father of two tribes of Israel.

***The Levites became the priests of Israel, did not own property in Canaan, therefore were not among the traditional 12 landowning tribes of Israel. They were in 48 towns scattered throughout the promised land (Joshua 21).

LESSON 10

FREED TO FORM A COMMUNITY

Exodus 17:8-18:27

Israel was still struggling as a people, discontent with their leadership and doubtful regarding the LORD's presence among them. Yet another crisis was about to unite them. The Amalekites, who had no fear of Israel's God, attacked the fledgling nation when they were most weary and vulnerable (see Deuteronomy 25:17). God's people immediately became united as together they faced an outside enemy.

Unlike the victory over the Egyptians at the Red Sea, the participation of all Israel was critical in this battle. Moses appointed Joshua to choose men to fight, while he stood before the LORD, holding the staff of God up in prayer. When Moses became tired, Aaron and Hur held his arms up, while Joshua united the people to battle the enemy.

Israel took responsibility for her part in the battle, but the victory was clearly dependent on God's intervention. Every time Moses lowered his hands, the Amalekites began to win the battle. When he raised them up before God, Israel prevailed. When the battle ended, God told Moses and Joshua that He would eventually blot out the memory of Amalek and forever be against this people for their attack on Israel.

Chapter 18 continues to focus on the building of the community of Israel. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, would prove strategic in the process. He came to visit Moses in the wilderness, bringing Moses' wife and two sons with him. Jethro joyfully received the news of all God had done to deliver the Israelites from the Egyptians and preserve them in the wilderness. He praised the God of Israel and received Him as his own, declaring, "Now I know that the LORD, YAHWEH, is greater than all other gods, for He did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly" (18:11). As a foreigner and one of the first converts to be blessed through what God had done for Israel, Jethro immediately responded by worshipping God with Moses, Aaron and the elders.

After Jethro's profession of faith, God used Jethro's experience and gifts to help the new community develop the structure it needed to support their life of faith. Jethro observed Moses hard at work from morning until night judging the people's disputes as they were brought before him. In order to save Moses and the people from exhaustion, Jethro suggested that Moses only hear the most difficult cases and appoint trustworthy men to serve as judges over the simpler ones. Moses heeded Jethro's advice, taking a great step forward in structuring the community of God's people.

Israel's identity as a community was established on their confession of *faith* in the LORD, YAHWEH. The issues of law and good order within the community *followed* their faith and were designed to support Israel's identity as a redeemed people.

Read Exodus 17:8-16.

1. a. What new leader was raised up to help Moses (17:9-10)?

b. How did Israel and the LORD work together in defeating the Amalekites (17:9-13,16a)?

c. What do you think the LORD wanted Israel to learn from this victory? What was the point in Moses raising his hands and the staff of God?

Read Exodus 18:1-12.

2. We have seen Moses primarily in the roles of deliverer and prophet of God. In this passage, we see more of Moses' personal life. Describe his family and his reunion with them (18:2-7).

Reference: Note 1, *sent away his wife*, p83. , and Note 6, *priest of Midian*, p. 12.

3. When Moses left Jethro and his family in Midian, they had a vague knowledge of the God of Abraham who had called Moses to go back to Pharaoh and Egypt. What new understanding about God did Moses give to Jethro at this point (18:8)?

4. a. What was Jethro's immediate response to his new understanding of what God had done for Israel (18:9-11)?

b. Jethro's response also symbolized his reception by the community. What did Jethro do (18:12)?

Read Exodus 18:13-27.

5. a. Up to this point, what system of justice had operated in the Israelite community (18:13-16)?

b. What was wrong with this current system (18:17-18)?

6. a. What was Jethro's advice to Moses?

18:19-20

18:21-22

b. Who was the final authority as to whether or not this advice should be accepted (18:23)?

c. How did God lead Moses to respond (18:24-26)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Keys to Leadership: A Submissive and Teachable Spirit

In contrast to the people of Israel who struggled to submit to God's leadership and plan, this lesson highlights the submissive natures of three godly leaders. The first was Joshua, who "fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered" (17:10). As we follow the life of this leader throughout the rest of our study, we will see a man who never hesitated to take God's orders and carry them out explicitly. Joshua never questioned God's promises, no matter how impossible the circumstances might have seemed.

Then there was Moses' father-in-law, Jethro. The open, teachable heart toward God of this non-Israelite inspired all of Israel as he freely embraced faith in YAHWEH and worshipped Him. Then he humbly instructed Moses in ordering his priorities and delegating responsibilities to others. Finally, we saw the teachable spirit of Moses as he listened and carefully followed the wise counsel of Jethro. These three great leaders blessed all of Israel because of their ability to listen and submit to God and others.

These important qualities of leadership--submission and a teachable spirit--require choosing against pride, fear of what others think, and deeply imbedded wrong thinking. For anyone who develops and maintains these wonderful qualities, the life of faith becomes a dynamic, abundant never-ending learning experience. As we yield to God and love learning from Him and others, we find no end to what an infinite God has to teach us. Each step of obedience and growth brings greater wholeness and freedom and equips us to be a greater blessing to the world around us.

While a submissive, open and teachable spirit are necessary keys to good leadership, we don't have to be powerful leaders for God to learn these secrets to fulfillment. The freedom and blessings of such a disposition toward God are for all who "hunger and thirst after righteousness." As we continue our study of *Journey to Freedom*, let's look at what the Bible has to say about the strength of a submissive and teachable spirit toward God and others.

1. a. What different aspects of a submissive and teachable spirit were exhibited by Joshua, Jethro and Moses?

b. How did this contrast to the people of Israel in their attitudes toward Moses and God?

c. What do you think contributed to the teachable and submissive spirits of these men?

2. Where does a submissive and teachable attitude toward God begin? What are some things we need to comprehend?

Psalm 8:3-4

Psalm 18:30, 32

John 15:5

3. a. What can prevent us from having a submissive and teachable spirit toward God and other people?

b. What do these verses suggest?

Proverbs 3:7a (Proverbs 11:2)

Matthew 14:29-32

Mark 12:24

4. a. What are the characteristics of a submissive and teachable spirit? What do these verses suggest?
Proverbs 12:1

Proverbs 18:15

b. How do Proverbs 10:8a and 16:20 describe Joshua's submissive heart?

c. How does Proverbs 9:9 describe the teachable hearts of Jethro and Moses?

5. a. Being teachable requires being a good listener. What does it take to be a good listener?

b. To listen to God and others, we have to discipline ourselves not to talk. Of what do these proverbs remind us?

Proverbs 17:27a

Proverbs 18:13

Proverbs 18:2

6. a. How does Proverbs 2:1-4 describe a submissive and teachable heart toward God?

b. List some of the benefits of a submissive and teachable heart toward God found in Proverbs 2:5-8.

Proverbs 2:9-11

c. According to James 1:5, what is God's open invitation to us in any situation?

7. Certainly it is important to have a submissive and teachable heart in order to influence people for Christ. But what are the greatest rewards of a submissive and teachable spirit toward God?

Ephesians 3:17b-19

Summary

8. a. What opposes submission and a teachable spirit toward God in our lives? What do you see in the people of Israel?

b. How did submission and a teachable spirit enable Joshua, Jethro and Moses to be effective leaders? What does such a spirit elicit from others?

9. a. What does listening have to do with a teachable spirit toward God and others?

b. How are you doing at listening to God and others, especially those close to you? Do you seek out and enjoy hearing other viewpoints? What is your desire in this area?

10. What is to be gained from developing a submissive and teachable heart toward God and other people?

LESSON 10 NOTES

1 *sent away his wife* (18:2). "Moses had apparently sent his wife, Zipporah, and two sons back to Jethro after they had started for Egypt. Though the reason for that action is not stated, Moses may have wanted to protect them from the horrors of the Egyptian bondage. So now, several months later, Moses was reunited with his family." *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament*, p. 136.

LESSON 11

COVENANT AT SINAI

Exodus 19:1-25; 20:18-21

It was three months to the day after leaving Egypt that the Israelites reached Mount Sinai,¹ the place where Moses had first met God in the burning bush. At that time, God had promised to use Moses to deliver his people from Egyptian bondage and guide them back to this mountain to worship Him (3:12). There God would make a covenant² with Israel that would forever set them apart from all other nations of the earth.

To prepare the people to receive this covenant, God first reminded Israel of His care for them thus far, describing in a very personal language how He had carried them on eagles' wings and brought them to Himself (19:4). The image was that of an eagle hovering over its young, spreading its wings to catch them and carry them on its pinions (cf. Deuteronomy 32:10-12). Then God made His proposal to Israel, saying, "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession . . . a kingdom of priests³ and a holy nation"⁴ (19:6).

The people responded enthusiastically to being God's people, raised from bondage to power. They promised to do everything He said, and the LORD began to prepare them for a new understanding of His character. Israel had already witnessed God's power against the Egyptians and Amalekites and His care for them in the desert. Now they would see His *majesty and holiness*.⁸ For this, they were instructed to consecrate themselves and prepare to meet and hear God on the third day.

The day came, and the LORD spoke to Moses from a thick cloud on Mt. Sinai in view of the people. It was an awesome day as thunder and lightning filled the sky, and smoke and fire covered the mountain, which trembled violently as the LORD descended upon it. Limits had been placed around the mountain to set it apart as holy. The people were warned that whoever touched the mountain, man or beast, would die.

The people trembled with fear and begged Moses to speak to them, rather than God Himself. But God used Moses to comfort them and explain why He was presenting Himself in such an awesome way.

"Do not be afraid,"⁵ Moses said. "God has come to test⁶ you, so that the fear⁷ of God will be with you to keep you from sinning" (20:20). Seeing God's holy nature would cause the people to keep His covenant, share in His holiness, be His treasured possession, and, as a nation that was set apart, reflect the knowledge of the one true God to the world.

The people stood in awe as Moses once again entered the thick darkness to be with God.

Read Exodus 19:1-15.

1. Where did the people camp (19:1-2)?

Reference: *Mount Sinai*, note 1, p. 89.

2. a. What had the people experienced in their relationship with God thus far (19:4)?

b. What covenant did God now propose to Israel (19:5-6)?

References: Note 2, *Sinaitic Covenant*, Note 3, *kingdom of priests*, and Note 4, *holy nation*, p. 89.

c. How did the people respond (19:7-8)?

3. a. Why did God speak to Moses through the cloud as the people watched (19:9)?

b. Why did the people wash their clothes, put limits around the mountain and abstain from sex (19:10-15)?

Note: The people were to abstain from sex (19:15) not because it is sinful but in order to be ceremonially clean.

Read Exodus 19:16-25.

4. How did God manifest His holiness to the people (19:16-20)?

5. What did the LORD tell Moses he must reiterate to the people (19:21-25)?

Note: *break out against* (19:22,24). The LORD's holiness required total consecration to enter His presence (cf. 40:32; Leviticus 21:23). This might have referred to the Aaronic priestly office soon to be established. It also highlights the great significance of the holiness of Christ imputed to the believer which allows him/her to freely enter the presence of holy God (cf. Ephesians 4:24; 5:25-27; Hebrews 4:16; 1 Peter 2:9).

Read Exodus 20:18-21.

6. How did the people react to what they had just seen and heard (20:18-20; see also Deut5:23-27)?

Note: Moses, who had been Israel's liberator, had now become the mediator between the people and God.

7. What was God's intention in manifesting His holiness to Israel (20:20; see also Deut 5:24, 29)?

References: Note 2, *God tested them*, p. 74, and Note 5, *Do not be afraid*, p. 89.

Note: *Fear of God* means "reverential trust" (see Note 7, *Fear of God*, p. 90).

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

The Rewards of Reverence

"Fear of the LORD" is a biblical phrase often misunderstood to mean an emotion toward God that keeps us at a distance from Him. But this is not the biblical meaning of the phrase. "Fear of the LORD" means reverential trust in God that leads to intimacy with Him and allows us to experience His richest

blessings. As we stand before God as the Israelites did, in awe of His greatness and holiness,⁸ we are humbled and filled with a desire to serve Him and walk in obedience to His loving will for us.

Rather than distancing us from God, our obedience to the biblical mandate to "fear the LORD" causes us to become united with Him in a oneness that allows us to know His heart, experience His joy, and take part in His merciful work in the world. God revealed His greatness and holiness to Israel at Mount Sinai so that they and those who followed them might revere Him and experience the great benefits of "fearing the LORD."

As we continue our study of *Journey to Freedom*, let's explore the blessings of realizing God's greatness and worshipping Him in loving trust and obedience.

1. a. Why do you think it was important for Israel to realize God's holiness and majesty? Why did the people need to fear the LORD?

b. Do you think people truly revere God today? What are the results where there is a lack of reverence: in an individual?

in a society?

c. What are the symptoms of a society that refuses to honor God?
Romans 1:21,25

d. What sobering warnings are given to a society that refuses to revere the LORD (which includes following His ways) in Romans 1:24, 28-32?

2. a. The Scriptures record many rewards for revering the LORD, some of which are found in the following verses. What phrases describe the blessings we will experience in our relationship with God when we revere Him?
Psalm 103:11, 13, 17

Psalm 25:14

Psalm 147:11

Luke 1:50

b. What are other rewards we will experience as we live a life of reverent trust in the LORD?
Psalm 31:19

Psalm 34:9

Psalm 145:19

Proverbs 10:27; 14:27

Proverbs 19:23

Proverbs 22:4

3. Psalms 34 and 37 highlight the choices people make who reverence the LORD. What phrases in the following verses describe these choices?

Psalm 34:1-6 (9)

Psalm 34:11-14

Psalm 37:1, 3-5, 7-8

4. a. What was God's desire as He showed His holiness and majesty to Israel at Mt. Sinai? Why did He want them to revere Him?

Deuteronomy 6:2

Deuteronomy 10:12

b. What was the psalmist's response to God's revelation of His majesty?

Psalm 95:6-7

Summary

5. How does reverence or "fear" of the Lord preserve a society? What happens without it?

6. Do you take time each day to meditate on the greatness of the LORD? If not, how might you build this into your life?

Note: The Psalms are a wonderful place to go to meditate on God's character.

7. a. What does the LORD want to give you as a result of your reverent trust in Him?

b. What can you give the LORD through your reverence toward Him?

LESSON 11 NOTES

1 *Mount Sinai* was also called Mount Horeb. It was located in the south-central Sinai peninsula. Moses met God there in a burning bush and later received God's covenant with Israel there as the people camped beside the mountain. The remainder of Exodus takes place at Mt. Sinai, as God gave His people the laws and guidelines for right living.

2 The *Sinaitic Covenant* was made with Israel as the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and as the people the LORD had redeemed from bondage to be an earthly power. It was a conditional divine pledge to be Israel's God (as her Protector and the Guarantor of her blessed destiny). The condition: Israel's total consecration to the LORD as his people (his kingdom) who live by his rule and serve his purposes in history. This covenant was an extension of the covenant He had made with Abraham 600 years prior in which receiving the divine blessings depended upon faith and obedience.

3 *kingdom of priests* (19:6). God's kingdom on earth would be made up of the people who acknowledged him as king and, like priests, were completely committed to His service.

4 *holy nation* (19:6). "Why did God choose Israel as his nation? God knew that no nation on earth was good enough to deserve to be called his people, his 'treasured possession.' He chose Israel, not because of anything they had done, but in his love and mercy he chose Israel in spite of the wrong the nation had done and would do. Why did he want to have a special nation on earth? To represent his way of life, to teach his Word, and to be an agent of salvation to the world. 'All nations on earth' would be blessed through Abraham's descendants (Genesis 18:18). Gentiles and kings would come to the LORD through Israel, predicted Isaiah (Isaiah 60:3). Through the nation of Israel, the Messiah, God's chosen Son, would be born. God chose one nation and put it through a rigorous training program so that one day it could be a channel for his blessings to the whole world." *The Life Application Bible*, p. 135.

5 *Do not be afraid* (20:20). The same Hebrew word is used in Exodus 20:20 as for the reverential *fear* of God (see note 6). This is another example of the both/and way of Hebrew thought regarding God. The same God who demonstrates His holiness in order to develop the proper fear of His majesty is the God who comforts and speaks the word through Moses, "Do not be afraid."

6 Reference: Note 2, *God tested them*, p. 74.

7 *Fear of God* is a conventional phrase equivalent to "true religion." *Fear* in this phrase has the sense of reverential trust in God that includes commitment and obedience to His revealed will (word). *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 36.

8 *majesty and holiness of God*. The word *majesty*, when applied to God, is always a declaration of His *greatness* as our Maker and our LORD, which bids us to worship. "The LORD is a great God, and a great King . . . O come, let us worship and bow down" (Psalm 95:3,6). When the Bible speaks of God as being "on high" and "in heaven," the thought is not that God is far distant from us in space, but that He is far above us in greatness and to be adored. J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 73.

The holiness of God has to do with God being "set apart" in power and glory and majesty, separate from sin and perfect in righteousness. He alone deserves to be held in awe by created beings.

LESSON 12

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Exodus 20:1-17

At Mt. Sinai, all of the people committed together to do everything that God would instruct them to do through Moses. They said "yes" to His proposed covenant (19:5, 8) whereby the LORD would be their King¹ and they would be His people. Now they would receive His edict, the ten "words"² or "stipulations" upon which all the laws of Israel would be based thereafter.³

God had revealed Himself in Egypt as their powerful deliverer and in the desert as their gracious provider. Now the people would come to know the LORD as their King. The covenant He would make with His people would include ten "words" or edicts and would always be based upon a personal relationship with Him. Only later would the stipulations of the covenant be called laws and decrees (Deuteronomy 5:1) or the Ten Commandments. But it is important to note that these stipulations were never intended to be a static legal code in isolation from a relationship of reverent trust in a gracious and faithful LORD.

The first three "words," or edicts, of the covenant had to do with this relationship between God and His people. If Israel was to be God's treasured possession (19:5), they must:

1. *Trust God only* (20:3-4). "You shall have no other gods before me."

2. *Worship God only* (20:5-6). "You shall not make an idol . . . or bow down to them or worship them."

3. *Use God's name in ways that honor Him* (20:7). "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God . . ." Following these principles would set Israel apart from all other nations who worshipped idols and graven images. Israel would be a holy nation for the LORD which would honor His name, YAHWEH. Because His name represented all that God was to His people, it must never be misused or taken lightly.

The fourth stipulation of the covenant also had to do with their personal relationship with the LORD:

4. *Rest on the Sabbath and think about God* (20:8-11). "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy . . ." This day was to honor God as the Creator who rested from His labor on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2-3). It was also intended as a gift of rest to Israel.

Commandments five thru ten addressed principles regarding the people in relationship to each other:

5. *Respect and obey your parents* (20:12). "Honor your father and your mother . . ."

This commandment promised long life in the land God would give them, a result of following God's intended order within the family.

The last five principles prescribed community ethics:

6. *Protect and respect human life* (20:13). "You shall not murder." This protected Israel's community.

7. *Be true to your husband or wife* (20:14). "You shall not commit adultery." This law protected marriage.

8. *Do not take what belongs to others* (20:15). "You shall not steal." In a broader sense, this forbids any misappropriation of a neighbor's possessions.

9. *Do not lie about others* (20:16). "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor." This law extended to include deceit of all kinds (see Leviticus 19:11).

10. *Be satisfied with what you have*⁴ (20:17). "You shall not covet your neighbor's house . . ." strikes at the heart motivation behind the acts mentioned in other commandments. Deuteronomy 5:21 uses the phrase, "You shall not set your desire on . . ." to interpret the word *covet*, showing the heart attitude from which most violations against one's neighbor would occur.

These Ten Commandments given at Mt. Sinai established Israel's covenant responsibilities, but also expressed the eternal will of God, written on every heart by the Creator (Romans 2:15). Jesus further stated that all these commandments can be summed up in the following two: "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39).

Read Exodus 20:1-17.

1. a. How did God identify Himself in the preamble of the Ten Commandments, and what gracious act called for the allegiance of His subjects (20:2)?

Reference: Note 1, *be their King*, p. 99.

b. In Exodus 19:5-6, what had God promised to do as Israel accepted His covenant stipulations?

Reference: Note 3, *kingdom of priests*, and Note 4, *holy nation*, p.89 .

2. a. God established an intimate relationship with His people, first by allowing them to relate to Him by His personal name, YAHWEH, and then by making the covenant with them at Mt. Sinai. The Old Testament sometimes pictures this intimate relationship between God and Israel as a marriage: "for I am your husband" (Jeremiah 3:14). By delivering Israel from bondage, the LORD had proven His love, and His desire was that Israel would follow His leadership out of a motivation of love for Him (Deuteronomy 11:1).

How was this intimate relationship between God and Israel to be preserved (Exodus 20:3-4)?

Reference: Note 6, *Jealousy*, p. 99.

b. In the second commandment, the consequences of hating God are seen to affect three or four generations. In contrast, what is God's bountiful promise to those who love and obey Him (Exodus 20:5-6)?

3. God had given Israel His personal name, YAHWEH, which stands for all He is and will be to His people. In the third commandment, *misuse* of His holy name literally means "to lift it up to or attach it to emptiness." An example would be swearing falsely by God's name, as on a witness stand in a courtroom. What does this commandment say about using God's name flippantly or to reinforce a lie or wrong action (Exodus 20:7)?

4. a. How does the fourth commandment also support Israel's relationship with God (Exodus 20:8, 10; Leviticus 23:3)?

b. How was this day also a gift to God's people (Exodus 16:23, 29-30; Deuteronomy 5:13-14)?

Reference: Note 7, *Sabbath*, p. 99.

5. a. What was the promised blessing to those who honored their father and mother (20:12)?

b. If individuals obeyed this commandment, why would the nation also experience long life in the land God had given them?

6. How could each of the commandments that are stated in the negative be stated in the positive (20:13-16)?

7. a. Why did God speak so strongly against coveting (20:17)? What harm can result from unchecked coveting:
in one's own life?

in the family, community, or workplace?

b. What commandments could coveting ultimately lead a person to break?

c. How can obedience to the first two commandments help us fulfill the tenth commandment (see also Deuteronomy 6:5)?

8. a. Which commandments refer specifically to Israel's relationship with God? Which refer to relationships within the community?

b. Why would God's holy nation have to have both?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

God's Gift of the Ten Commandments: Part I

All the godly principles of the Bible have their roots in the commandments of God given at Mount Sinai. The laws simply stated there can be expanded to address every aspect of our lives.

It is important to emphasize, however, that these principles were given as a gift to help Israel become a holy nation which experienced life as

God intended it to be lived. And these principles are still a gift to us today. Far from restrictive, they safeguard our freedom, make social life possible, and help us make healthy, constructive choices. Also, God's desire was for Israel to follow these guidelines for life out of love and devotion to Him, and this is His desire for us today.

In the rest of this lesson and the next, we will be looking more closely at the gift of God given to us in the Ten Commandments. As we briefly look at each of the "words" God gave at Mt. Sinai as He established a covenant of love with His people, we will see invaluable keys to living. In this lesson, we will take a brief look at the first five commandments, and our next lesson will cover the remaining five.

1. How did the Psalmist describe the gift of godly principles for life?

Psalm 19:7-11

Psalm 119:24, 105

Psalm 119:32, 45

Psalm 119:165

2. It has been said that the Ten Commandments reveal the lifestyle the Creator intended for all human beings--a life characterized by God-centeredness, balance between work and leisure, faithful relationships, and respect for others.⁵ The first four commandments have to do with God-centeredness, or devotion to God.

a. Commandments one and two state: "You shall have no other gods before Me" (20:3). "You shall not make for yourself an idol . . ." (20:4-5). The people of Moses' day were polytheistic. They worshipped many gods. How can we have many "gods" in our lives today?

b. How does Romans 1:25 describe idolatry?

3. a. In the modern classic, *The Pursuit of God*, A. W. Tozer describes a shrine in every heart upon which God is to be enthroned and worshipped. Tozer writes that human beings replace Him on this throne with external things which He has given us to enjoy. What are some of the tragic results of this choice mentioned in Colossians 3:5?

b. How do the instructions in Matthew 22:37-39 provide the basic keys to avoiding the subtle pitfalls of idolatry?

4. Commandment three states: "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God . . ." (20:7). The word "misuse," or "in vain" (KJV), refers to using God's name in a hollow or idle way, placing no value on it, especially when swearing an oath or backing an action. Here is a command against profanity, but also against using God's name in a manipulative way, such as to lie in court, back a wrong action or curse someone.

a. How does Leviticus 19:12 restate the justice called for in this commandment?

b. What did Jesus add to this in Matthew 5:33-37?

5. a. How can Christians misuse God's name and the privilege of knowing Him personally?

Mark 7:6

Titus 1:16a

b. If we claim to be followers of Christ, what is our high calling?

Ephesians 5:1-2 (1 John 2:6)

6. a. How do the following teach us to address God?

Psalm 8:1

Psalm 29:2

7. The fourth commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy" (20:11), was given to help the Israelites regularly stop to focus on their relationship with God as well as to help them find balance between work and leisure. While Sabbath day worship is not mentioned as a requirement for believers in the New Testament, it was practiced throughout the early church (see note 7, *Sabbath*, p. 99).

a. What is the motivation for us to set apart one day to honor the LORD each week? What should be the purpose of this day?

b. What will be the rewards of making this a priority?

8. a. How is the fifth commandment, "Honor (or *respect*) your father and mother . . ." (Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 19:3a) restated in the New Testament? Ephesians 6:1-2

b. What do Proverbs 23:22 and Proverbs 1:8 add to this?

c. Why does this biblical principle bring stability to a society?

d. How would you account for the disrespect for parents in today's society?

e. What are some ways we can respect and honor parents?

9. a. What guidelines are given for parent/child relationships in Ephesians 6:4?

b. How can parents best set the tone for a relationship of respect and obedience with their children?

10. When children learn to respect parents, they learn to respect others. What do the following Scriptures say about showing respect?

Leviticus 19:32

1 Timothy 5:1-2

1 Peter 2:17

1 Peter 3:15

Summary

11. What motivation does God want you to have as you seek to follow His principles for life?

12. What is the key to avoiding subtle pulls toward idolatry in our modern culture?

13. What does knowing God's name, the LORD, mean to you? How can you avoid taking His name and your relationship with Him for granted?

14. What have you observed in this lesson regarding keeping the Sabbath?

honoring parents?

LESSON 12 NOTES

1. *be their King.* *The Ten Commandments* (also known as *The Decalogue*, Greek terminology for "Ten Words") are worded like a covenant of Moses' day between a great king and a subject people. 1) The great king identifies himself in a preamble (20:2a); then 2) he sketches his previous gracious acts that should have earned the gratitude of the subjects (20:2b); then 3) he states the treaty stipulations that the subjects must obey (20:3-17). Use of this treaty pattern showed that in the Decalogue, the LORD was formally acknowledging Himself as Israel's King and that Israel had become His subject people. In gratitude for His mercies, reverence for His sovereignty, and trust in His continuing care, the people of Israel, as His subjects, were expected to render complete submission, allegiance and obedience to the LORD, their King. *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 115.

2 *Words* (20:1). A technical term for "(covenant) stipulations" in the ancient Near East. The ten "words" in 20:2-17 are the basic stipulations of Israel's covenant with God. In this account it simply says, "And God spoke all these words . . ." In Exodus 34:28 and Deuteronomy 4:13; 10:4 these same words of God are called, "the ten words." Later in Deuteronomy, the same passage is given the technical terms, "laws and decrees." The common title, *The Ten Commandments*, must come from the combination title given to the passage, "the ten words," and the reference to it as laws and decrees. *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 115.

3 *These "ten words"* or Ten Commandments given to Moses at Mt. Sinai are the original kernel of the Torah (Old Testament laws or instructions of the LORD). . . around which the whole rest may be grouped as an expansion . . . The "ten words" are at once the beginning and the heart of the Mosaic revelation."

4 Paraphrasing for the Ten Commandments in this section are taken from *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, p. 32.

5 David Field, *Christianity, The Life That Pleases God*, p. 34.

6 *Jealousy* is addressed in both a positive and negative way in the Bible. The two positive are (1) God's jealousy, or exclusive right to possess, Israel (Exodus 20:4) because of their covenant relationship (analogous to marriage), and (2) a husband's jealousy, or zeal to protect, his marriage (Proverbs 6:34; Song of Songs 8:6). Israel's unfaithfulness to God was compared to adultery in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 3:6-10, 20; Ezekiel 16:32-35; Hosea 1:2). *The NIV Topical Study Bible*, p. 83.

In His "jealousy," God (1) demands exclusive devotion to Himself, (2) delivers to judgment those who oppose Him, and (3) vindicates His people. "Zeal" and "jealousy" are the same Hebrew word, translated differently according to context. *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 115.

7 *Sabbath*. On the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, God ceased His creative work (Genesis 2:2-3). He commanded His people to keep the day holy as a sign of the covenant, as well as to use it for their own benefit, especially for rest and worship (Deuteronomy 5:12-14; Leviticus 23:3; Exodus 24:12). It was designed to symbolize the rest that God desired for His people and to point forward to an eternal sabbath in God's land of rest (Hebrews 4:8-11). By New Testament times the Sabbath had become so filled with legalistic rules that Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, often did things to restore its proper spirit (Matthew 12:2,3,10; Mark 2:27). Many Christians, in view of both Christ's resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the first day of the week, celebrate Sunday as the day of rest,

the Lord's Day (John 20:1, 19; Acts 2:1). Some, however, believe that Saturday ought to remain the day of rest and worship." *The NIV Topical Study Bible*, p. 81.

8 Reference: Note 2, *Redemption*, p. 27.

9 Reference: Note 5, *Holy Spirit*, p. 20.

LESSON 13

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Exodus 20:1-17

The Gift of the Ten Commandments: Part II

At Mt. Sinai, all of the people committed to do everything that God would instruct them to do through Moses. They said "yes" to His proposed covenant (19:5, 8) whereby the LORD would be their King¹ and they would be His people. Now they would receive His edict, the ten "words"² or "stipulations" upon which all the laws of Israel would be based thereafter.

As we saw in our last lesson, these laws were established to allow Israel to thrive as a holy nation and treasured people, bound in a covenant of love to their gracious and personal LORD. Through the Ten Commandments, God also revealed in a broader sense the lifestyle He, as our Creator, intended for all mankind--a life characterized by God-centeredness, balance between work and leisure, faithful relationships, and respect for others. When practiced, they prevent the chaos produced by selfishness in a society and promote harmony in the family and community. Far from a list of "do's and don'ts," the Ten Commandments are a loving gift from God. for our protection and welfare.

As we explore the broader implications of the Ten Commandments, we will see that we all fall short in keeping them. But the Scriptures make it clear that endeavoring to keep these laws does not save us (Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16), but rather points out our tremendous need for the salvation³ found in Christ. His Spirit⁴ then enables us to follow godly principles (Ezekiel 36:27) as we choose the wholehearted devotion prescribed by the first two commandments. The law, then, serves to draw us to Christ's salvation, where we receive the grace to bow to God's wise authority.

In this lesson, we will survey the last five commandments, all related to healthy relationships with others, and also review the grace of God, which motivates and enables us to practice godly principles for life.

1. a. The sixth commandment states: "You shall not murder" (20:13). Record what 1 John 3:15 adds to the sixth commandment.

b. What does the Spirit of Christ lead us to do with grudges?
Colossians 3:8

Colossians 3:12-13

c. How does this affect our quality of life?

2. a. The seventh commandment, "You shall not commit adultery" (20:14), provides protection for the sanctity of the home. How is this commandment restated in Hebrews 13:4?

b. Why is the sanctity of marriage critical to the preservation of a society?

c. To what do you attribute the sexual moral state of our society?

d. What are some choices that we can make in order to be a stabilizing factor in our society?
1 Corinthians 6:18

1 Corinthians 7:2

Galatians 5:22-25

3. a. The eighth commandment, "You shall not steal," deals with respect for the property of others. Why is this necessary for a stable society?

b. How is this commandment closely related to the tenth commandment (Exodus 20:17)?

4. a. How does Ephesians 4:28 add to the principle stated in this commandment and turn the focus to generosity?

b. The Bible describes us as caretakers (or stewards) rather than owners. Why is this true, according to Psalm 24:1?

c. Because of this, one author makes the statement, "We are as guilty of theft when we fail to distribute God's resources generously as we are when we seize them for ourselves unjustly."⁵ The eighth commandment is designed to protect personal property, and does not suggest we give away all we own. However, what do the following verses encourage us to do?
Proverbs 3:27-28

Proverbs 19:17

Luke 6:38

5. What additional practices related to respecting others' property are prohibited by the Bible?
Proverbs 22:22-23 (Nehemiah 5:10b)

Note: Usury is driving a hard bargain when the other person's need is great. It involves exploitation of the needy, such as a moneylender who turns his clients into victims and their misfortunes to his own profit. (Example: Matthew 21:12-13.)

Psalm 37:21a

6. In light of all these principles, how would you summarize the healthy choices we can make regarding material things and respecting the property of others?

7. a. The ninth commandment, "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor" does not just apply to a court of law. What related principles are given in these verses?
Leviticus 19:11b, c

Proverbs 10:18b

Proverbs 11:12-13

b. What effect do our words have on our lives and our society? What do these verses suggest?
Proverbs 13:3 (12:14)

Psalms 34:12-13

8. What guidelines can we follow to make our words a positive force in the world around us?
Ephesians 4:29

9. The tenth commandment, "You shall not covet . . . anything that belongs to your neighbor" (20:17), is the only commandment to address a hidden mental state, a state which is the root of nearly every sin against other people. What objects of coveting are mentioned in the tenth commandment?

10. a. Sometimes coveting is synonymous with greed in the Bible (cf. Colossians 3:5; Ephesians 5:5) and connected to idolatry. How can coveting lead us to put something else before God?

b. What mindsets can combat coveting in our lives?
Hebrews 13:5

1 Timothy 6:6-7

Luke 10:27a

11. While the Ten Commandments are guidelines for life as God intended it, the Scriptures make clear that we are not made right with God by keeping these laws. What do the following verses state?

Romans 3:20

Ephesians 2:8-9

Galatians 2:16

Reference: Note 2, *Redemption*, p. 27.

12. If we have received God's gift of salvation in Jesus Christ, what can we do when we realize we have failed to meet God's standard in a certain area? 1 John 1:9

13. a. Rather than a set of rules to be rigidly followed for salvation, the Ten Commandments are valuable keys to life which will never become outdated. What do the following all declare about God's laws?

Psalm 119:144a, 152, 160

b. What will always be true of the one who seeks to live in ways that please the Lord?
Psalm 119:45

Psalm 119:165

Summary

14. a. What do the Ten Commandments show you about the character of God?

b. What do the Ten Commandments show you about the character of man?

15. Are there any principles which you have studied related to the last five commandments that have been especially helpful to you?

16. If there are any specific areas of your life where you realize you have failed during this study of the Ten Commandments, what is God's desire for you according to 1 John 1:9 and Isaiah 1:18?

17. Why are the Ten Commandments a gift to you as an individual and to our society?

Journey to Freedom Study Summary

1. What did you learn from the exodus--God's miraculous deliverance of Israel out of bondage in Egypt--that relates to your walk of faith today?

2. What did you learn from Israel's experience in the wilderness that is helpful to you today (i.e. their grumbling and complaining experiences and God's provision for them through manna and water from the rock)?

3. What did you learn about the value of the ten words, or stipulations (Ten Commandments), of God's covenant with his people? What is their value today?

4. What have you learned about the character of God from this study?

5. a. What keys to freedom stand out to you as you reflect upon the essence of this study?

6. What is your desire as a result of your discoveries?

LESSON 13 NOTES

- 1 **Reference:** Note 1, *be their King*, p. 120.
- 2 **Reference:** Note 2, *Words (20:1)*, p. 120.
- 3 **Reference:** Note 2, *salvation found in Christ, See Redemption*, p. 32.
- 4 **Reference:** Note 5, *Holy Spirit*, p. 23.
- 5 David Field, *Christianity, The Life That Pleases God*, p. 217.

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**JOURNEY TO FREEDOM
STUDIES FROM EXODUS THROUGH JOSHUA
Exodus through the 10 Commandments**

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