



## LEADER'S GUIDE

### Week 1: Exodus 1-3 Egypt, Facing Our Fear

September 18, 2016

We are beginning an 8-week series that covers the Exodus to the Promised Land. This history is also a metaphor for our personal deliverance from bondage to freedom in Christ.

As you begin each day's study, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you what God is saying in His Word.

#### **DAY 1: Read Exodus 1:6-14**

1. ***What happened to Israel during their time in Egypt?*** (vs 6) They were fruitful and multiplied, became exceedingly numerous, they filled the land. ***How long were they there?*** The NIV Study Bible footnote states that from the time of Joseph's death until this new king was about 200 years or closer to 350 years by the time of Moses birth.
2. ***Describe the current situation of Israel presented in chapter 1.*** The new king feared they would join the enemies of Egypt in a war, so he enslaved them.

***What can you find out about slavery in Egypt at that time?*** Exodus uses several strong words to describe this slavery. Exodus 1:11 speaks of being "oppressed" with forced labor. Twice in succeeding verses, the term "ruthless" is used, as well as "hard labor." Exodus 2 refers to the Israelites as "groaning" in their slavery. According to Eerdman's Bible Handbook, the Israelites would be organized into gangs, under taskmasters to dig out mud and make the bricks for building. From Bible History by Alfred Edersheim, it was the policy of the Pharaohs to bring an immense number of captives into Egypt and to retain them there in servitude for forced labor. So a Pharaoh fearful of the numerical size of the Israelites would conceivably force them into servitude. The overseers were armed with heavy lashes.

#### ***How do we in the U.S. understand slavery?***

Slavery has been part of many societies throughout history, including Israel in biblical times and the United States in its first century; slavery was a principal cause of the deadly American Civil War in the 1860s. In the early years of American history, and even sanctioned by the US Supreme Court, slaves were treated as property rather than as people with their own rights. The Old Testament (Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15) describe rules for how slaves were to be treated in that society and how some of the slaves could be freed in the Year of Jubilee; but we can be sure that the Egyptians did not follow those rules with their Israelite slaves. While slavery has now been outlawed throughout the world, people are still clearly enslaved by other people today. An example is the injustice of human trafficking that is rampant throughout the world and even in our own country.

#### ***Discussion question: What rules and guidelines does the Bible describe for how slaves are to be treated?***

(See Leviticus 25, Deuteronomy 15, Ephesians 5, Colossians 4). If your class is large enough you may want to break into four groups to look at these passages. How should these prescriptions affect the way we treat people who work for us, or, who serve us, or who do jobs we would not want to do?

#### ***How do our own desires and addictions make us slaves?***

People become enslaved for economic or social reasons, providing no cost or low-cost labor to produce goods and services. Sinful humans also become enslaved in emotional and psychological ways, as we follow our desires and passions, sometimes to the point of addiction.

Two characteristics of slavery make it especially repugnant. First, slavery represents a loss of control – one person taking complete control of another person, often against their will. When we are enslaved to another person or when we are enslaved to our desires and addictions, we effectively surrender our control. Second, slavery represents the loss of human respect and dignity. Slaves are treated in inhuman ways.

### **What can we do to be emancipated?**

Liberation or emancipation came to the Israelites through God's work of exodus, with Moses' leadership. In the United States, liberation from slavery came through President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the carnage of the Civil War. In England, William Wilberforce was a key figure in their abolition story. God uses these leaders to undermine economic and social slavery. In the same manner, God uses the death and resurrection of his own son, Jesus Christ, to emancipate us from the slavery of our sins and the power of our addictions. Thanks to God's saving work, there is neither slave nor free, for we are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).

**Discussion Question: If liberation from slavery and if treating people with dignity is what God desires, how can we as individuals and as a church work for the liberation and dignified treatment of people who are now enslaved, including by human trafficking?**

3. **Who was the king at this time?** (vs. 8) Pharaoh. His name is not mentioned in these chapters. Pharaoh is a title, not a name. Actually, there are two Pharaohs – one in chapter 1, who was Pharaoh before and at the time Moses is born, and one in chapter 2, who is Pharaoh at the time of the plagues and when Israel leaves Egypt (see Exodus 2:23). Refer to the biographical information on Pharaoh in the Historical Background material. There are generally 2 time periods and thus different Pharaohs the Bible scholars think may have been ruling at the time. If you wish to look into this further, use resources such as Bible dictionaries, Bible handbooks, Bible commentaries, The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, books on Bible history i.e. *Bible History* by Alfred Edersheim, and the Biblical Archaeology journal or website.  
**What was his solution to too many Israelites?** (See verses 15-16)  
Have the midwives kill the Hebrew boy babies when they were born.
4. **When has a good situation in your life come to or ended up feeling like an entrapment? How did you feel?**
5. **What did the midwives do?** (verses 17-21). They let the boy babies live.  
**What did they tell the king?** That the Hebrew women were vigorous and gave birth before they got there. See the information about midwives in the Historical Background section. This may have been a lie, or it may have been true if God was blessing the Hebrew women, their deliveries may have been quick and easy. Even so, the midwives disobeyed a direct order from Pharaoh. They feared God more than Pharaoh, and risked having to suffer the consequences.  
**When is it right to disobey the ruling authority?** (see Daniel 1:3; Daniel 6, and Acts 4-5) When the ruling authority tells you to do what disobeys God; we must be willing to pay the consequences for breaking the law.  
**What was the king's response?** (vs 22) Pharaoh ordered all his people to throw the male Israelite babies into the Nile River.

## **DAY 2: Read Exodus 2**

1. Exodus 2:1-10

### **How was Moses rescued? By whom?**

Moses was in a watertight basket in the Nile River and Pharaoh's daughter found him.

### **Who gave Moses his name? What does the name mean? Who raised him?**

Pharaoh's daughter named and raised Moses. His name means "to draw out." See the biographical information on Moses in the Historical background.

### **What did it mean for Moses to be raised in the Pharaoh's home rather than as a slave with his own people?**

Moses would have been well-educated. The Egyptians were very knowledgeable, had written language, books, art, astronomy, math etc. He also would have been trained on how to lead and govern.

### **How does this prepare Moses for leading Israel?**

It gives him the skills he will need to lead and govern Israel on their journey to the Promised Land.

2. Exodus 2:11-25

**What did Moses do?** He killed an Egyptian.

**Why?** Because the Egyptian was beating a Hebrew, one of his own people.

**Why did he run away?** He was afraid that Pharaoh wanted to kill him

**Where did he go?**

He went to live in Midian (note on the map in the historical background material where this is)

**How long was he there?** (see Acts 7:29-31) 40 years

**What did he do there?** He was a shepherd

**How does this prepare Moses for what he will do for Israel?**

He gained knowledge of traveling in the desert and leading and caring for animals, as well as people, for sheep are a lot like people in not listening and obeying instructions and in getting themselves lost.

3. **What was happening in Egypt while Moses was gone?** (vs. 23-25)

The king died. The Israelites groaned under their slavery and cried out to God.

**What was God doing at this time?**

God heard their groaning and remembered his promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

He looked on the people with concern.

### **DAY 3: Read Exodus 3 – The Call of Moses**

1. In verses 1-3

**What was Moses doing?** Tending the flock

**What unusual occurrence happened?** He saw a bush burning but not consumed by the fire.

**What did Moses do?** He went over to see it.

2. In verse 4-5

**How does God call Moses?** He calls him by name from within the bush

**How does God identify Himself in verse 5?**

I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

**What is the significance of God using this name?**

He identifies himself as the Israelite God, therefore, as Moses God.

**What characteristics of God does this name reveal?**

He is the God of the covenant, the God of the promise. Look also at verse 14 – God says “I AM who I AM” – the eternal God, the name by which He wished to be known and worshipped in Israel. He is the God who is dependable and faithful. See John 8:58-59 – Jesus applied the phrase to himself thus claiming to be God.

3. *From verses 7-10*

**What was the purpose of God appearing?** To rescue Israel, His people

*From verses 11-13*

**Note Moses' responses:** Who am I to go to Pharaoh and lead Israel?

What if Israel asks me what is God's name?

*From verses 12-14*

**Note God's promises:** I will be with you. You will worship me on this mountain.

4. **What were the details of Moses' mission?** (vs. 16-20)

Assemble the elders of Israel

Tell them God has come to deliver them

Go with the elders to Pharaoh

Ask Pharaoh to let them go 3 days into the desert to worship God

Note in verses 19-20 that God tells Moses that He knows the king will not let them go unless a mighty hand compels them – so God will raise His mighty hand on Egypt. Also note how the Egyptians will dramatically change their views of the Israelites, from treating them harshly as slaves, to treating them more generously. What may be the cause for this change? (see verses 21-22)

**5. Can you see God's presence in the events of Exodus 1-3? Who thought he was in charge?**

Pharaoh

**How did God turn events to His purposes?** Moses saved by Pharaoh's daughter, raised and trained in Pharaoh's household, Israelite baby boys saved, Moses training in the desert and shepherding. God comes to end Egypt and Pharaoh's resistance ending with Israel leaving Egypt. (People in your group may note other events also.)

**REFLECTION/APPLICATION:** Ephesians 4:1 claims that we all have been called by God to fulfill God's purpose, although our own calling is not as dramatic as God speaking in a burning bush. **How did you sense God's call to you, as you chose a job or career or as you chose some kind of service to render in your church or community? Like Moses, we often try to give excuses for not following God's call. What kinds of excuses do we use? How has God responded to your excuses?**

**PERSPECTIVES ON CALLING** (based on Ephesians 4)

It is a rather dramatic scene when God called Moses to lead Israel's exodus from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the promised land. God doesn't call us quite like that, but Scripture is clear that God is indeed calling us. The most significant call we have from God is to leave the slavery of our sins to enter the promised land of God's kingdom, through the blood of Christ. How clearly have we heard this call from God? Like Moses, what objections or excuses have we used to avoid God's call?

Usually we think of calls in terms of jobs, careers, or vocations (a term from the Latin which means to call). Indeed, many of us have probably experienced God's call or God's leading us into a particular profession, and hopefully we have seen our profession as a response to God's call and as our response of service to God and God's people. Ephesians 4 is clear that God calls specific people to a wide range of tasks: prophets, teachers, pastors, apostles and evangelists. How has your professional life been shaped by your sense of God's call?

The biblical concept of calling, however, goes beyond jobs and careers, for God also calls us to serve beyond our careers. We are called by God to serve in our families, our churches, and our communities. How clearly have we heard this kind of call from God? How quickly have we responded? How faithful have we been?

The biblical concept of calling goes even further than our actions to encompass our essence or character. In other words, it's not just what we do, but what kinds of people we are or become. Ephesians 4 speaks of calling in terms of being humble, patient, forbearing, and seeking unity. How has God's calling shaped your character?

Finally, the biblical concept of calling goes beyond our careers and our character to give a purpose to our lives that is beyond ourselves. Ephesians 4 describes how God calls us "...for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up..." God's call is not just for our own benefit but to build God's kingdom. If the goal or purpose of our lives is only to enrich ourselves and our family, we have not caught the vision of calling.

Have we, as Ephesians 4:1 says, lived a life worthy of the calling we have received? How have we served God through our careers, through our character, and for the sake of God's kingdom? What more is God calling us to do in the next week, month, or year?

#### **DAY 4: Read Matthew 1**

**1. Compare Matthew 1 with Exodus 1-3.**

Jesus' genealogy traces back to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

God appears to Mary and Joseph – He comes down to save His people – Jesus, God the Son, will be born as a baby. This deliverer's story starts as a baby also, like Moses story.

**What are the characteristics of a womb?** A place of safety, nourishment, growth and development, but temporary.

**What happens during labor?** A rather traumatic experience for both the mother and the baby, in which the baby is pushed out of the womb – actually can be seen as a deliverance from a space that has become too small and confining for the baby.

**Why must a baby go through labor?** Because to continue to grow and develop the baby needs to leave the space of the womb. Thanks to Adam and Eve's original sin, this is a painful experience, but in most situations a positive one.

**How was Egypt like a womb for Israel?** It started out a place of nourishment and growth and safety, but it became confining and restricting.

- 2. In Exodus 1 – notice the shift from Israel growing and thriving, to Pharaoh's persecution. What in your life keeps you from growing and thriving? What is your Egypt? What do you feel enslaves or entraps you?**
- 3. Have you gone through an "Exodus" experience? Describe how you were liberated.** This is a process – we experience different liberations at different times in our lives.

#### **DAY 5: Compare Jesus' life in Matthew 1-4 with Moses' life in Exodus 1-3**

**1. What similarities do you see?**

Birth and rescue when boy babies being killed, unusual rescue; Jesus and his parents flee to Egypt for safety and return to Israel from Egypt; Jesus baptism and call of God; Moses call by God; Jesus spends 40 days in the wilderness; Moses spends 40 years in the wilderness; both start their public ministry after their time in the wilderness.

**2. In what way did Jesus become enslaved to lead us captives out of slavery and liberate us?**

The pre-existing God the Son left heaven and took on a human body, starting in the womb just like us, and setting aside some of His powers to live as a human and then die on the cross. See Philippians 2:6-8.

**3. How do you see Jesus being sent to be our deliverer like Moses being sent to be Israel's deliverer?**

(Read Romans 6:6-8 and 7:14-25)

Christ's death on the cross frees us from being slaves to sin – when we accept Christ as our Savior, we die to a sinful way of life and are raised with Him to a new life. Yet, we find our sinful nature is strong and pulls us to do what it wants, but the Holy Spirit is stronger, living in us, pulls us to do what God wants because of the power of Jesus Christ our Lord. It is a daily struggle to chose God's way rather than our own way. We daily need to remind ourselves we are no longer slaves to sin and ourselves, and claim our freedom in Christ to live as God wants by the power of the Holy Spirit in us.

## **DAY 6**

*(If you have the book Leaving Egypt, read chapters 1, 2, and 3. If you do not have the book, consider how you might respond to these questions based on your own experiences and understanding.)*

- 1. What or who do you identify with in these chapters?**
- 2. In a broad sense, this world we live in is our “Egypt” – our temporary home from which we will be delivered. In a more personal sense, DeGroat says that whatever keeps us from growing and thriving, or whatever enslaves and entraps us is our personal “Egypt”. In the DeGroat book, Charles May is quoted as saying that we are all addicts (p. 38). *How does this happen? (see pages 22-25) Can you think of a time in your own story, past or present, when you experienced the “enslavement” of an “Egypt-like” circumstance – perhaps in a relationship, a job, an addiction or a limitation?***
- 3. DeGroat also writes that people in situations like slavery can become accustomed to their situation and not resist. *As you have lived under the slavery to sins, how have you become accustomed to the situation and did not try to escape or resist? How did you try to cope rather than trying to resist?***  
It often begins innocently, but over time subtle changes happen. We can become deceived, victims of institutionalism – saying yes to one too many activities we feel obligated to perform, taking on one more responsibility, saying yes to one more piece of cake, one more pair of shoes, one more drink, etc. Thus we become slaves. We also need to be aware that there are forces outside ourselves that seek to enslave us. Note Screwtape’s statement in the C.S. Lewis book: “All we can do is to encourage the humans to take pleasures which our Enemy has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which He has forbidden.” The deception is that we forget what we were made for by our Creator. But, we are not without hope, we hope and pray and cry out, and God responds. That’s what Moses and the Exodus reminds us.
- 4. DeGroat (p. 46) writes that “Moses would become the man God chose to invite an embattled, enslaved, and oppressed people into a new life, to draw them out of darkness into light.” *In what ways is there a “Moses” in your life, drawing you out of bondage or oppression?***  
For practical application, we can perhaps find a “Moses” to draw us out of our own places of bondage. DeGroat provides examples of such individuals and situations, such as the waitress who was seriously over-worked by a boss who did nothing to recognize or resolve her situation. On a larger scale, he cites the racial slavery in U.S. history and the sex slavery throughout the world. In each example, there is or could be a “Moses,” who sees the injustice of the situation and steps in, exposing the “pharaoh” who is the oppressor. ***Has there been a situation or struggle in your life where you needed someone else to “draw” you out and maybe even point out that you were indeed being oppressed by another person? Have you ever stepped in to report an injustice to a legal or professional authority who could change a situation to free someone who has become enslaved?***
- 5. *How do you relate to what DeGroat says in chapters 1-3? What don’t you understand? What are your reactions to what he has written?***
- 6. *What have you read in these chapters that relates to a situation that is happening in our country or in the world today?***