

EXODUS:

THE CALL OF GOD



Grace Church
Bible Reading Plan
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INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS

When the book of Genesis ends, life seems to be going pretty well for God's people (now known as the *Israelites*). Joseph had ascended to a high place and he was looked at fondly by Pharaoh. But things change, and the Book of Exodus shows us just how bleak things were looking for the Israelites. Exodus, the second book in the Bible, is a continuation of the story that began in the book of Genesis. Scholars maintain that Exodus (like its predecessor) was written around 1440 B.C. (potentially a little later) by Moses, about whom we'll learn a great deal over the next 40 days.

As you read, take good notes. Read closely and carefully, paying special attention to the sequence of events that are unfolding before you. Get to know the characters in these stories. What does each chapter in this book teach you about God's character? What does it teach you about humanity? What are the implications for you today?

Too often, people get confused by the Old Testament because some of the names sound funny and because we equate "old" with "irrelevant." Let that not be true of us! There are so many parallels between God's deliverance of His people in Exodus and God's deliverance of us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.



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WEEK 1

January 7-13

READ: Exodus 1-10

DAY 1

Today's Reading: Exodus 1-2

Chapter 1

As the Bible transitions from Genesis to Exodus, we also see a transition of life in Egypt. Through Joseph, the Israelites had just saved Egypt from famine and therefore received tremendous honor in the country. However, as the years go by, the prior generation's actions are forgotten. With a new King in charge, Egypt now sees the Israelites as a problem rather than a provision. In order to deal with the growing number of Israelites, Pharaoh places them under slavery and directs two midwives to kill every baby boy.

This is a painful reminder of the evil of humanity. However, underneath this painful new leadership sits a fascinating story of courage. Two women, Shiphrah and Puah, come through as heroes. Verse 17 recounts their story: "The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do." These women literally put their lives in danger because they feared God more than they feared their king.

It is an incredible relief that this chapter does not end with the butchering of baby boys. Because these women had the courage to do what was right, Scripture says that God was kind to them. Every single day, we have choices that will prove where our allegiances lie. We will either fear God or we will fear some other king. While our decisions might not feel as costly, any decision that is made apart from God will similarly lead to destruction. Be reminded today that following God takes courage. We can follow Him through dangerous places because we know that God's kindness will be there with us every step of the way.

Chapter 2

Moses is one of the main characters in the Old Testament. He was born an Israelite, but was raised an Egyptian. Moses grew up privileged in Pharaoh's house but never forgot where he came from. In chapter 2 we see him rushing to defend a fellow Israelite and, in the process, ended up murdering an Egyptian.

Acts 7:25 says that "Moses thought that his own people would realize God was using him to rescue them, but they did not." He must've seen himself as the rightful savior of the Israelites. After all, he was an Israelite, but with the wealth, power, and resources of the Egyptians. That unique combination made him fit to be the one to rescue the Israelites from slavery, or so he thought. Once he realized the Israelites didn't see him that way, however, he fled the country in shame.

While things looked hopeless for Moses and the Israelites, at the end of this chapter, we see who the true Savior for the Israelites is. "God heard their groaning and He remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them." (vv. 24-25) God will use Moses to deliver His people, but don't overlook who the true Deliverer is—God. He uses people, but He, and He alone, is the One who rescues, delivers, and saves.

Moses tried to take matters into his own hands and ended up a murderer and a fugitive hundreds of miles away from the people he was trying to save. We end up in similar places when we try to play God. When we try to be the savior for a friend in need, or try to take on a burden not meant for us to carry alone, this leads to nothing more than burnout and more problems. We'll see Moses learn this lesson and begin to allow God to work through him, and as a result, save an entire group of people. We need to learn that same lesson. Philippians 2:13 says, "It is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose." Instead of acting out of our own strength, let's humble ourselves, allow God to work through us, and be amazed at what He does.

DAY 2

Today's Reading: Exodus 3-4

Chapter 3

This is one of the most pivotal passages in all of Scripture. As Moses was tending his flock one day, God appeared to him as a burning bush with very clear instructions for what He wanted him to do. Think about that sentence. It was just a normal day when God appeared and audibly told Moses where to go and what to do.

So often, we get stuck trying to determine God's will and we just wish God would appear to us and tell us exactly where we should go next. We all want our own "burning bush" moment, as we try to discern what God is calling us to do. Sometimes, God makes it explicitly clear for us (albeit maybe not through burning bushes). Other times, it takes a whole lot of prayer, discernment, and wise counsel (and even then we may feel unsure about proceeding).

The task God gave Moses was no small one—and Moses was fully aware of that. In verse 11, Moses, in an incredibly relatable moment, makes his first of many excuses why he's not the guy to accomplish this task. But God reminds Moses that He will be with him. He's not being sent out to figure it out on his own. In the same way that God was with Moses, the Holy Spirit is with believers in Jesus (Matthew 28:20).

In the rest of the chapter, we see God lay a theological foundation, both for Moses and for us. We see God's love for the Israelites and His commitment to them. Then, in verse 14, God says to Moses: "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

God is responding to Moses' asking, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" by making it clear that it's not about who Moses is, but who God is. God is, always has been, and always will be. Moses was inadequate for the task at hand. Any mortal man would be. But I AM was sending him. I AM was with him. And I AM was going to deliver His people again.

Chapter 4

One of the most influential leaders in history didn't want to be a leader. Moses objects to God's appointment for him several times. He voices the first two objections in chapter 3—he's a shepherd, not the appropriate person to go in front of Pharaoh, and he doesn't even know God's right name or how to refer to the deity who is sending him. Now, in chapter 4, he reminds God that he's not very eloquent (as if God is surprised by any of Moses's shortcomings).

Moses asks all the questions we're thinking, right? We can't blame him for his hesitancy. After all, he doesn't feel like he has the ability or talent to do the job God is asking him to do. In verse 1, he says the two debilitating words we often ask God: what if?

Those two words wreak havoc on our faith. What if You don't come through for me, God? What if obedience to You requires a sacrifice I'm unwilling to make? What if they reject me? Rebuke me? Ridicule me? What if...? And we're left holding the bag of questions without answers and steps of faith left untaken. Missing out on the work God has prepared for us and prepared us for.

Moses wasn't chosen for his charisma or eloquence, he was chosen because God saw fit to use him. He wasn't chosen because he sounded good, he was chosen because God is good and God uses the foolish and ordinary people of this world to declare His excellencies and advance the Kingdom. God was neither surprised nor hindered by Moses' deficiencies. And God is not surprised or hindered by ours.

Like Moses, God has prepared work for us. Will we believe and trust that He will be faithful to prepare us for the work? He will not leave us nor forsake us. He is with us wherever we go. Let's quit making excuses and get to work. The harvest is plentiful.

DAY 3

Today's Reading: Exodus 5-6

Chapter 5

The demand to produce is crushing. In reading this chapter, you can almost feel the exhaustion within the Israelite camp. As the Egyptians ask for more, and more, and more, they literally cannot keep up. Because of the demands of Pharaoh, they are now required to work longer hours and produce more bricks. Their work is not only a burden, but their failure to produce led to physical beatings (v. 14). When you're only seen as something that produces, you will be run dry.

While we aren't in slavery in Egypt, many of us can associate with the demand to produce. This world seemingly asks more of us every day. We need to be a better friend, a better mom, a better Christian, a better worker. We're required to be doers who produce what the world asks of us. But this is a burden too heavy for us to bear. We aren't machines caught up in some grand assembly line. We're people, meant to be loved.

As Christians, we don't have to fall in line with the demands of this world. As it asks for more of what you can produce, Jesus just asks for more of your heart. His concern isn't that you'd impress Him today with all you can do for Him. Jesus is more impressed with those who can put down their work and sit at His feet (Luke 10). Today, you don't have to keep up with the expectation to produce. Instead, you have the opportunity to love Jesus and be loved by Him.

Chapter 6

Moses delivers some good news to the Israelites. He tells them what God has told him—how He has remembered His covenant with them, how He will free them and redeem them, and how He will take them to the Promised Land. You'd think the Israelites would be jumping for joy! At last, they're going to be rescued! At last, God has remembered them! Wahoo!

But Moses' message fell on deaf ears. Verse 9 says, "They did not listen to him because of their discouragement and harsh labor." The Israelites just don't believe it. It all sounds too good to be true. And the guy giving them this "good news" is the same person who just got their workload increased. The Israelites were overwhelmed by their life circumstances. They knew God's promise to their forefathers, had heard stories of what He was capable of, and yet, because they were focused only on the problems directly in front of them, they missed God's provision for them.

The same is true for us. Many times, we are so discouraged and dismayed by what life is throwing at us that we can't see the bigger picture. We can't see God at work because our view is limited by our small, earthly perspective. Our human eyes only see problems, worries, fears, and anxieties because that's all we're looking at. And who can blame us, right? Look around—this world is a mess. Disease, sickness, brokenness, failures, hurts, and more overwhelm us. It's easy to get lost in the despair of it all.

However, as believers, we get to be the most optimistic people in the world. Sure, in this world, we will have trials (like Jesus promises), but we know that what we're going through now is not the end. And because of that, we can have an eternal perspective—one with our eyes fixed on Christ, rather than on our problems. Like Paul says in Colossians 3:1-2, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." What are you looking at today? Problems, pain, and worries? Or, are you looking up at Christ and allowing His perspective to guide and direct you even in the midst of tough circumstances?

DAY 4

Today's Reading: Exodus 7-8

Chapter 7

As we begin our study on the plagues with Exodus 7, we see God's power and might on display in full effect. It starts with Moses and Aaron standing before God, receiving their marching orders, and it ends with the Nile River, their source of water, turned to blood. Why the Nile? This first plague was directed at the Egyptian river deities. The Nile was essentially worshipped as a god by the Egyptians, and here, God shows that He has power over the Nile. God exposes our idols for what they are.

God told Moses and Aaron that Pharaoh's heart would be hardened and he wouldn't listen, but surely he would repent after that, right?! Wrong. The text tells us that Pharaoh simply turned around and went back into his palace (v. 23). Close your eyes and imagine that picture in your mind. The river that runs through Egypt turns to blood and Pharaoh is so unmoved by it, so unbothered, that he essentially shrugs it off. His pride won't let him see what God is doing. Instead, he goes about his daily life, unconcerned by the work of God going on around him.

When our pride swells, we develop blind spots. These blind spots prevent us from seeing the hand of God around us because we become so inwardly focused, which is not God's intention. We become self-absorbed and entitled, concerned with only what benefits us. Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." Pharaoh is about to encounter a crash course on what that means, as his heart continues to harden even further.

Chapter 8

Different day, same message: "Let My people go." By the end of this week, you will be astounded by Pharaoh's unrelenting heart and behavior. But, let's not be quick to distance ourselves from his pride and arrogance, assuming that "we would never..." The truth is, we have. We do. All the time. We've stubbornly clung to a cause or a justification when God told us to let it go. We've made promises and repented falsely. We've seen the destruction our pride and sin has caused other people. We've hardened our hearts as we've feasted on disobedience and rebellion. Asking someone to pray for us, on our behalf, that God would be kind and relenting, when we have no intention of changing or surrendering.

Stubborn. Strong-willed. Obstinate. Prideful. We don't like to be called out. It's painful. But, what is more painful is the wake of destruction left behind when we refuse to listen to wise counsel. Pharaoh refused to listen to Moses and Aaron. He then refused to listen to his own advisors when they said, "This is the finger of God." Ultimately, he refused to listen to God, and it was devastating and costly.

Pharaoh is like so many people in the world. God's method of dealing with Pharaoh is still the same way He works today—God wants people to know Him. He gives us opportunities to make the right choices, and so experience the blessing of God. He often uses people to speak into our lives, to warn us, to encourage us, to remind us that God wants freedom for us. Pharaoh chose not to trust God, to ignore wise counsel, and his disobedience resulted in personal tragedy for himself and national tragedy for Egypt. Our choices determine our destiny.

Pharaoh either forgot his promises or had no intention of following through on them. Make no mistake—God keeps every one of His promises. He is true to His word. He is after your deliverance and surrender.

DAY 5

Today's Reading: Exodus 9-10

Chapter 9

“This time I have sinned,’ he said to them. ‘The Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong.’” We get this shocking admission from a humiliated Pharaoh in verse 27 of this chapter. The strong and mighty King of Egypt has finally been brought to his knees by the King of the Universe. As we have been watching the stand-off between these two kings, it was clear that one of them would have to give in eventually. It would either be God or it would be Pharaoh. Unfortunately for Pharaoh, he could fight all he wanted, but the Lord had shown that He would not relent until His people were set free.

Finally, as Pharaoh sees the utter destruction that his hard heart has brought onto his kingdom, he repents. He finally realizes that his ego is the one thing putting his people in danger. It’s the only act of humility we have seen from Egypt’s ruler during the first nine chapters of Exodus. Since Pharaoh had finally given in, the Lord also mercifully relented and stopped the hail from falling.

But then we read this in verse 34: “When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again: He and his officials hardened their hearts.” His return to arrogance is almost unbelievable. It would be unbelievable if it weren’t a story that is so true of our own lives. How many times have we promised God to never do “that sin” again, only to return shortly thereafter? We only want to repent enough so that God would make us feel better, only to pursue our own desires once again. Pharaoh is about to learn an even more difficult lesson as we read on—don’t let your story end the same way.

Chapter 10

In Exodus 10, we read about the eighth and ninth plagues—locusts and darkness. As Pharaoh’s pride and refusal to humble himself continue to bring crisis and trials to the Egyptian people, Moses remains steadfast in his request to let the Israelite people go. After the locusts, we see Pharaoh ask for forgiveness and think he may finally relent and give in to Moses’ requests. But once again, his hard heart kicks in, and Pharaoh does not let God’s people leave.

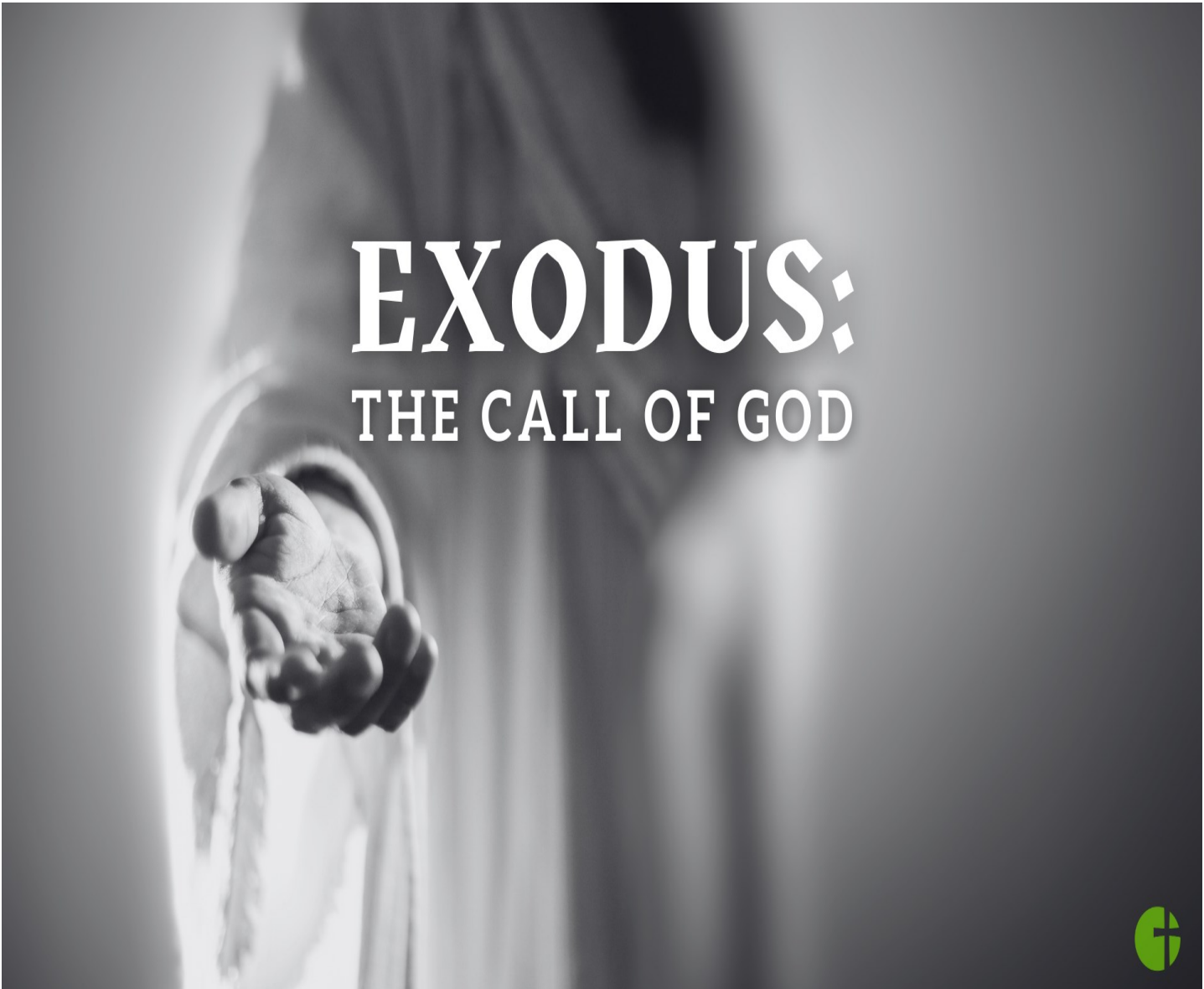
In the ninth plague, Moses stretches out his hand and pitch darkness is cast upon the land for three days. Can you imagine what it must have been like? And this wasn’t just like an evening dusk or sunset, but pitch black darkness. There you are, washing your clothes, working in the fields, or playing games in your village, and a darkness so dark that it could be felt (v. 21) now envelopes you and everyone you know and love.

That is, unless you were an Israelite. Exodus 10:23 says, “No one could see anyone else or move about for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived.” It’s as if the Light of the World was among God’s people.

We’re in the middle of some dark times in January 2024. Wokeism, racism, unemployment, a sexually immoral and confused culture, and a toxic political landscape in an election year. It’s the perfect storm, and we can feel the darkness everywhere we go (v. 21).

But as followers of Christ, we have the Light of the World among us (see John 8:12, 9:5, 1 John 1:5). Jesus provides light and hope in the midst of a dark world and a dark year. Isn’t it entirely possible that you, the light of the world (because of Jesus), could let your light shine before others so that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:13-16)? We have the light that our dark world requires.

Though a pitch-black darkness fell on Pharaoh and the Egyptians, God’s people were spared with light from the Lord. Let’s push back the darkness and bring the Light to a world desperately in need of hope and light.



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WEEK 2

January 14-20

READ: Exodus 11-20

DAY 6

Today's Reading: Exodus 11-12

Chapter 11

By chapter 11, we have seen nine different plagues come on the Egyptians. Surely by this point, Pharaoh has gotten the message, right? God tells Moses there's one more plague to come, and this one will kill the firstborn of all the Egyptians, from Pharaoh's own son to all the livestock in Egypt. Reading this, you can't help but hold out hope that Pharaoh will respond to these other nine plagues, repent from his evil ways, and let the Israelites go peacefully. But sadly, God tells Moses that Pharaoh isn't going to listen.

Throughout Exodus so far, we have learned a lot about the character of God. Not only has He remembered His covenant with Israel, He also shows His mercy to Pharaoh, even when Pharaoh has proven to be undeserving. Scripture is clear, from the Old Testament to the New Testament, that God is full of mercy and extends it towards us, even when we don't deserve it. Romans 2:4 talks about God's kindness and how that very kindness is what leads us towards repentance.

As we'll read about tomorrow, God's going to offer His protection and deliverance for the Israelites. He'll save them from what's coming to Pharaoh. In that same way, God provided deliverance to us through Jesus. Our hearts have been hardened at times. We've wandered from God. We've ignored His signs and wonders all around us at times. We, like Pharaoh, have rejected God ourselves. But God's kindness leads us to repentance. We have received mercy and grace because God loved the world so much that He sent His Son. May it never be lost on us that we didn't get what we deserved.

Chapter 12

This is it. Everything we read so far has prepared and led us to this dramatic conclusion. God brings the final and most devastating plague upon Egypt—the killing of the firstborn males. It's hard to read, it's weighty. But, we can't take the hard, mysterious stuff out of the Bible. What we know is that over and over, God warned Pharaoh. Remember, in Exodus 4:22-23, God said, "Israel is my firstborn son; if you don't let them go, I will kill your firstborn son." God cannot go against His word. While the Lord could have wiped this arrogant Pharaoh off the map quickly, He gave him many chances to repent. God's kindness and mercy was intended to lead the king to repentance (Romans 2:4), but Pharaoh wasn't interested in God's good gift.

God gives the Israelites specific instructions to prepare them for deliverance ("eat quickly and with your traveling clothes on"). He also commands them to celebrate their deliverance. All of God's instructions to His people are IN ADVANCE of their liberation, before He delivers them. The Israelites trusted and knew that while their deliverance was coming, their Deliverer was already there. They acted in faith, believing God would do what He said He would do.

Remember, as we read the Bible, that all of Scripture points to Jesus, our Deliverer. We cannot miss the significance of the Passover lamb. God tells His people to slaughter a lamb, a perfect lamb without blemish, and use the blood of the lamb on their doorposts to protect them. No doubt the covering of blood for salvation of life foreshadows our True Passover Lamb, whose blood saves us from the penalty of sin and death.

But, don't miss this: remember that the Egyptians worshipped livestock. The lamb was one of many animals worshipped as gods by the Egyptians. God instructs the Israelites to slaughter a god of their oppressors as a way of serving their own God. The faith required to do this was huge, because this would have been an act of defiance to the Egyptians. To demonstrate their faith in God could have endangered the lives of the Israelites. Putting the blood on their doorposts let the world know the Israelites rejected the Egyptian idea of holy. The freedom of the Israelites required a sacrifice of a lesser god, a cultural god.

What if that's true for us, too? What if our deliverance and freedom hinges on our readiness to slaughter the lesser gods we worship? Said another way, where are you looking for life apart from Jesus? What sins need to be slaughtered so that freedom can be embraced? Because like the Israelites, our exodus is not only for freedom. Freedom alone gives license. Our deliverance from what oppresses us is for a purpose: to serve and worship God so that we may declare the excellencies of the One who called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light.

Our deliverance is coming, but our Deliverer is here. Let's trust and celebrate in advance of our Promised Land.

DAY 7

Today's Reading: Exodus 13-14

Chapter 13

Sometimes, God asks us to do things that we just don't understand. Particularly in the Old Testament, we often find commands that are somewhat confusing. For instance, in this chapter, God asks the Israelites to not eat yeast for seven days. What does God have against yeast? Well, this command actually has hardly anything to do with yeast. In reality, this command has everything to do with our forgetfulness. God knows that we are prone to forget (remember Pharaoh in chapter 9?); therefore, He uses these commands to wake us up. Yeast was such a staple of their diets that to not use it would have been a disruption.

Here, God uses a change in their diet and the sacrifice of an animal to provide a consistent reminder of His faithfulness. He knew that if the Israelites went through their lives without an intentional prompting, they would forget what God had done and fail to tell future generations. These commands were really just reminders of the goodness of God.

In the same way, we are prone to forget the faithfulness of Jesus in our lives. We will forget His goodness if we don't set up intentional reminders. His commands still achieve the same purpose as they did in Exodus 13. When we live differently from the world, people will ask us why we live that way. This will always provide us an opportunity to tell our kids, neighbors, and co-workers, "Let me tell you about what God has done for me..."

Chapter 14

The crossing of the Red Sea is one of the hallmark Old Testament stories in the Bible. It is mentioned not only in Exodus, when it happens, but throughout Scripture—in Isaiah, Psalms, Joshua, 1 Corinthians, Acts, Nehemiah, and Judges. This story is recorded throughout so much of the Bible because it's an important part of the Israelites' history. It proves the power of God; right when they felt all was lost, when their enemies were closing in on them, when there was nowhere else to go—God made a way where there was no way. This story serves as a reminder to the Israelites for years to come that God will provide for them and deliver them from their enemies, even when all hope seems lost.

God knew that the people He had just rescued from slavery were discouraged and felt forgotten. They had been enslaved for almost 400 years and were brought out through 10 horrific plagues. They were trusting a guy, Moses, who hadn't grown up with them and didn't fully understand where they were coming from. And they were heading to "the Promised Land," which they had never seen with their own eyes. They needed some encouragement to move forward in faith. So God gives them this epic moment to show the Israelites His power and to help instill belief in their leader, Moses. He was letting them know who He was and what He was capable of so that in the days, weeks, months, years, and even generations to come, they would have this story to look back on and be encouraged.

What is your "Red Sea" moment with God? When have you seen God do the impossible in your life? The Israelites are told throughout the Bible to remember this story because they so often forgot it and started to doubt God's faithfulness. Where do you turn when you forget God's power and goodness in your life? When we face trying times in our life, it can be easy to feed our doubts and let them grow, just like we'll see the Israelites do time and time again throughout the Old Testament. What if, instead, we feed our faith by remembering times of God's faithfulness, provision, and deliverance. By looking back at who God has been to us, we will gain the proper perspective necessary in order to move forward in faith with Him.

DAY 8

Today's Reading: Exodus 15-16

Chapter 15

Imagine the flood of emotions Moses and the Israelites were feeling in Exodus 15. They are finally out from under the oppressive thumb of Egypt, and they just witnessed an actual miracle with the parting of the Red Sea. We could assume they had to be emotionally and physically spent. They have been on quite the journey from slavery, to the plagues, to their escape out of Egypt.

We can learn a lot from the actions of Moses and Miriam here. They both pause, reflect, and praise the God who delivered them. They didn't just exhale and rest. They weren't delusional, thinking that they had somehow rescued themselves. They knew it was God. Moses not only looked back with gratitude for what God had done, he also spent time praising the very nature of who God is. This song of Moses doesn't end here—it continues all the way on to the book of Revelation (Revelation 15:3-4).

How do you respond when you feel like God has delivered you? Do you stop and sing praises of gratitude? Do you just crash and try to block out any thought of what God delivered you from? Or do you look back with a certain amount of pride, wanting to claim credit for God's work? Moses and Miriam show us what true worship really looks like. We have the opportunity to express our thankfulness to the God of the universe whenever we want to, yet too often we reserve that for a 75 minute block of time on Sunday mornings, or when we drive around listening to Christian radio.

But what if it was more than that? What if we were habitually grateful people? At the end of this chapter, we see the Israelites start to complain about a lack of water. Three days isn't that long, but apparently it's long enough to forget what you just came out of. God had their back again and gave them clean water, despite their grumbling and complaining. We have the opportunity to be people who remember well. Let's not miss out on that opportunity.

Chapter 16

It's just a little over a month since the Israelites sang a song of gratitude at their triumph over the Egyptians. Remember Exodus 15? The Israelites' song of praise and declaration that "In Your unfailing love You will lead the people You have redeemed. In Your strength, You will guide them..." (Exodus 15:13). Yet, here they are, just a few weeks later, complaining that they would rather be back in Egypt and questioning the intention and leading of God.

Already?! After all the miracles of deliverance and provision they witnessed with their own eyes—the Ten Plagues; the escape route through parted waters of the Red Sea; the destruction of Pharaoh's strongest warriors; bitter water made sweet to quench their thirst. They are already exhausted with the God of exhaustless resources and provisions.

The Israelites do what so many of us do: Recreate history. Romanticize the past. Question God's appointed leaders over us. Question God's deliverance and care for us. Approach God as a glorified Santa Claus, hoping He grants our wish list without asking anything of us.

We are a forgetful bunch. We beg God for miracles of deliverance and then quickly forget them when He provides. We pray things like, "God if you'll get me out of this mess, I'll believe;" or, "God, provide for me and then I'll believe." But, miracles only bring people to a faith in God for a short time. A faith and belief dependent on what God can do for you will be disappointing at best and disheartening and distrusting at worst. God cannot and will not be manipulated.

However, God will provide for us. He is true to His promises. He will supply all we need (Philippians 4:19). Let's not be people who evaluate God's faithfulness and goodness to us by what He does for us. The goal is dependency on the Giver, not the gifts. He will be faithful to us. Let's be faithful to Him.

DAY 9

Today's Reading: Exodus 17-18

Chapter 17

We should realize by now that the story of the Israelites in Exodus is really just a study on our own human condition. The only difference between us and them is that their actions were actually written down! This chapter begins with the people of God complaining about their thirst and doubting God's goodness...again. These are the people that God miraculously freed from Egypt, and yet Satan is able to attack their faith by making them a little thirsty. How could they so quickly give up on the One who has done so much for them? It's because their faith is defined by their feelings. Their situation is the number one driver of their attitude in their walk with God. The Israelites have a "What have you done for me lately?" type of relationship both with Moses and with their Savior.

When we read this chapter, it's hard not to see them as an entitled and fragile bunch. Rather than trusting God in the hard times, they just give up immediately! And yet, if someone was writing the story of your life, how similar would it look to Exodus 17? How often do you fall into temptation because you're in a bad mood? How often do you distance yourself from God as soon as your situation isn't to your liking? We probably look like the Israelites more than we'd like to admit. But we don't have to let Exodus 17 be our story. We can choose to remember God's faithfulness when we feel thirsty in the desert. We can know that God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). So today, don't let your feelings define your faith. Instead, let's choose to praise God before we see His provision, not just after He has provided it.

Chapter 18

We love to be wanted and needed by others. Whether you're a parent whose kids need help tying their shoes, the friend to whom everyone turns for wisdom, or the boss who knows all the answers, it's good to be in high demand. But sometimes this "need to be needed" becomes a source of pride. We find too much significance from being needed by others.

The people of Israel needed Moses. The lines to get time with him to pick his brain were very long—God's people stood around Moses from morning till evening (Exodus 18:13-14), waiting for his help and counsel. He alone sat as the judge for the people. The text doesn't tell us how Moses felt, but he thought he had to be the one, the only one, who could help the people know God's decrees and instructions. He is, after all, Moses! He's the one who led them out of captivity and was the leader of God's people. The Lord spoke to him through a burning bush, he stood up to the evil Pharaoh, and he led the people through the Red Sea.

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, called him out when he said, "What you are doing is not good" (v. 17). After singing the praises of the Lord and all the work He had done (see verses 8-11), Moses now thinks he needs to do it all. We often feel the same way. We want to be needed and think we need to do it all. "My way is the best way"—and in the process, we wear ourselves out and leave people dissatisfied.

We can be grateful for the example of Moses and the way he applied Jethro's wisdom. Once Moses selected capable men to help lead, he was no longer weary, and the people went home satisfied. We see something similar in Acts 6:1-7. When the workload of the twelve Apostles was distributed to others, the Word of God spread and disciples were made. The Good News of the gospel of Jesus Christ was shared in making disciples and strengthening the saints!

Getting practical for your life today: think through the areas of life where you "need to be needed." Too often, we find significance in what we do and being needed by others. In the process, we wear ourselves out. Think through how you can better follow the example of Moses in building teams and including others in the work that needs to be done.

DAY 10

Today's Reading: Exodus 19-20

Chapter 19

In the book of Genesis, we saw God establish multiple covenants with His people. The first covenant began with Adam, then the next with Noah, and then another with Abraham in Genesis 12. With each covenant, God makes promises to His people while also setting expectations for them to uphold.

The Israelites have been through a lot over the past few months. God has delivered them, fed them, and guided them this far. Clearly God was on their side, but He decided to remind them of that and establish a whole new covenant with His people. God wants to set Israel apart again, and in verse 8 the Israelites say they're willing to do whatever God asks of them (spoiler: they do at first, but it doesn't last long).

This is one of those chapters where you almost need to close your eyes in order to visualize what's going on here. Clearly, something was happening that was going to change their lives forever. The Israelites must have been terrified, excited, and bewildered all at the same time. As God rolls out these instructions over the next few chapters, we see Him lay the framework for the Israelites for essentially the rest of the Old Testament. This covenant sets Israel apart as a "kingdom of priests," calling them to be a light in a world of darkness (the first time we see God using kingdom language).

Unsurprisingly, we'll see the Israelites fall short of the standard God set for them time and time again. The Mosaic Covenant serves as more than just a rulebook for Israel to follow; it sets up their ultimate need for a savior. Jesus is able to do what the Israelites were ultimately unable to do: uphold the Mosaic law perfectly.

So what does this mean for us today? While we're no longer under (bound by) the laws of Moses, they do serve as a helpful guide for us as we pursue holiness. If we're following hard after Jesus, seeking to live as He did, our desires to covet, steal, or murder will fade and be replaced with a desire to live out the gospel instead. Just like the Israelites, we will consistently fall short of God's standard. Through Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, He fulfilled the law and, as a result, we get to enjoy a renewed relationship with God.

Chapter 20

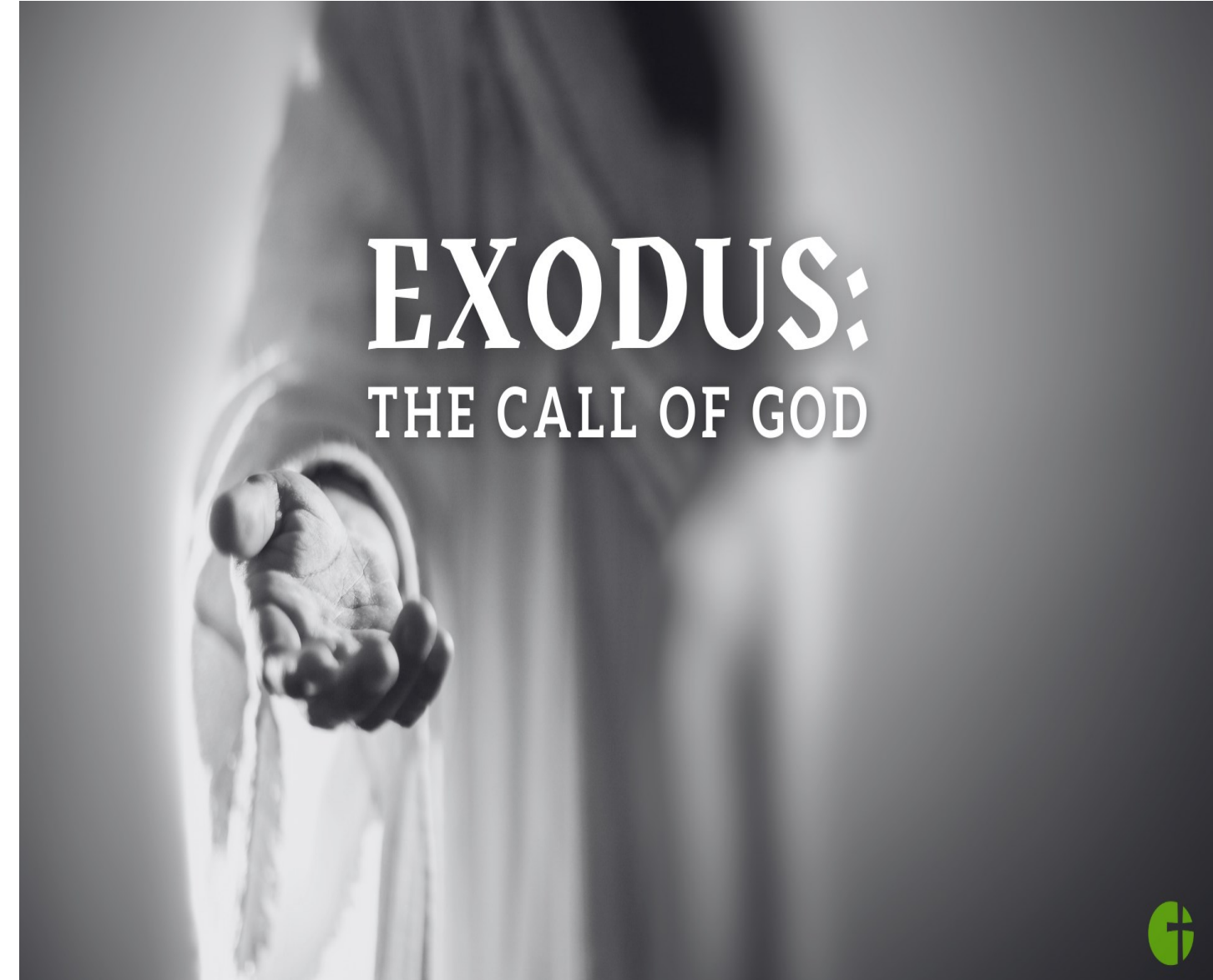
Exodus 20 demonstrates God's desire to initiate relationships with His creation. Before the events of this chapter, the Lord approached Moses, drew His people out of slavery, and reminded them of His promises and plans. God desires to dwell in intimacy with His people and set them apart as His own. To do this, He gives them the Law: The Ten Commandments.

Reading through the list of Commandments, it is easy for us to get discouraged. No matter how hard we try, how nice we are, or how often we attend church, we are bound to break them. We are all broken in our own way. We can't follow the guidelines. We gossip about our coworkers without even thinking about it. We covet the opportunities and possessions of our peers. We envy the remodeled kitchen of our neighbor. We get jealous of our roommate when they are in a God-honoring relationship, and we are not. We break these Commandments time after time. Does this mean we have no hope? Why even try? Now what?

God created these laws knowing that we wouldn't be able to uphold them. He gave us this law so that we could understand sin. He uses these Commandments to build upon the foundation of His grand plan. To fill the gap of our inadequacy and brokenness, He gave us His son, Jesus, who lived, died, and rose again so we could walk with the Lord in righteousness and freedom that we don't deserve. These Commandments remind us of our inability to earn or work for our salvation, but thankfully, that is not the end of our story. We have a God who shows steadfast love for His people.

Unlike pagan gods, our God isn't basing our value on perfection, feelings, or performance. Instead, He forgives us for the ways we fall short of His expectations.

Praise God we don't have to be separated from God because of our mistakes; rather, we can follow Moses' example in verse 20 and draw near to God in the midst of darkness.



EXODUS:

THE CALL OF GOD



WEEK 3

January 21-27

READ: Exodus 21-30

DAY 11

Today's Reading: Exodus 21-22

Chapter 21

If you were a servant, can you imagine being allowed to go free, but instead you choose to stay? That just doesn't even seem possible in our minds. Freedom is one of the ideals on which we place a large value. We want to do what we want, spend what we want, and go where we want. Why would we choose servitude over freedom? The only reason you would is if you had a tremendously generous, gracious, and protective master. This is the story in the beginning of this chapter. God is outlining what must be done if a servant chooses to stay with his or her master.

This is an interesting beginning to the chapter because the Israelites are in a very important time in their history. They have just received freedom from Egypt and now have the ability to do whatever they want. It's an inflection point for the people of God. Will they choose to stay under God's leadership, or will they put themselves in charge? The rules written in this chapter are God's attempt to remind His people that He is a good master who wants to protect them. Each one of these laws is about guarding the value of life. These men and women can go out on their own, but their Good Shepherd has told them over and over again how much He values them.

This point in Israel's history is somewhat similar to John 6. Jesus had just given a hard teaching, and many of His followers turned back and left Him. They thought they were better off on their own. Jesus then asked His twelve disciples, "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.'" Just as the Israelites and Simon Peter made the decision to stick with their masters, so should we. His laws are always made with our flourishing in mind.

Chapter 22

When we read the Old Testament, it's easy at times to get bogged down in what might seem like irrelevant details and rules. Exodus 22 is no exception to this challenge, as we read about livestock, silver, fires, and thieves.

Immediately after instructing God's people to not allow sorceresses and those who are involved "romantically" with animals to live, Moses drops a truth bomb in verse 20. He says, "Whoever sacrifices to any god other than the Lord must be destroyed."

You may think you're in the clear since you don't practice Old Testament sacrifices. You may think you're safe from God's judgment in Exodus 22 because you don't sacrifice to any god—you're not sacrificing doves and sheep at the altar! But every day, you worship other gods. Maybe it's food, drink, or stuff. Maybe you worship your own body and obsess over it, or maybe you worship your reputation and what others think of you. While we don't sacrifice animals at the altar, we sacrifice our resources for our own comfort and pleasure. In the process, we put our own desires before God.

In the Ten Commandments, God says, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). He's kind enough to remind us again in chapter 22 that we shall not worship or sacrifice to any other god. And if we're honest, we know we need this reminder—not just in Exodus 20 and 22, but pretty much every moment of every single day.

We need to be people who are thankful for God's mercy, grace, and forgiveness. God doesn't give us what we deserve (mercy). He forgives us for our sins and transgressions against Him and others. And He demonstrates grace towards us—He gives us something we don't deserve. Even though our sins of worshipping and sacrificing to idols earn us death, God gives us life through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Let's not miss these great Truths that still affect us today in the midst of a bunch of seemingly outdated laws and rules.

DAY 12

Today's Reading: Exodus 23-24

Chapter 23

Another day, another set of instructions for the Israelites to live by. So far, we have seen God outline the expectations for everything from property, to sexuality, to how to properly borrow something from a neighbor. This chapter begins by talking about justice and ends with God essentially re-affirming His commitment to the Israelites. This chapter, along with the few preceding it, give us tremendous insight into Israelite culture as they were trying to navigate life beyond slavery.

There's an interesting thread that flows throughout this chapter, beginning in verse 2, where it says, "Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong." Later on, there are warnings of what can happen when you worship the gods of others (verses 24 and 32). Clearly, God was concerned that the Israelites would fall victim to peer pressure and turn their backs on Him.

Who we surround ourselves with matters. This is a theme that prevails throughout the story of Scripture. Proverbs 13:20 says, "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm." It's easy to follow the crowd. It's easy to do whatever everyone else is doing. It takes boldness and courage to do what is right in the eyes of the Lord.

At the end of the day, it's important to remember that our citizenship here on earth is temporary. When we idolize status or possessions, when we make gods out of money or acclaim, we've simply given in and followed the crowd. We have let the world around us dictate success, when instead God has laid out His expectations for us. We need to surround ourselves with people who will help us love God more, spur us on towards love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24), and help us chip away at the parts of us that don't look like Christ.

Chapter 24

In Exodus 24, we see Moses ascend up Mt. Sinai for the sixth time to confirm the covenant between God and the Israelites. This time, Moses and about 75 others encounter the Lord God. Moses is called to ascend even further up the mountain to receive the tablets of stone with the instructions and commandments written on them. In verse 18, it says, "Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights."

At this point, when Moses goes up the mountain, the Israelites had left Egypt over a year ago. And he's gone for another 40 days and 40 nights.

Can you imagine what it was like to wait for those 40 days and 40 nights?

We have the privilege of knowing the length of the waiting period, but they didn't. They were not told to "sit tight, it'll be about 40 days." No, they weren't told anything about the duration of waiting they needed to endure. Most likely, they asked the questions we would ask ourselves in that situation: "When will our leader come back?" "Who will take us to the land God promised us?" "Has God forgotten us? Abandoned us?"

This is similar to all of us right now. We are waiting for something without knowing how long the wait will last. Whether it's an answered prayer for health to be restored, a relationship reconciled, a wound to heal, a change in our circumstances or a change to take place in someone we love.

In our waiting, may we turn towards God and not from Him.

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13)

DAY 13

Today's Reading: Exodus 25-26

Chapter 25

In this chapter, we read that God wants to build a big, fancy sanctuary. He wants it to be made out of gold, silver, and bronze. He even wants goat hair, for some reason. All of this so that there can be an important building dedicated to Himself. You can't help but wonder, why can't he just do it Himself? Why can't He have the Israelites stumble upon a ready made sanctuary made out of gold and goat hair finer than they could ever imagine? Wouldn't that have been more impressive? But God asks Moses instead to receive an offering from "everyone whose heart prompts them to give" (v. 2).

Why do you think God does this? He certainly doesn't need an offering from the Israelites. But God asks them to provide for the sanctuary to involve them in the relationship. God has made it clear that even if He can do miracles, it doesn't mean He always will. There will be times that He parts the seas, and there will be others where He asks us to build a sanctuary on our own. He doesn't want the Israelites to get used to a God that does everything for them. He wants them to develop the habit of being an active participant in the relationship. This way, they won't flee when things get hard. Because now that they have participated in the building of the sanctuary, they truly make the claim that this God is their God. He didn't just choose them, because in giving of their gold, silver, and bronze, they now get to say that they choose Him. These offerings bind their hearts to God and remind them that while some may trust in wealth, they trust in the name of the Lord.

Chapter 26

In Exodus 26, we see God's instructions on how to build the Tabernacle. As seen in the text, the Lord is very specific in the size and measurements of the Tabernacle, the type and color of thread to be used, and clear instructions about what was to be placed where in the Tabernacle.

In verses 31-33, we see instructions on how an interior curtain was to be made. This curtain separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, and the covenant law was to be placed in the ark behind the curtain. This curtain banned access to all people from entering the Most Holy Place. The only one granted access to the Most Holy Place was the high priest, but only on the Day of Atonement (see Leviticus 16). God's people needed this curtain because sin separates us from God. A sinful people could not survive an encounter with the holy God.

This same curtain shows up throughout the Scriptures, but most notably in Matthew 27:50-51. At the moment Jesus died, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. As a result, the tearing of the curtain gives us access to the Most Holy Place, not literally, but figuratively. Now we can stand before God because of the finished work of Jesus, not because of our good deeds or righteous acts. Hebrews 9:12 says, "He (Jesus) did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption." We are the beneficiaries of the torn curtain and eternal redemption!

So often, we get lost and discouraged by the seemingly minor, insignificant details in the Old Testament. Instead, what we see in Exodus 26 is a beautiful picture of God's intentional design. The details matter. Aren't you glad we follow and worship a God who knows details like the number of rings in the Tabernacle and the number of hairs on your head (Matthew 10:30)?

DAY 14

Today's Reading: Exodus 27-28

Chapter 27

At first reading, it's easy to think this chapter is another set of instructions or rules to follow, but it's actually so much more than that. The guidelines for sacrifices and the instructions for the construction of the courtyard have something in common: they both explain how to get closer to God. In fact, the Hebrew word for sacrifice (korban) comes from the Hebrew word for "close" (karov).

Any intentional relationship requires a certain level of sacrifice. Maintaining friendships, marriages, and parenting relationships all require you to give up something in order to grow closer together. The sacrificial system that's discussed in Exodus was a way for the Israelites to grow closer to God. It was the way they had to atone for their sins and restore their relationship with God. Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, we no longer have to sacrifice animals each time we sin, but our relationship with God should still require sacrifice on our ends. Our time, our money, our gifts, and abilities should all be held open-handed as we think about what it means to live sacrificially.

The courtyard was another opportunity for the Israelites to get as close to God as they could. Keep in mind, only the priests were allowed to go inside the tabernacle. The rest of the people would have only been allowed access to the courtyard and that would have to suffice. Think about how different that is for us now! Because of the Holy Spirit, we have access to God at any and all times.

It's hard to fully appreciate where we are today without understanding where we have been. Understanding these parts of Exodus should help us appreciate the gospel and the sacrifice of Jesus all the more. We can stop and pray directly to God at any time. We have the Spirit of God living inside of us. We aren't merely relegated to the courtyard anymore!

Chapter 28

As we read this chapter, we can't help but notice the precision, care, and detail given. In these chapters of Exodus, God not only gives the Israelites specific instructions on how to worship Him and where to worship Him, here in chapter 28, He also gives great detail for how the priests are to dress and how they will serve the Israelites.

We would expect God's first instruction regarding the priests to deal with their role and duties. Instead, God begins with a description of the priest's clothing—a subject occupying the entire chapter. They had to be dressed in a manner that radiated sanctity, holiness, and glory. Each garment has significance and purpose. With great intentionality, God lays out the dress code for the priesthood—a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban, and a sash.

Three times in the first four verses, God says, "that he may minister to me." Priests—under the old or new covenants—have their first ministry to God Himself. However, God, with His creative clothing designs, weaves reminders into the fabric of their garments that the priests are to help the community come closer to God. Their service is constantly connected to the people, bearing the names of the people on their shoulders and also bearing the names across their hearts.

The priesthood is a hereditary institution. One had to be born into it. Only the descendants of Aaron are designated as priests. The priesthood was no place for ambition or self-glory. It was only entered into by God's call and invitation. Through Jesus, our great High Priest, we are extended an invitation to be a part of the priesthood. There is nothing we can do to earn it or work for it. We simply accept the free grace given to us through Jesus' death on our behalf.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:9 NIV

DAY 15

Today's Reading: Exodus 29-30

Chapter 29

Why do you think God asks the priests to go to such lengths to consecrate themselves? There are a lot of instructions in this chapter that seem to go above and beyond what is needed. Can't God just have them repeat a few lines like, "I promise to love God" and, "I promise to be a good priest"? Instead, He has them sacrifice animals and have them dab the blood on their ears and on their big toes. What's the point? The point is that we never err on the side of taking God too seriously. If we are prone to make a mistake, it's to approach God with a lack of reverence and sincerity.

How do you think these priests approached God after going through all the steps required in Exodus 29? After all the death that they had to experience, surely they were just thankful to be alive in His presence! The priests likely had a better understanding of the importance and power of their God. He isn't someone who is just there to serve their purposes. He's a holy God who wants His children to live holy lives. How then should we approach God today? We, too, only get to approach the throne because we've been sprinkled with blood. Hebrews 10:19-23 says it best: "Brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful." Let's take our God seriously today because He went so far as to die so that we could access Him.

Chapter 30

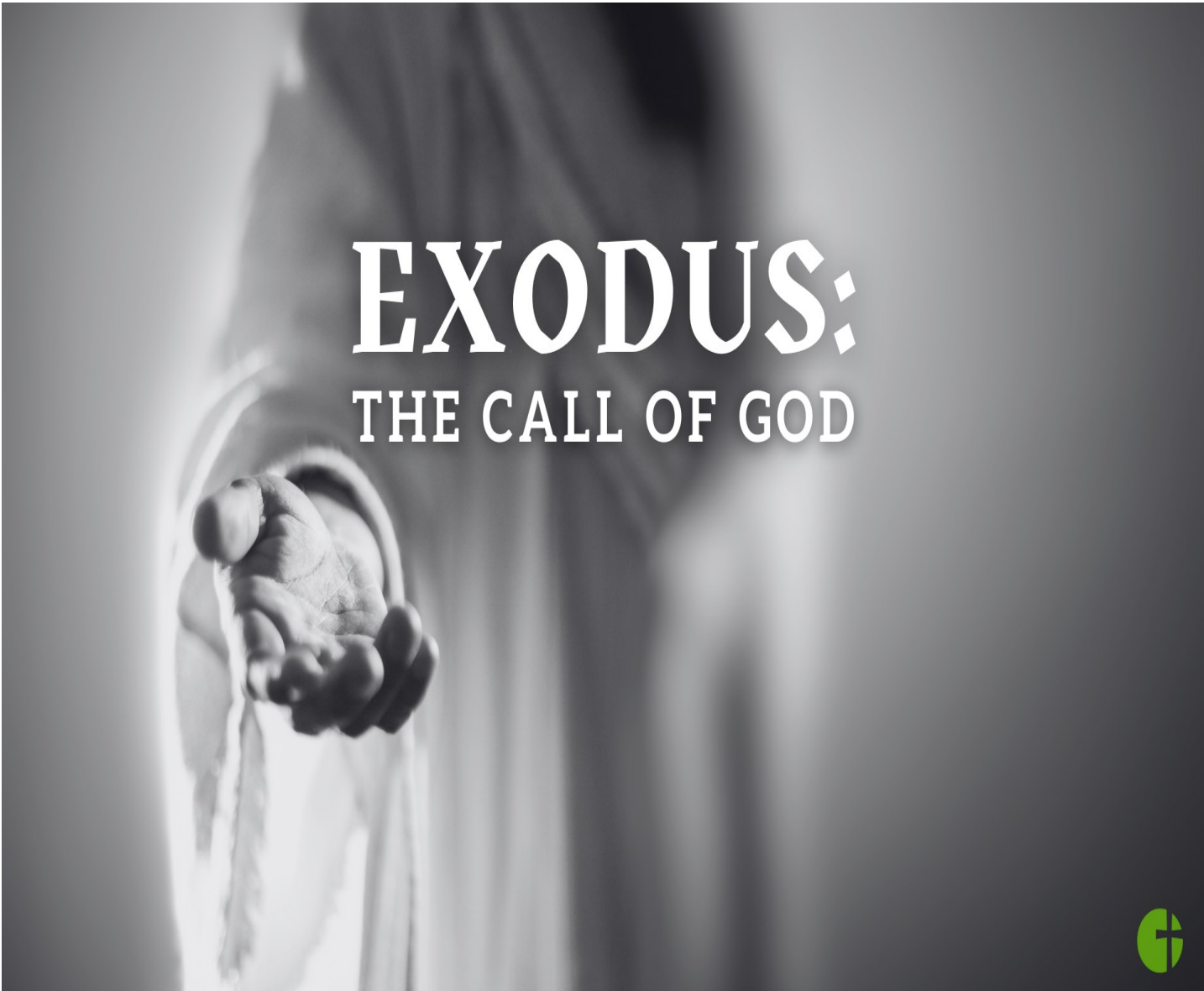
A casual reader might misunderstand Exodus 30 as instructions for creating ambiance in a restaurant, but God is doing so much more! In this chapter, God outlines specific ways to trigger the Israelites' memories of His purpose and His love.

The sense of smell is closely linked to memory by the anatomy of the brain. God designed us specifically to connect scents to circumstances. We should not be surprised that He leverages His craftsmanship to help the Israelites (who have demonstrated challenges with remembering) recall who He is.

God commands a special altar built for the sole purpose of burning incense every morning and every night "so incense will burn regularly before the Lord for the generations to come." Later in the chapter, God gives an exact recipe for the incense and warns it not be used for any other reason. If we smell something too often, we grow accustomed to it and forget the memories tied to it. God never wants us to forget what He has done and what He will do.

He also desires to be with us. The tabernacle was the earthly dwelling place of God. In order to support its creation and maintenance, God establishes a monetary offering. It was the original church building fund! God wants us to use all He's given us—our time, our talents, our resources, our money—for His glory.

God created us to have a relationship with Him. His instructions in Exodus 30 demonstrate He knows we need routines and disciplines to serve as reminders of His goodness and His love. He does not fault us for that need; He simply instructs us to fulfill it and to remember.



EXODUS:

THE CALL OF GOD



WEEK 4

January 28-February 2

READ: Exodus 31-40

DAY 16

Today's Reading: Exodus 31-32

Chapter 31

Exodus 31 is a chapter that is important in its teachings, but also in its practical application. First, God chooses the people who will actually execute the plans of building the tabernacle and all the furnishings. Second, God commands Israel to observe the Sabbath so they may know that He is the Lord who makes them holy. Finally, we see God giving to Moses the two tablets of stone which were written by the finger of God. We know them as the Ten Commandments.

At this point, Moses has been on Mount Sinai with God for 40 days receiving detailed instructions of how the Israelites would worship God. As we read in Exodus 25:9, God told Moses to “make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.” Nothing is left to chance. No place is left for human scheming. Every single detail was designed by God. Now that the pattern had been completely set before Moses, God makes known who will execute these plans. He chooses two men: Bezalel (from the tribe of Judah) and Oholiab (from the tribe of Dan). We are told in 31:3 that they were filled with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of craftsmanship. God knew these were the right men for the job.

We have seen over and over in the book of Exodus (and Genesis before it) that God calls ordinary people, often the least qualified, to accomplish His will. Joseph was called from a dungeon to deliver Egypt from a famine. Moses was called from the back side of the wilderness to free Israel from slavery. Later on in the Old Testament, David, the youngest of Jesse's sons, was called from the field as a young boy caring for his sheep to become Israel's King. That's just what God does.

Just as God chose Bezalel and Oholiab, He calls and equips us to live for a greater story—an eternal story that makes His name known to those who are living in darkness. May we surrender our fear, our insecurity, and our own selfish agenda, trusting Him to provide everything we need in order to live out the call that He has given us.

Chapter 32

In today's reading, we see the crushing consequences of creating our own comfort, as the Israelites suffer the ramifications of their rebellion.

While Moses spent 40 days & nights on the mountain with God, the people of Israel remained at base camp. They got bored and restless. Getting out of Egypt was what they wanted, but they expected to be going somewhere to settle. Instead, they were stuck in this temporary camp with no known plan and a shaky faith.

Sound familiar? No plan, life in limbo, and God calling you to trust Him in the midst of chaos. There is such strong temptation to DO something. To make our own plan. To move things forward, even if in the wrong direction. To undo the unsettled and create the comfortable. The Israelites were comfortable with idols and parties, so in the midst of the unknown, they created something familiar.

And yet, that is not God's direction.

Right in the middle of all of it? Aaron. Among the people, gathering gold and forming it into an idol. This is the same Aaron who spoke to Pharaoh for Moses, who held up Moses' arms during the battle against the Amalekites, who ate in the presence of God last month. The last thing Moses said to Aaron was to wait for him in the place they had seen God. Aaron knew God's plans and directions were worth the wait. He knew better than to cave to culture.

Yet, so do we.

How often in our discomfort with waiting do we take matters into our hands? How many times do we ask God why something went differently than we think it should have gone? However, we see here that God appoints us to the right time and place for His purpose, not ours. When we think we know better than God, we should remember His love and redirect our path to His guidance. He calls us to settle during the uncomfortable, to trust during the tension, to believe during the boredom.

DAY 17

Today's Reading: Exodus 33-34

Chapter 33

This chapter is a reminder that God was not distant from his people in the Old Testament. He didn't become a new type of God when Jesus came to earth. He has always been at His people's side because He is a relational God. He eagerly desires to know and be known by His children. In this chapter we get a behind the scenes look at His relationship with Moses. These two have gone on a journey together from slavery, to freedom, to wandering in the desert. All along the way God has been graciously present with Moses. Because of their time together, they have a deep relationship. In fact, God was so close with Moses that he spoke to Him as one would a friend (v. 11).

We can learn a few things about how Moses viewed God from this passage. Primarily, Moses was convinced that he and his people were desperate for God's presence. He went so far as to basically say "I'm not going anywhere you aren't going." (v. 15) Moses also had tremendous boldness with God. He essentially demands to see God's glory! This was a boldness that flowed out of years of faithfulness. He has seen God's goodness time and time again, so Moses knew that he could trust God. Moses didn't have to pull his act together to approach God. He didn't have to change his desires during his conversation with God. Instead, Moses brought his full self to the Father. And as a result, these two developed a friendship that would change the trajectory of a people.

Chapter 34

People often don't like reading the Old Testament and Exodus specifically because they think it's outdated and irrelevant. If you've struggled at times with the detailed instructions, you're not alone. Yet, Exodus 34 is such a rich chapter and destroys any belief that God's Word in Exodus doesn't apply to us today. In this chapter we see God re-establishing His covenant with Israel. Moses goes up the mountain with two empty tablets and comes back down with the Ten Commandments written on those same tablets.

We also see the character of God. Exodus 34:6-7 says, "...The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished..." In this one passage we learn so much about the character of God.

We see that He is compassionate, gracious, and slow to anger. He abounds in love and faithfulness and forgives wickedness, rebellion, and sin. And the fact that He is slow to anger is some of the best news possible. God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow (Hebrews 13:8), and so this Good News applies to Moses and God's people in the wilderness thousands of years ago as much as it applies to us today.

But God is also perfect and holy (and in case you're confused, we are not). We see this all throughout the scriptures (a few examples: Exodus 3:5, 20:11, 1 Peter 1:14-16). We see this in the way the tabernacle is made and how the curtain separates the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place (Exodus 26). He does not leave the guilty unpunished.

We deserve punishment and separation and God deserves payment for our sin. The beauty of the gospel shines in Exodus 34 as we see the Lord showing compassion, grace, and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We are forgiven of our sins, but we are not the ones punished. In His grace, the Son of God takes our sin upon Himself. The unguilty One becomes the guilty One on our behalf. In the cross and in Exodus 34 God shows that He is both merciful and just and we are the ones who benefit eternally. Still think Exodus doesn't apply to our lives today?

DAY 18

Today's Reading: Exodus 35-36

Chapter 35

In Exodus 35, Moses is still receiving instructions from the Lord concerning the tabernacle and its furnishings. In verse 5, Moses comes to the people of Israel and proclaims “Take from among you a contribution to the Lord. Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the Lord’s contribution.” (ESV) God could have easily erected the tabernacle himself, but instead He chose His people to participate in the work! Moses lays out not only items that are needed (gold, silver, bronze, yarns, goatskins, oil, etc.) but he also specifies skills that are needed (construction of hooks and frames, a veil, fragrant incense, and more!).

After Moses lists out all the items the Lord has commanded are needed, the Israelites depart from the presence of Moses and start to take action. Verse 21 opens with “And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone whose spirit moved him, and brought the Lord’s contribution to be used...” God initiated and His people responded. They proceeded to bring costly items like brooches, earrings, and signet rings. They brought fine linens and precious animal skins and specific types of wood. Skilled craftsmen volunteered their talents to be used to as contributions to the tabernacle and they did it all with a willing heart.

It’s easy for us to try and have too tight of a grip on what we think is ours. Our perspective changes when we realize that everything is God’s already and these opportunities are moments of worship for us. Verse 29 says that the people brought all these things as a “freewill offering to the Lord.” It was not out of obligation or something to gain, it was out of a response to the stirrings of their hearts. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver.”

The Israelites not only willingly and voluntarily brought their offerings to the Lord, but they did it cheerfully. By responding to the stirrings of their hearts to bring the best of their possessions and the best of their skill sets, they were giving glory to God for not only all that he had already done for them, but what He would continue to do. God deserves the best that can be found in creation. May we be so in tune with His word and His spirit that we will notice and obey when His spirit leads us to give cheerfully!

Chapter 36

Throughout most of Exodus, we’ve seen the Israelites complain, rebel, and question God (or God’s appointed leader). So, when we get a glimpse of their obedience and generosity, we’d be wise to pay attention. After all, we are more like the Israelites than we care to admit. We’ve had plenty of our own golden calf moments of rebellion, and other times, we’d give away our best possessions if it meant the nearness and presence of God.

Exodus 36 reads a little like an instruction manual—and one we’ve already read no less. It’s redundant and mundane and dare we say boring. Tedious tasks and repetitive instructions, yet, the Israelites are following God’s instructions to the letter. Everything God asked or commanded, they did.

So, what do we learn here? We aren’t building a tabernacle so that God’s presence can dwell among us. We don’t have blueprints or instructions to follow that require gold, goat hair, acacia wood. However, God has asked us to build His church, make disciples, obey His instructions, and follow Him.

Our lives are often more mundane and repetitive than miraculous and extraordinary. The Israelites had moments of miracles—the parting of the Sea, the provision of manna, the plagues—but, their everyday lives were categorized by steady, repetitive obedience and faithfulness. We, too, have moments of the miraculous where God shows up and shows off, but it’s mostly in the mundane and ordinary everyday life of faithfulness and obedience where courage, perseverance, love, joy, peace, and godliness is built.

DAY 19

Today's Reading: Exodus 37-38

Chapter 37

Let's be honest: This is a chapter that you would have skipped over if you weren't committed to reading the WHOLE book of Exodus. Why read a passage that's just filled with descriptions about an arc? How can that help you grow in your love for Jesus? But skipping over this chapter would have been such an ironic mistake. The very lesson that we learn from Exodus 37 is that the Israelites didn't skip a single detail when it came to their relationship with God. They wanted to serve and honor Him in each and every way. So these men and women made sure to dot every i and cross every t. They even cared about the details of a lampstand. The Israelites simply didn't cut any corners in their walk with God.

For us though, it can be easy to skip over the hard parts of following Jesus. We know we're supposed to get up early to pray, but do we really have to? Does God really care if we skip it? Does God really care about that little sin in our lives? Do we really have to confess it? Do we really have to do every little detail that God asks of us? In a word, yes.

He's given us detailed instructions in His word because he wants us to have life to the full. Simply put, God doesn't want us to miss out on His grace in any area of our lives. The more we follow His instructions (even the most detailed ones that we might not even understand), the more we'll get to experience his goodness. So today, let's not cut any corners in our walk with Jesus. Give your entire life to him. Surrender every nook and cranny of your heart. Because when we're fully devoted to Him, we get to better experience His full devotion to us.

Chapter 38

In Exodus 38 we read about the materials used to build everything we learned about throughout the book of Exodus. Chapter 38 seems like another irrelevant, "Why am I reading this?" chapter of the Bible. Often we're left wondering what we should do with what we read. Is this chapter prescriptive and should we go build our own altar, basin, and courtyard? Furthermore, you might wonder where God's people got all these materials to build the tabernacle, the bronze basin, the table, and all the utensils. Did the land around Mount Sinai have bronze, silver, and gold-producing trees?

A few weeks ago we read about the Ten Plagues in Exodus chapters 7-11. In Exodus 11:2-3, right before the exodus, we read: "Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold." (The Lord made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh's officials and by the people.)" We know the people did what God commanded because of what we read in Exodus 12:35: "The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing."

These were the very materials God's people used to carry out the Lord's instructions. He provided exactly what His people needed. Because of the Lord's provision through the Egyptians, God's people had all the materials they needed to complete the construction detailed by the Lord.

Sometimes we get frustrated by the Word. Things that seem irrelevant to us are actually very intentionally communicated by the Lord through His Word. It's no accident that God told His people to ask the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold. In His omniscient, all-knowing power (1 John 3:20, Matthew 10:29-30, Psalm 139:15-16), God knew exactly what His people would need to build and create the tabernacle and everything in it.

Our God is not a weak, random, thoughtless god. Rather, He is the Creator of the universe (Isaiah 42:5), the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), and the one true God, one in nature and three in person (Matthew 28:19). What seems irrelevant to us is divine to Him.

DAY 20

Today's Reading: Exodus 39-40

Chapter 39

So much of our reading over the past couple of weeks has been focused on instructions and details and in Exodus 39 (finally) the work is done! While the beginning of Exodus 39 describes the garments worn by the priests, by the end of this chapter we see that the tabernacle is completed. Not only is it completed, the passage tells us something else: it was done just as the Lord commanded (v. 32 & 42).

There are a couple of lessons we can learn from this chapter. First, it's really important for us to do whatever it is that the Lord commands us to do. Too often we let pride get in the way. We decide we know best. We look for workarounds and loopholes. God has given us both scripture and the Holy Spirit to serve as a guide for us. Think about that! James 1:22 tells us that it's not enough to simply hear the word—we have to do what it says. The last 39 chapters in Exodus have shown us the importance of not wandering or straying away from what God has instructed and here, at the culmination of the construction of the tabernacle, the Israelites nailed it.

The second principle we can pull from this chapter is that God is honored by excellence. The construction of the tabernacle wasn't thrown together with duct tape and shoestring—it was a masterpiece. When we work hard and do things with excellence with our hearts in the right place, God receives the glory in that. Proverbs 22:29 says that someone skilled in their work will stand before kings. When we do things with excellence and we're faithful with the skills and abilities God has entrusted to us, He entrusts us with even more. This is a theme we see repeated continuously throughout scripture and the Israelites are yet another example of that.

Chapter 40

What an ending to Exodus! Almost exactly a year from their freedom from Egypt, the tabernacle is ready. But, before we jump to the end, let's sit with anticipation for a few moments.

Remember where we started? A group of slaves without a way out. A people with no leader. Darkness, misery, and oppression. Enter, a reluctant leader who asks for another to be sent in his place. Then, a story ensues of supernatural deliverance, disobedience, forgiveness, provision, instructions, obedience, faithfulness, and ultimately the preparation of the tabernacle for God's presence.

God commanded every detail about the tabernacle's construction and purpose. Moses had delivered every word to the Israelites. All instructions had been given and carried out and now... the anticipation of glory. Not any glory, no. Shekinah glory. The glory of the One and only God, His divine presence.

Imagine the emotions of the Hebrews. Awe and wonder. Accomplishment and purpose. They worked diligently to finish the work God commanded them to do. The Israelites had moments of failure and disobedience over the course of their year of freedom, but God is faithful to His Word, not ours. And since He deemed the tabernacle as acceptable and holy, He did what He promised. He filled the dwelling place with His glory.

Exodus doesn't end with a description of how beautiful the tabernacle is or the materials in it. We couldn't comprehend it if it did. Exodus ends with a description of how its purpose was fulfilled. The tabernacle was built so that God could dwell among the Israelites. God in their midst. The only God of His kind. The only religion where God comes down to the people.

Because God can't stay away from His people. He is with us. He loves us with an everlasting love—a never stopping, unbreaking, never giving up, always and forever love. Let's be people who are beautiful dwelling places of the Holy Spirit. People who fulfill the purpose for which we were made—to love God and love others.

Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

John 14:23

Exodus Reading Schedule

January 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8 Exodus 1-2	9 Exodus 3-4	10 Exodus 5-6	11 Exodus 7-8	12 Exodus 9-10	13
14	15 Exodus 11-12	16 Exodus 13-14	17 Exodus 15-16	18 Exodus 17-18	19 Exodus 19-20	20
21	22 Exodus 21-22	23 Exodus 23-24	24 Exodus 25-26	25 Exodus 27-28	26 Exodus 29-30	27
28	29 Exodus 31-32	30 Exodus 33-34	31 Exodus 35-36	Feb 1 Exodus 37-38	Feb 2 Exodus 39-40	