



EXODUS:
Rescue Mission



21 Days of Prayer & Fasting
February 25 - March 17, 2024

GRACE CHURCH
Daily Devotional Guide

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Grace Church,

Have you ever been utterly helpless? Have you ever been in a situation that you could not get yourself out of? It is in moments like this that we are in desperate need for someone to rescue and deliver us. We need something, or someone, who is bigger and stronger and more powerful than us to enter into our situation and graciously act on our behalf. That's the situation that the enslaved people of Israel were in at the beginning of the book of Exodus.

Exodus 2:23 says that, "During those many days . . . the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. ***Their cry for RESCUE from slavery came up to God.***" In response to their cry God said in Exodus 3:7–8, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and ***I have come down to DELIVER*** them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey . . ." For many years, the people of Israel cried out to God for freedom from the heavy burden of slavery in Egypt. But now, the stage has been set for God's power to be displayed through the miraculous rescue of His people.

God is a ***God of rescue***, He is a ***God of deliverance***. Our sin and our difficult circumstances will make us feel helpless, but God is strong enough, big enough, powerful enough, and gracious enough to do a miraculous work of rescue and deliverance in our lives. Colossians 1:13 says that, "(God) has DELIVERED US from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Are you in need of rescue from sin? Are you in need of deliverance from a difficult circumstance?

Join us for the next 21 days as the family of Grace Church cries out to God together, fervently fasting and praying that He will perform a "Rescue Mission" in your life!

Pastor Niall Philyaw

Grace Church 21 Days of Corporate Fasting and Prayer

Grace Church's time of corporate fasting and prayer begins on **Sunday, February 25** and continues through **Sunday, March 17**. Below are some ways you can participate and be involved . . .

Join the ***kickoff on Sunday, February 25 @ 9:00am***

Fill out a ***commitment card*** (print or digital), save a picture of it, and then turn it in

Gather for a ***night of prayer and praise on Sunday, February 25 @ 6:00pm***

Use the ***devotional booklet*** to enrich your time with God each day

Join our ***"all church" fast on Wednesdays . . .***

Wednesday, February 28

Wednesday, March 6

Wednesday, March 13

Fasting on each of these Wednesdays will involve abstaining from food for breakfast and lunch. During the time we would normally spend in preparation or eating the meal, it is important to use that time to pray and to read God's Word. For example, if you normally spend 20 minutes preparing and eating breakfast, use that 20 minutes to pray and read Scripture instead.

If you are unable to participate in the corporate fast on Wednesdays, you are welcome to choose another day of the week to seek God through fasting and prayer.

Film a testimony in the church library about how God is working in your life. During our Sunday, March 17 worship service, we will close our time of praying and fasting together by celebrating what God did in our hearts and lives.

What is Biblical Fasting?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline in which believers abstain from food for the spiritual purpose of intensifying our hunger for God and deepening our relationship with Him.

Fasting encourages a deeper relationship with God by demonstrating our HUMILITY before Him. (Ezra 8:21; Psalm 69:10)

Fasting encourages a deeper relationship with God through our REPENTENCE and CONFESSION of sin. (1 Samuel 7:6; 1 Kings 21:27)

Fasting encourages a deeper relationship with God by acknowledging our sole DEPENDENCE on Him. (Deuteronomy 8:2-3; Matthew 4:1-4)

Fasting encourages a deeper relationship with God by helping us to discern His WILL and DIRECTION in our lives. (Judges 20:26-28; Acts 13:1-3)

Fasting encourages a deeper relationship with God by increasing our appetite to PRAY. (Mark 1:35)

Fasting encourages a deeper relationship with God by increasing our appetite for Him and His WORD. (Matthew 4:1-4; John 4:31-35)

What are some different ways to fast?

These pages contain some suggestions from Dr. Elmer Towns's book *The Daniel Fast for Spiritual Breakthrough*. (Used by permission)

Fasting Suggestions

Eliminate one meal a day and pray during that mealtime.

Eliminate two meals a day, and pray during their times.

Eliminate all desserts.

Eliminate all rich, superfluous foods eaten only for pleasure.

Eat only necessities, and only during mealtime (no snacks).

Eliminate all drinks except water (no coffee, tea, soda or purchased drinks).

Contemporary Interpretations

No text messaging or social media communications that take your thoughts away from God.

No secular music; only praise and worship music.

No newspaper or pleasure reading; give that time to prayer.

No television; give that time to prayer.

No recreational sports; give that time to prayer.

No sex. "Both husband and wife to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time, so they can give themselves completely to prayer." (1 Cor. 7:5, NLT)

Some Physical Aspects of Fasting

If you have specific health issues related to diet, check with a doctor before beginning a fast.

No matter what way you choose to fast make sure and drink fluids including water and fruit juices.

You may need to restrict some of your physical activity during a fast, especially rigorous exercise.

Sudden movements, especially standing up quickly, may cause dizziness or light-headedness.

Expect some physical, mental, and perhaps even some emotional discomfort during a fast. Headaches, sleeplessness, and irritability often accompany a fast, but don't allow the fast to become an excuse for improper actions or attitudes.

My Time to Pray

*Lord, I will deny myself enjoyment during my fast
so that I can seek Your will in my life.
I count it a privilege to give up my “pleasant food”
for Your glory and as a commitment of my prayer.*

*Lord, I have made a spiritual commitment to You that I will
faithfully fast and pray for 21 days.*

*Lord, give me strong inner discipline to keep my commitment to
You, and give me strong inner desire
to pray faithfully for the rescue I seek.*

Amen.

My Commitment to Fast and Pray

As a way of bringing focus to your time of fasting and praying, answer the following questions:

My Goal: Where am I seeking God's rescue?

My Fast: What will I withhold through fasting?

My Prayer: When and where will I pray?

My Commitment: God being my strength, and grace being my basis, I commit myself to this period of fasting seeking God's answer to my prayer and the thing from which I need rescue. Not my will, Oh God, but Yours be done.

Lord, I sacrifice small things to express the greatness of Your supremacy in all of life.

Lord, I will be faithful in little expressions of my faith for great answers to prayer.

Lord, I commit to fulfill these small expressions of my love to You.
Amen.

Signed _____

Date: _____

Day 1

What If The Right Thing Costs You Everything?

READ: Exodus 1

Have you ever found yourself in a seemingly hopeless situation, feeling trapped and completely stuck? Perhaps you questioned if God noticed your pain and suffering, or if He even cared? Searching for a light at the end of a dark tunnel may seem endless, and it can leave us asking, "God, are we there yet?"

This is likely how the Israelites felt under Pharaoh's rule. As their population increased in Egypt, the new Pharaoh felt politically threatened and decided to enslave them in an effort to crush their spirit. Pharaoh also ordered Hebrew midwives to drown all male children at birth. Imagine the turmoil and anguish these women felt!

Placed into a situation they knew was wrong, these brave people chose God's principles over worldly principles and were rewarded. "So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. And because the midwives feared God, He gave them families of their own"(Exodus 1:20-21).

No matter what we're facing, hope is always present. God can sometimes seem slow in fulfilling His promises, but His promises are always kept and His timing is always perfect. God has a plan, full of wisdom and resolution. Though we may not always understand the difficulties we face, we can rest assured God is planning something far better than we can hope for ourselves.

Reflect:

Have you ever felt stuck or hopeless? Looking back, how was God at work in that situation?

Have you ever been asked to do something you knew was wrong? If you chose to follow through, what were the consequences?

What's one promise you are still waiting for God to fulfill? What do His actions in the past tell you about His ability to come through in the future?

Day 2

Are You In Need of Rescue?

READ: Exodus 2

Have you ever needed to be rescued? Whether it's a conversation with your crazy great aunt at a Christmas get-together or the traffic jam that interrupts your morning commute, we have all found ourselves needing rescue from something.

Exodus 2 tells the story of a baby and a nation in dire need of rescue. At a time when a maniacal king was executing infants and senseless violence ruled the day, God was in control and He had something better for His people.

There's nothing to suggest that Moses' mother had a grand plan when she placed him in a basket on the Nile. The Bible seems to indicate that she'd simply run out of options and found herself with an impossible choice. She knew Moses would be found and killed if she kept him, so she did the only thing she knew to do to keep him alive a little longer. No doubt, that decision was made with agonizing fear and uncertainty.

There are times in life when we find ourselves in seemingly impossible situations. We may think there is no way out. At these times, our faith can be the quality that sees us through the difficulty in our lives. God is faithful, and He wants something better for us. Even when we face an impossible situation, God is there and He is in control.

As Moses drifted down the Nile, he couldn't do anything to bring himself out of this crisis, but Moses had been set apart by God. If we are believers, we have been set apart by God in the same way Moses was, and we can trust God to be faithful in the seemingly impossible situations in our lives.

Reflect:

What part of your life is out of control?

What is one thing you can do to give that situation over to the care of God?

Day 3

Help Is On The Way

READ: Exodus 3

As parents, it doesn't matter what's going on around us, when we hear our child's cry for help, we go running. Sometimes, all that's needed is a hug and a kiss. Other times, it's a listening ear or a trip to the doctor. No matter what kind of help our children need, there is a strong desire to ease the pain, emotional or physical.

God feels the same way about us. In Exodus 3, the Israelites had been slaves in Egypt for over 400 years and were crying out for help. God heard their cries, saw their suffering and wanted to rescue them (Exodus 3:7). God appeared to Moses in a burning bush and commanded him to go rescue the Israelites from slavery. Moses, an Israelite raised by the Pharaoh's daughter, had fled Egypt after killing an Egyptian soldier. He probably never imagined God would use him as part of the rescue mission for the nation of Israel.

We may not be slaves, but each of us suffers in some way, whether it's the loss of a loved one, a strained marriage, a rebellious child, or financial hardship. God sees our sufferings, hears our cries for help and wants to rescue us, just like He did with the Israelites. God's rescue mission may not look the way we imagine or come as soon as we'd like, but the Lord's plan is always best.

Reflect:

What's causing you suffering right now? Take time to talk to God about it today. Be honest with God and tell Him your pain.

The same way that what kids want isn't always what they need, what we want from God isn't always what we need. What's one way you've seen God say no to what you want and instead give you what you need?

Day 4

Looking For A Sign That God Is With You?

READ: Exodus 4

Moses was a simple shepherd living in a foreign land, far from where his life started out. When God shared His plan to rescue His people from enslavement in Egypt, Moses responded with questions and doubt. It's not that Moses didn't want God to do something amazing for His people; it's that Moses wasn't sure if he was good enough to be part of God's plan. He wanted a sign. And another sign. And another.

Sometimes life takes us to an uncomfortable, unexpected place. We have to work an undesirable job, a friend walks out on us, or the budget gets tight between paychecks. When we hear God has a plan for our lives, we want to believe it. But from our current perspective, it seems nearly impossible.

We often pray, "God, please fix our problems." But what if God wants to use us to address the problems? We worry, "What if it doesn't happen how we expect?" God says, "What have I already given you?"

God's not afraid of our questions. Our doubts don't ruin His plans. He meets us in the questions and the doubts. No matter how many excuses we come up with, God always provides more than enough signs that He's with us and for us. He provides the tools we need to complete the tasks He's called us to. We even carry a sign that God has not given up on us: the Holy Spirit. God gave us His Spirit as a sign and as a helper. The empty tomb is proof that Jesus can make the impossible possible.

Reflect:

Is there any area of your life where you're struggling to believe God is with you? If so, what is it?

What's one way Jesus has provided for you in the past in a way you didn't expect? What does this say about His ability to come through in the future?

What is keeping you from doing the next thing God has called you to do?

Day 5

When God Doesn't Meet Expectations

READ: *Exodus 5*

You can't seem to please anyone — your boss, your spouse, your parents. Maybe you've been rejected, made to feel like an outsider because of your obedience to God. You've been doing everything right. You're reading your Bible, going to church, praying. You expected God to give you more than He has right now. Your circumstances stink. Your expectations haven't been met, and in the space between what you expected and reality, you've grown disappointed.

It's easy to shake your fist at God and ask, "Why?" But complaining and turning away from God does not remove the disappointment. Instead the despair deepens. Consider for a second this possibility: That God's plans for you are greater than the greatest plans you could ever make for yourself.

In Exodus 5, the Hebrews' lives were made harder when Moses and Aaron obediently went to Pharaoh and requested the Hebrews be let go. Pharaoh, not knowing God and thus unable to understand obedience to Him, not only denied the request, but made the Hebrew plight much worse. Under the circumstances, the Hebrews turned on Moses and Aaron rather than trusting God had greater plans for them.

God is at work in all of our circumstances, even the painful ones, and He wants more for us than we could ever want or imagine for ourselves. So what if we stopped asking why, and instead asked, "What can I learn in the midst of this?" Neither question changes our circumstances, but the second changes us. It shifts our attitude from victim to victor. It turns our eyes from the earthly to the eternal, and allows what was meant to harm us to help us.

Reflect:

Is there an area of your life where you're deeply disappointed, suffering or feeling like you just can't win? What's one area of your life where you just want to ask, "Why?"

God can work through our pain to show us things about ourselves and about Himself. What's one thing you want to learn about God in this situation? What's one thing He might be teaching you about yourself?

Day 6

Will You Let God Set You Free?

READ: Exodus 6

In Exodus 6:6, God tells Israel: “I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.” Moses was a messenger with great news. God was promising to free His people, yet hopelessness kept them from accepting that promise. The Bible says, “... they refused to listen anymore. They had become too discouraged by the brutality of their slavery” (Exodus 6:9, NLT).

Don't we do the same when Jesus tries to speak to us today? We get so caught up in what's happening around us, we find it hard to believe there is any other way to live.

Moses' mission to free Israel is a perfect parallel to Jesus' mission to free us. God sent His Son to free us from sin and give us eternal life. But like Israel, we can be so blinded by our circumstances we refuse to listen when the Lord speaks (Exodus 6:8).

We don't believe Jesus' offer when we hear it because it sounds too good to be true. Or maybe we don't hear it at all because we're too busy trying to stay afloat to be distracted by something as daunting as a brand new life (2 Corinthians 5:17). But God keeps pursuing us the same way He kept pursuing Moses and His people in Egypt.

Even after we first believe, God keeps setting us free — removing our old feelings, our old ways of doing things and replacing them with better ones (Ephesians 4:22-24). And over time, as we lean in and listen, we begin to find God working through us, like He did with Moses, to help set others free!

Reflect:

Do you relate more to Israel or Moses in this story? Why?

What, if anything, stops you from hearing from God?

What, if anything, do you want to be free of today?

Day 7

Great Success Often Begins with Failure

READ: Exodus 7

“If at first you don’t succeed, try, try, try again!”

That old saying was written by T. H. Palmer, someone who had surely failed. Too often, we define ourselves by our failures. We look back at the dreams we had and feel empty and unsuccessful if they didn’t become reality.

We are not alone with our failures. Almost every hero in the Bible failed God in some way. What makes the men and women in the Bible heroic is that they humbled themselves, kept trusting God, and kept persevering in the faith, despite their mistakes.

Moses was a reluctant hero, telling God he couldn't possibly lead Israel out of slavery. At the time, Moses was 80 years old and Aaron was 83! But once Moses began the task the Lord set before him, he kept trying despite Pharaoh’s refusal to listen.

The lesson of success is not to concentrate on what we failed to do, but to concentrate on the one who is giving the instructions. Even though Moses failed to turn Pharaoh’s heart many times, Moses returned to Pharaoh again and again. Moses trusted God and continued to do what God was leading him to do.

It’s never too late to trust the Lord. And it’s never too late to try again.

Reflect:

Looking back, has there been a time where a failure turned into a success because you tried again? How has this refined your definition of success?

Is there something the Lord is asking you to do that you feel you cannot finish with success? What next step do you need to take to trust the Lord and follow His command?

Day 8

How To Break The Cycle of Regret

READ: Exodus 8

It happens to the best of us. We reach the end of a busy day, and someone asks for help with a simple task. Instead of responding with a simple yes or no, we snap. We say or do things that later we deeply regret, but if nothing changes, we find ourselves repeating that moment over and over again.

In Exodus 8, Pharaoh goes through a similar cycle, relenting for a moment, then returning to the way things were. After each plague God sends on Egypt, Pharaoh has a moment of regret where he asks Moses to make the destruction stop, but then he goes right back to the way things were.

We all have those “throw our hands up, make it stop” moments. But regret and repentance are two different things. Regret is wishing something had never happened. Repentance is taking action to prevent something from happening again. Regret says, “Make it stop.” Repentance says, “Make me different.” Regret leads to remorse, but only repentance leads to change.

Breaking the cycle of relenting and returning starts with a breaking point. We have to want to follow Jesus more than we want to be right in our own eyes. This change of heart leads to a change in behavior. 2 Corinthians 7:10 describes it this way, “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.”

God sent Pharaoh a way out of regret in the form of Moses’ constant invitation to repent, and He extends the same invitation to each of us through Jesus’ death on the cross. Saying yes to Jesus’ invitation gives us the power to change, but it’s only when we acknowledge our brokenness that we’re motivated to make a change.

Reflect:

Is there any area of your life where you find yourself in a constant cycle of regret? If so, what is it?

Why is it so important that our hearts change before our behavior changes?

What step can you take this week to move from regret to repentance?

Day 9

What Is Your Purpose In Life?

READ: Exodus 9

How many times have you asked yourself, "What am I here for? What is my purpose in life?" There are hundreds, if not millions, of jobs in the world, but finding a purpose is not the same as finding a career.

In Exodus 9:16, God declares that He has a purpose for each of us, telling Pharaoh through Moses, "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." God could have wiped Pharaoh and the nation of Egypt off the face of the earth in one breath. After all, this is the same God who spoke the world into existence. But He didn't. From the beginning until now, God has been working through people to make Himself known on earth. God doesn't have to work through us; He chooses to.

God sent Moses as a messenger then followed Moses' words with a series of plagues that could only be described as other worldly. The plague on the livestock, the boils that broke out on everyone, the hailstorms that destroyed crops and animals, the fifth, sixth and seventh warnings God sent to Pharaoh. God went to great lengths to make Himself known to Pharaoh, to Egypt and to the Israelites who were enslaved there. And just like God was working through Moses, He wants to work through each of us to declare His glory and power on earth.

When we submit our lives to God's plans, He works through us in ways we never thought possible. And as a result, God's glory is declared in the most significant and mundane moments of our lives — when we forgive those deemed unforgivable, when we're generous without expecting anything in return, when we do what's right even if when it's not easy. Every interaction in every day is an opportunity to show God's power in our lives.

Reflect:

What's one way God has gone to great lengths to make Himself known to you?

What's one opportunity you have today to allow others to see God's power and glory through your life?

Day 10

When You Can't See Clearly

READ: Exodus 10

How many times do you have to hear something before you realize it's true? Pharaoh had a hard time listening to the words God spoke through Moses and Aaron. Time after time, they explained God's desire for the Israelites to be freed from slavery. Pharaoh repeatedly responded with pride and rebellion against God. Because of his disobedience, plagues hit the land of Egypt and caused people around Pharaoh to suffer.

Pharaoh didn't want to admit it, but even his advisers urged him, "Let the people go, so that they may worship the Lord their God. Do you not yet realize that Egypt is ruined?" (Exodus 10:7). Sometimes we're blind to how things really are, even when the people around us can see it clearly. Our foolish choices often hurt the people we love. Maybe our unforgiving relationship with our parents unintentionally causes us to be harsh with our own children. Perhaps our frustration at work is spilling over into frustration in our marriage.

When we fail to deal with the circumstances that challenge our faith, it gets easier and easier to say "no" to the better ways God for us. But no matter how we've rebelled against God in the past, He gives us new chances to say "yes" to Him.

Sometimes it takes the people around us to point something out so we can get back on track. We don't have to make all the decisions of life alone. By humbly trusting the perspective of people who care about us, we take a step closer to being who God's made us to be.

Reflect:

When was one time you realized how your actions impacted people around you?

What's the most valuable piece of advice or wisdom you gained from a friend?

Who has God placed in your life who can help you make the best decisions?

Day 11

We Are All Enslaved To Something

READ: Exodus 11

Blood. Frogs. Gnats. Flies. Disease. Boils. Hail. Locusts. Darkness. Nine destructive plagues and still Pharaoh refuses to free the Hebrews from slavery. Now God will unleash the crushing blow: death to all Egyptian firstborns. Pharaoh's power as master over God's people will end, and the slaves will walk away with the riches of their captors.

Like the Hebrews, we are born into slavery — not to an earthly kingdom, but to the kingdom of darkness (Colossians 1:13). Our master isn't human. Our master is sin, but our freedom will also come through the death of a firstborn.

When Jesus left heaven and was born as a human He became God's firstborn son (Hebrews 1:6). He came to reveal the kingdom of God. He died to destroy the kingdom of darkness (Colossians 2:15). All who call on Jesus for salvation are set free from slavery to sin and empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a new life (John 8:34-36). Unfortunately, sometimes we still yield to sin even though we've been set free.

God brought the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt to show Himself to the world as a bondage breaker. Jesus rescued us from slavery to sin for the same purpose. Is there any area of your life that does not reflect the freedom Jesus provided for you?

Reflect:

Imagine you are locked in chains in a dark, dirty dungeon. How would you respond to the person who rescued you?

Remember where you were when you asked Jesus into your life? When is the last time you thanked Jesus for rescuing you? Will you take a few minutes now to thank Him for how your life has changed since He saved you?

As a Christian, is there a sin you feel has you captive? Confession is a powerful weapon in overcoming sin. Who can you confess it to this week?

Day 12

Freedom Comes From Following Instructions

READ: Exodus 12

Have you ever been given a list of instructions, looked at the amount of information, and said, “I just can’t be bothered”? Maybe it was the bookshelf instructions from IKEA with its seemingly endless 8-point type and diagrams. Maybe it was the code of conduct you signed at work.

The thing we are quick to forget is that instructions exist to help us not hinder us. This principle is true in our everyday lives as well as our spiritual lives. In Exodus 12, God gave Moses and Aaron instructions for conducting their Passover Feast. The nation of Israel “did just what the Lord had commanded,” and their total obedience led to their freedom from slavery.

Throughout the Bible, God gives us instructions as well — instructions on how to treat others, how to handle our money, how to grow closer to Him, how to worship Him. When we follow God’s instructions, we, too, experience freedom. James 1:25 says, “ whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.”

Following Jesus means obeying God’s commands, even when they seem inconvenient, insignificant, outrageous, or scary (1 John 5:3, John 14:15). God is in control of all things at all times, and He works everything for our good (Romans 8:28). We can trust God’s instructions because He wants better for us than we want for ourselves. When we listen to God and do what He says, the outcome will always be for our benefit and His Glory.

Reflect:

When you get a long list of instructions, what’s the first thing you think? Do you ever find yourself feeling that way when you read the Bible?

Think of a time when you were obedient to God, even when it wasn't what you wanted to do. What’s one blessing that came as a result of your obedience?

What next step is God asking you to do today? What, if anything, is holding you back from following the instructions God has given you?

Day 13

Remembering the Past Shapes The Present

READ: Exodus 13

When it feels like we're wandering aimlessly or stuck in a hopeless situation, promises like "the best is yet to come" can seem applicable to everyone but us. We've all had these days. The ones when we've lost loved ones, when relationships are severed, when our kids seem out of control, or our jobs are too much. It's those days when we're so overwhelmed by what's happening in front of us that hope for tomorrow feels impossible to comprehend.

The Israelites were experiencing this kind of hopelessness after leaving Egypt. They left their homes and everything they knew on a promise God had made to Abraham years ago. They were going after God's best for them, the Promised Land. It wasn't a sure thing, but they were trusting that God's word was good. Although God bypassed the Philistine road and protected Israel from war, the Israelites were still sent to wander the wilderness.

Experiencing the wilderness was necessary in order for the Israelites to get where God was leading them, but having hope when wandering isn't easy. In Exodus 13, God shows us a practical way to have hope in tough times: Remember His past faithfulness and know that He always makes good on His word. This practice of remembering is the reason God tells Moses to consecrate every firstborn male to Him during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This act would serve as a lasting reminder of the day God brought Israel out of Egypt.

The wilderness seems like a hopeless place, especially when all we have is a promise to hold on to, but the key to having hope is remembering where we've been and holding on to where we're going. God went ahead of the Israelites in the wilderness, and He's going ahead of us, too. There is hope. We just have to remember God is good and He is for us. We are not alone today, and the best really is yet to come.

Reflect:

Where in your past do you see God's provision or protection?

What are one or two promises about God's character you've seen Him prove true in the past?

Day 14

How To Win The War

READ: Exodus 14

Have you ever felt like you were in a war you couldn't win? Maybe your dream job turned out to be miserable. Or your happily ever after was actually a strained marriage. It could be that the child you prayed over for so long made one poor decision after another. There are times in life when we feel helpless to fight the battles we're facing.

In Exodus 14, the Israelites were camped out with the Red Sea ahead of them, the desert behind them, and the Egyptian army closing in. There was nowhere to go and they were powerless against their enemy. But the Israelites didn't have to form a battle plan or even raise a sword because God was their weapon. In Exodus 14:14, Moses tells the people, "The Lord will fight for you, you need only to be still."

God didn't just know the struggles the Israelites were facing, He also knew how they would overcome them. So He put the people where they needed to be, where victory would be won. God parted the Red Sea letting the Israelites cross on dry ground. As the Egyptians followed in pursuit, God let the waters go, destroying the entire army. He won the battle for them.

No matter what kind of war you're in, God is your weapon. You are right where He wants you and you have everything you need to win because He is fighting for you.

Reflect:

Can you remember a time when you felt like you couldn't do anything to change your circumstances?

How can you see God fighting for you as you look back on that time?

If you're in a battle right now, surrender your will to His and ask Him to guide you to victory!

Day 15

Celebrating Life When It's Hard

READ: Exodus 15

In today's society, we find ourselves celebrating so many things. Birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, the victories of our favorite football team, a good grade on a test...the list goes on and on. It's so easy to celebrate something that goes in our favor, and we often remember to thank God for His goodness when things are going right.

In Exodus 15, Moses and the Israelites sing a song to the Lord in celebration and thanksgiving of their escape from the Egyptians through the Red Sea. Verse 2 states, "The Lord is my strength and my defense: he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him." It's so easy to remember that God is the reason for anything good in our lives when everything is good. When we've experienced a victory, it's easy to praise and thank Him and give Him the glory.

But what happens when things aren't so good? Where is our urge to give thanksgiving and praise to God when a loved one is dying, our car breaks down at the worst possible time, or our marriage is falling apart? How can we thank God for being good when we just don't see the good?

Exodus 15:13 says about the Lord, "In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed." As Christians, we have the ability to trust in God in the good times and bad because we know God's love never fails. He is always leading us to something better than we could ask or imagine. His plan for us is great, and He will always bring good out of every situation. Praising Him and thanking Him even through the trying times will help give us clarity and discernment, and it will remind us that God really is good all the time.

Reflect:

Do you find it difficult to praise and thank God when times are hard? How can you begin to give Him thanksgiving even when things don't seem to be going the right way?

How do you think your perspective of God could change if you began to praise Him in all circumstances?

Day 16

God's Presence Is Greater Than His Presents

READ: Exodus 17

The whole goal of advertising is to convince us we need an upgrade. They try to convince us we are missing out on the latest fashion, the fastest computer, or the smartest cell phone. Advertisers want us bored and ungrateful, hoping we'll believe that our lives will be so much better if we just buy their product. The people of Israel found themselves in a similar frame of mind during their walk in the wilderness in Exodus 17. God had shown them amazing proof of His love and presence when He moved them through the Red Sea and drowned their enemies behind them, thereby punishing Israel's slave masters and leading His children into freedom (Exodus 14:30-31).

After witnessing God's power, Israel celebrated by worshipping God, praising His strength and protection, and boldly proclaiming their confidence in His deliverance (Exodus 15:1-21). Then, something strange started happening: the Israelites started grumbling.

The Israelites, like us, had unmet expectations. When God's miracles slowed down, they stopped trusting Him and started doing things their way. They wanted more proof (Exodus 17:7). But if God led them there, wouldn't He care for them there? Dissatisfaction arises when our attention shifts from what we have to what we don't have — from what God has done to what He hasn't yet done. God made His presence known to Israel, and He makes Himself known to us. The wilderness can draw us closer to God, teaching us new things about His character. The way God cares for us today might be different from the way He cared for us yesterday. Don't give up seeking God's presence or settle for anything less.

Reflect:

Are you struggling to see God at work in your life? If so, why?

Take some time this week and write out your salvation story. What was "Egypt" like for you before Jesus freed you?

God wanted Israel to focus on His presence more than their possessions. Is there something in your life competing with Jesus for your heart?

Day 17

The Gift We Never Knew We Needed

READ: Exodus 18

Our perspective — the way we interpret what’s happening around us — can make or break us in any given situation. For many of us, a new perspective is the one thing we need to help us gain a breakthrough in our walk with God.

By Exodus 18, Moses’ ministry and relationship with God had been steadily growing for years. God had delivered Moses and the Israelites from Pharaoh and the Egyptians, provided food and water while they were in the desert, and protected them from attacks by their enemies.

Word of what God was doing in Moses’ life spread to his in-laws in Midian, so while Israel was camped at the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, came to visit. After spending some time celebrating, Jethro had a conversation with Moses that became a crucial point in Moses’ life. Jethro was able to offer a new perspective to Moses in the midst of what could have become an overwhelming situation.

Sometimes a new perspective is exactly what we need. We need to let those who care about us into our lives. People who love Jesus and love us are the best at helping us to see a new perspective — whether we’re in the midst of a hopeless situation or on the path to what could become a hopeless situation.

We have all gotten a gift that we did not realize we needed at the time, but later we realized it was one of the best gifts we’ve ever received. Sometimes the advice of a godly friend is not what we want to hear at the moment, but like Moses, a new perspective may be exactly what we need to get us to the place where God is calling us.

Reflect:

In what area of your life do you need a new perspective?

Who are some people in your life that you can invite into your situation to offer you a new perspective?

When is the last time you asked God to give you His perspective on your hopeless situation? Ask Him for that this week.

Day 18

A New Way To Think About God's Commands

READ: Exodus 20

At some point, you've probably heard, "If you obey all the rules, you miss all the fun." Those of us that have tested this can say that it isn't entirely true. Some of life's biggest regrets come from having fun in the moment at the expense of our future. And while we all want to enjoy life, rules are in place to guide our actions and protect us from harm.

Years ago God gave a set of 10 commands to His people, the nation of Israel. In Exodus 20:20, we learn that these commands were designed to keep them from harm. Even more, these rules served as a guide for how to live a life close to God.

These commandments are still here for our benefit today and teach us about our relationship with God and others. The first four commands show us how deeply God loves us and desires a relationship with us. The other commands show us how our relationships with others can honor God when we live a life that is pleasing to Him.

God knew we would eventually see a perfect example of these rules put into practice through the life of his son, Jesus. Because of Jesus, our hope doesn't have to be in keeping the rules, but in the One who perfected and completed them.

Reflect:

When have you experienced safety and peace by following a guideline that someone has placed in your life at work, at home, or in public?

Which of the Ten Commandments is most difficult to put into practice in your life?

How does knowing that our hope is ultimately in Jesus give you comfort?

Day 19

Timing Is Everything

READ: Exodus 23

A plentiful harvest doesn't happen by accident. A farmer spends considerable time fertilizing the soil, tilling, planting, and watering the seeds and plants. But perhaps the most important factor a farmer considers is timing. No matter how well he cares for his crops, if they are planted too late or too early, they will not thrive. Timing matters.

In Exodus 23:27-30, God explains that a good thing at the wrong time is no longer a good thing. God promised to drive out the Israelites' enemies so they could take possession of the land. This was a good thing. However, God explained that they would have to settle the land gradually. If God cleared out their enemies all at once, the land would become a wasteland, filled with dangerous, wild animals.

To the Israelites, the thought of waiting was discouraging. They had been wandering through the desert without a permanent home since God delivered them from slavery in Egypt. The Promised Land was so close, they could taste it. But, if they did not accept the gradual process of God driving out their enemies one-by-one, they would never be able to enjoy the land and thrive there for generations to come.

Just as the Israelites desired a permanent home immediately, we often want solutions from God immediately. We want to be healed now. We want to be married or have children now. Often our immediate solution is like planting crops in January. No matter how good our solution seems, if it is not the right timing, it will not benefit us in the long run. In Romans 8:28, the Bible teaches us that in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him. This means that in the midst of our discontentment and impatience, we can trust God to work things out for our good, even when we don't understand His timing.

Reflect:

Why is it so hard to trust that God's timing is better than yours?

What is one issue you are facing today that you would like solved immediately? What can God teach you while you wait for His perfect timing?

Day 20

You've Got A Friend In Me

READ: Exodus 33

The story of Exodus is at best a turbulent one for the Israelites. God's people seem unable to escape the roller coaster of their own making as they turn from God time and time again. In the midst of all this, Moses approaches God. And in spite of Moses' leadership struggles and inability to keep the Israelites on track, God calls Moses a friend.

In the Bible, both God and Jesus are referred to as friends of sinners. Understanding friendship with God is hard because there's nothing and no one like Him. And, as our world becomes increasingly interconnected, the notion of friendship is changing. We refer to everyone from our closest confidants to vague online acquaintances as friends.

In God and Jesus, we see what makes a good friend — patience, loyalty, kindness. As sinners, we fall short of these characteristics every day. But God offers us perfect friendship. Throughout the Bible, God remains faithful through every circumstance.

God's perfect friendship gives us a beautiful example of how much He loves us. In John 15:15, Jesus explains the kind of friendship Christians experience with God: "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

Reflect:

What's one way you talk to God that would change if you began to see Him as your friend?

What's one way you can be more like Jesus in your friendships?

Day 21

How To Prepare Our Hearts For Worship

READ: Exodus 40

In Exodus 40, God takes 34 verses to tell Moses how to prepare the tabernacle for worship. And Moses follows God's instructions exactly. But what about us? Thousands of years after Moses and the tabernacle, worship remains a command, not a suggestion. So how do we prepare our hearts for worship?

Here are five ways we can prepare for worship:

Pray that God will open our hearts to hear Him.

Perceive what Jesus has done for us through His sacrifice on the cross.

Praise Jesus for our salvation and for the freedom to worship when and where we choose.

Present our tithes and offerings in response to God's grace on our lives.

Prepare to share what we have learned with the world, teaching others to follow Jesus step by step.

When Moses' work was done, a cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34). Israel had never experienced the presence of God like this before. When we prepare our hearts for worship, the same happens for us. When we prepare our hearts for worship, the glory of the Lord doesn't just fill the church. It fills our hearts as well.

Reflect:

It is often hard to concentrate on God when the world and its cares try to take first place in our hearts. What gets in the way of your ability to focus on God and hear what He says?

What times stand out in your mind as "best worship" experiences?

What can you do to prepare your heart for worship?

Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying,

“I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. 2 The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him. 3 The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name.

4 “Pharaoh’s chariots and his host he cast into the sea, and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea. 5 The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone. 6 ***Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power, your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy.*** 7 In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries; you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble. 8 At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up; the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. 9 The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.’ 10 You blew with your wind; the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

11 ***“Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? 12 You stretched out your right hand; the earth swallowed them.***

13 ***“You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode. 14 The peoples have heard; they tremble; pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia. 15 Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed; trembling seizes the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. 16 Terror and dread fall upon them; because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone, till your people, O Lord, pass by, till the people pass by whom you have purchased. 17 You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O Lord, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established. 18 The Lord will reign forever and ever.”***

Exodus 15:1-18