

ONE STORY CHURCH YEAR

Small Group Discussion Guide

For Freedom Christ has set you free, we hear in Galatians. As we see in Exodus, though, we do not always trust that freedom. Sometimes, it scares us. What does it mean to be free? We may not understand it, but God delivers freedom anyway.

Week Five: Freedom

Exodus 1-15; Galatians 5-6; Ephesians 1-3; Psalms 105, 114

The Small Group: Its Purpose

Faith matures and deepens in community. Small groups are places to develop faith-based relationships, explore questions, and find support for the journey. Discussion guides contain elements that will help group members get to know each other, reflect on the ONE readings, and pray together. The covenant of the small group is to be encouraging, confidential, and open to the wonderings and assurances that arise from reading scripture.

This Week's Readings: Some Notes

The first five books of the Bible, referred to as the Pentateuch, are, by tradition, attributed to Moses. Biblical scholarship has revealed authorship of these first five books to be more complicated than simply one author, but, in Exodus, we meet Moses, who is a significant figure in scripture. When Genesis ended, the people of Israel were welcome in Egypt and had special favor from Pharaoh, due to Joseph's relationship with him. Over time, that relationship has deteriorated and the people of Israel are oppressed by the Egyptians. Yet, God's promise to them remains. The first 15 chapters provide the meat of the story: Israel's enslavement, Moses's call, Pharaoh's stubborn refusal to let the people go, plagues, the Passover, and, finally, the victorious exit from Israel and freedom from slavery that God provides.

Galatians 5-6 end with an emphasis on freedom. Freed in Christ, our life is found nowhere but Christ. Submission to anything else, for Paul, makes no sense and in Galatians, he says so.

Ephesians follows Galatians. While this letter begins by saying it is from Paul, many scholars believe it to not be written by the Apostle Paul but by one of his followers. The letter emphasizes unity in Christ, which was a challenge when the early church included Gentiles and Jews, who had different customs and rules. Ephesians 2:1-10 and the phrase "saved by grace through faith" are much loved and cited verses from this book.

Connecting: Take Time to Get to Know Each Other

Continue to get to know each other. When have you felt the most free in life?

Praying: Entrusting All Things to God

Designate someone in your group to open in prayer. If members have joys and concerns to share, include those things, too.

Discussing and Studying: Digging In

The Bible study portion for these small group studies focuses on Sunday's preaching texts, but feel free to dig into what you have been reading. What did you read in the last week that surprised you?

What challenged you? What bothered you?

What sounded like good news? What did you find out about God? About yourself?

You could spend your whole discussion time just on these questions. If you like more structure, use the questions below. Some groups may want to go more deeply into the Bible readings; refer to the resource section for more.

Invite someone to read out loud Exodus 14:10-25 and Galatians 5:1. Use the questions below to assist your discussion and study.

1. What are some initial reactions you have to these readings?
2. If you heard this week's sermon, with what did you resonate? What did you wonder? How did it help or hinder your understanding of these texts?
3. Of all the verses included in this week's readings, the above verses are what were chosen for preaching texts. What connections do you see in these texts? What would you have chosen if you were the preacher?
4. As the Israelites are leaving Egypt and feel the pressure of an army behind them and a seeming block in front of them, they suddenly wonder how much they desire freedom. It's an understandable reaction! Can you relate to their fear and trepidation?
5. There is a muscle memory aspect to faith. When the people fear that they cannot go on, Moses reminds them that God fights for them. God has fought for them, God is fighting for them, God will fight for them. How does your past experience of faith and God's work in your life give you confidence for today and tomorrow?
6. Galatians gives us that beautiful phrase: For freedom Christ has set you free! Is it as simple as that? What matters if you are free? Apply this verse to Exodus. This moment of nervousness will not be the first time the Israelites wonder about what they are doing, leaving the security of what they know in Egypt to the unknown of freedom. Wonder about freedom in light of Exodus and Galatians.
7. The assertion of our Christian faith is that we are freed in Christ through the forgiveness of our sin and the gift of eternal life. Do you identify with freedom received through these gifts? Is there more to it?
8. Any other thoughts on these texts? Tap into study Bibles and other resources to expand your discussion.

Wrapping up

Share closing thoughts and a prayer and/or one of the week's psalms as a benediction for your time together.

Additional Resources

The Bible Project: <https://bibleproject.com/>

This site has many videos and other resources that your group may find beneficial for book overviews and context.

These videos are short but comprehensive. Specific videos that pertain to this week's readings are:

[Exodus 1-18](#)

[Ephesians](#)

Luther Seminary: [Enter the Bible](#)

[Summary of Exodus](#)

[Summary of Galatians](#)

[Summary of Ephesians](#)