

2013 - 2014
BIBLE STUDY
FOR
PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Selected Passages
from
EXODUS & DEUTERONOMY

SUPPLEMENTAL TEACHING OUTLINES
FOR LEADERS

by
Sandy Sturch

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| INTRODUCTION..... | 2 |
| LESSON ONE – <i>The Sovereignty and Providence of God</i> | 7 |
| Exodus 1:1 - 2:10 | |
| LESSON TWO – <i>God’s Call to Serve</i> | 15 |
| Exodus 2:11 - 3:15 | |
| LESSON THREE – <i>Set Free by God</i> | 24 |
| Exodus 4:18-31; 12:21-39; 13:1-10 | |
| LESSON FOUR – <i>Passing through the Waters</i> | 38 |
| Exodus 13:17-18; 14:5-14, 21-29; 15:20-21 | |
| LESSON FIVE – <i>God Provides</i> | 47 |
| Exodus 15:22-25; 16:1-3, 13-15; 17:1-7; 18:12-24 | |
| LESSON SIX – <i>Becoming a Holy People</i> | 57 |
| Exodus 19:3-6; 24:3-8. 15-18; Deuteronomy 7:7-9 | |
| LESSON SEVEN – <i>Covenant Living</i> | 67 |
| Exodus 20:1-17; 22:21-27; Deuteronomy 6:4-9 | |
| LESSON EIGHT – <i>Temptations along the Way</i> Exodus 32:1-24, 30; 34:1-6; Deuteronomy 6:10-12 | |
| LESSON NINE – <i>God’s Abiding Presence</i> Exodus 25:1-9; 33:7-11; 40:34-38; Deuteronomy 30:11-20 | |

INTRODUCTION

Exodus begins with listing the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt with Jacob—seventy in all—and then this statement: “Joseph was already in Egypt” (1:1). I am assuming that not all Presbyterian women who use these notes will be familiar with the Old Testament enough to understand or remember just who these people were and how they got to Egypt. To ignore Genesis is to miss one of the most fascinating and enjoyable books of the Bible. Furthermore, it is the foundation for all that follows.

Genesis opens with these words: “In the *beginning* God created the heavens and the earth.” This is a faith statement, not intended to be scientifically proven, simply accepted. We are told there was a “beginning” and that God preexisted the beginning; a God who is the creator of all that exists, and that all of God’s creation was good. In addition to the earth, sky, sea, and all the living creatures he placed on the earth, God created man in his own likeness, and he gave to him the responsibility of caring for all of God’s creation.

God saw that it was not good for man to be alone, that he needed a helpmeet suited to him. So God took a rib from Adam’s side, created woman, and then brought them back together again to become *one flesh*, creating marriage, a union from which children would be born. Genesis 1:28 says, “God *blessed* them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.’” This creates the *family*, the foundation of society. God’s plan was that man and woman—Adam and Eve—would have unbroken fellowship with God, in a setting of a beautiful garden where they would commune with God. Furthermore, they were to work the garden and care for it, and they were to bring children into the world. They were free to eat of any tree of the garden except one: the tree of knowledge of good and evil. If they ate of that tree, they would surely die. Thus Adam and Eve enjoyed fellowship with God, companionship with each other, and meaningful work in God’s garden among the plants and trees and beautiful creatures of land and sea.

However, Genesis 3 tells us how Satan appeared as a serpent, tempted Adam and Eve to sin, thereby breaking their communion with God and bringing death to themselves and all living things. From that point on, everyone has been born in sin; that is, with a sin nature, and therefore commits acts of sin. Sin separates us from our holy God. Having sinned, Adam and Eve instinctively became aware of their own nakedness, covered themselves with fig leaves, and hid from God. Already knowing they had sinned, God called them, confronted them with their sin, and then covered their nakedness with the skin of an animal. This is the first illustration of blood having to be shed to cover sin. And God himself provided the sacrifice. No one can come into God’s presence with sin, and we learn later that “*without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness,*” (Hebrews 9:22).

The consequences of sin were threefold: (1) to the *serpent*, he would crawl on his belly and eat dust; God would put enmity between the serpent and the woman, and

“between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel” [3:15], which is the first prophecy of Christ’s death. (2) To the *woman*, God said childbearing would be very severe, with painful labor, and her desire would be for her husband, and he would rule over her. (Note that this state of the relationship between husband and wife is the consequence of sin, not as God originally intended. But in Christ, as a husband *loves his wife as Christ loves the Church* and gave himself for her, there is mutual respect, love, and harmony (see Ephesians 5:22-33). (3) To *Adam* God said that the ground would be cursed, and food would be produced through painful toil; that the ground would produce thorns and thistles, and he would eat the plants of the field, produced by the sweat of his brow, until he died. For from the ground Adam was created and to dust he would return.

By Ch. 4, there is now a family. Out of envy, **Cain** kills his brother **Abel**, committing the first murder, lies to God, and the stories of family sin and rebellion go on from there.

By Genesis 6, *“The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. So the Lord said, ‘I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them,’* (vv. 5-7).

*“But **Noah** found favor in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God,”* (v. 8-9). Genesis 6-8 records God’s instructions for Noah to build the ark, even though there had never yet been rain on the earth—it had been watered from underground springs. Noah’s obedience is recorded in Hebrews 11—he is listed among the great heroes of faith. The flood destroyed all humans and creatures on the earth, except for Noah’s family and two of all living creatures that God had instructed him to bring into the ark. Thus, we see God’s judgment on sin, that there are limits to evil beyond which God will not permit sinful humanity to go, and there are consequences for sin that impact the whole earth. But in the midst of judgment, God provides a way of deliverance, based on faith and obedience to his commands. So we see that God is a God of love and judgment and mercy. In fact, God made a covenant with Noah and his sons:

Genesis 9:8-16

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you — the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you — every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth."

We see, however, that the Flood did not eradicate sin, for Noah and his son Ham fell into sin (Gen. 9:18-28), resulting in judgment that would impact all generations to come. Ham became the father of the Canaanites, a nation God knew would become wicked. They would be driven out of the land under the leadership of Joshua.

Genesis 12 begins the story of **Abraham**, to whom the Covenant was given. This covenant is basic to the theology of the rest of the Bible.

Genesis 12:1-3

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Through this covenant given to Abraham, God promised to form a nation, which we know is Israel, through whom all the world would be blessed, that is, through the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, who would become the final sacrifice for sin.

God promised that Abraham and Sarah, though well beyond childbearing years, would have a son through whom the promise would ultimately be fulfilled. Here we learn that our God is a God of the impossible! Through Sarah's compulsion to help God do what she thought was *impossible*, she gave to Abraham her servant Hagar, resulting in the birth of **Ishmael**, whose descendants became perpetual enemies of Israel.

We see throughout these stories that God *always* fulfills his promises. **Isaac** was born to Abraham and Sarah, and it he who inherited the Covenant given to Abraham. Isaac married Rebecca, who bore twins, **Esau** and **Jacob**. Though Esau was the firstborn, God had decreed that the covenant would be passed on to Jacob, whose twelve sons would become the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jacob's twin brother **Esau** became the father of Edomites, who became perpetual enemies of Israel, whose ultimate destruction was prophesied by Malachi:

Malachi 1:4-5

*Edom may say, "Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins."
But this is what the LORD Almighty says: "They may build, but I will
demolish. They will be called the Wicked Land, a people always under the
wrath of the LORD. You will see it with your own eyes and say, 'Great is
the LORD—even beyond the borders of Israel!'"*

Jacob and his wives, Leah and Rachel, bore **twelve sons**, who became **the twelve tribes of Israel**. **Joseph**, born to Jacob's beloved wife Rebecca, was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, taken to Egypt, where he was falsely accused of attempted rape of the Pharaoh's wife and put in prison. While in prison, God gave him the gift of interpreting dreams. This ultimately resulted in his prophesying the seven-year drought that was coming, and a plan to storing grain so that Egypt would have food during the drought. Pharaoh rewarded Joseph by giving him the highest position in the land, next to Pharaoh himself, and Joseph was responsible for the distribution of grain throughout the whole country during the famine (Gen. 41:41-57).

When Jacob learned there was grain in Egypt, he sent ten of his sons there to buy grain. He did not send Benjamin, the youngest of the twelve, and the son of his beloved wife Rachel, who had died giving birth to him. He was Joseph's only full-brother. The story of the reuniting of this chosen family, the inheritors of the covenant promises, reads like a novel and is the most intriguing and enjoyable story in the Bible, in my opinion. You might want to refresh your memory by reading Genesis 41:41-50:26 before you begin studying Exodus.

Exodus begins by naming the twelve tribes of Israel, who are known as the **patriarchs of Israel**. During their sojourn in Israel, God miraculously blessed them, even in the midst of their hard toil as slaves. After Joseph's death, their protection gone, they become so numerous that the Pharaoh feared that they would rise up against the Egyptians, and in the event of war, they would side with Egypt's enemies and leave the country. This would remove a major source of free manpower, adversely impacting Egypt's economy. So he devised a plan whereby all the Hebrew male babies would be killed by the midwives as they were being born. This is where God's story opens in Exodus 1.

Without the background of Genesis, we cannot appreciate the story of Exodus. In fact, Genesis is the basis for the theology of the rest of the Bible. When we understand the nature of God—his holiness, justice, and love; his sovereignty and providence over all creation; and when we see the impact of sin on the world and in our own personal lives, then maybe we can begin to understand the mess we are in today. We are still dealing with a fallen world, evil rulers, and our own sinful lives. Bondage to sin is everywhere. But through God's covenant, given to Abraham and fulfilled in Jesus Christ, we see hope for God's fallen world; we see deliverance from slavery to sin and assurance of eternal life in God's Promised Land, where we will dwell with him forever. We also begin to understand that it is our responsibility to navigate this wilderness, remembering

that we must claim God's promises by conquest, opposing Satan and his forces at every hand. We are engaged in spiritual warfare every day:

Ephesians 6:12-18

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Exodus will show us the nature of the Enemy, our own insatiable attraction to sin, and God's power over sin as we choose to be obedient to his commands. It is only through obedience that we find freedom to live the abundant life. Obedience is the *response* of a believer to salvation in Christ. Through the trials of life we learn to depend on God alone for our every need, just as Israel had to learn to depend on God alone on their journey through the wilderness.

So stop here and take time to read Genesis. Then begin your study of Exodus and note all the parallels you find there to our own journey through the wilderness. Learn to ask questions of the text:

- (1) What does this passage teach me about God?
- (2) What does it teach me about myself and others?
- (3) What warnings do I see in this text?
- (4) What promises or words of encouragement do I find in this text?
- (5) How will I apply this scripture to my own life?

LESSON ONE

The Sovereignty & Providence of God

Background Scripture: Exodus 1-2

Key Scripture: Exodus 1:1-2:10

ABOUT THE BOOK OF EXODUS:

(from the NIV Life Application Study Bible notes)

- **Purpose:** to record the events of Israel's deliverance from Egypt and development as a nation.
- **Author, Date, and place of writing:**
 - Written by Moses, approximately 1450-1410 B.C., about the same time as Genesis, in the desert during Israel's wanderings, somewhere in the Sinai peninsula.
- **Themes:**
 - **Slavery:** The Israelites were in Egypt 400 years, but which time they became slaves of the Egyptians, subject to cruelty, which caused them to cry out to God for deliverance.
 - **Redemption:** God raised up Moses to be Israel's leader, and through whom God worked mighty miracles to lead his people out of slavery to freedom. Through Israel's escape from Egypt the Passover was instigated, which we still celebrate today as a lasting ordinance.
 - **Guidance:** God used Moses to guide the people out of Egypt by using the plagues, the miracle of crossing the Red Sea, and giving them the Ten Commandments.
 - **Commandments. God's law was given in three parts:**
 - ◆ **Moral law:** the *absolutes of spiritual and moral life*, binding for all time, still valid today. The Ten Commandments summarize God's moral law, but they are given in greater detail in Leviticus.

Matthew 5:17-18

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

- ◆ **Civil law:** Rules to manage the Israelites' lives as a nation. When Israel lost their land and were dispersed throughout the nations, they came under the civil laws of the nations who governed them.
- ◆ **Ceremonial law:** Patterns for building the tabernacle and for regular worship. Principles for worship still can be applied today, but when the temple was ultimately destroyed, *Jesus became the fulfillment of the ceremonial law*. He became our High Priest, became the final sacrifice for sins, and opened the way into God's presence for all who believe.

Hebrews 2:17

For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

Hebrews 9:11-12

When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He 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, having obtained eternal redemption.

WHAT IS THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD?

(from the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 1038-39, F. H. Klooster)

- It is the biblical teaching that God is **king, supreme ruler, and lawgiver** of the entire universe.

Psalms 103:19

The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.

1 Chronicles 29:11

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.

Revelation 19:16

*On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.***

- The sovereignty of God thus expresses the very nature of God as **all-powerful** and **omnipotent, able to accomplish his good pleasure, carry out his decreed will, and keep his promises.**
- God's sovereignty is expressed in the **comprehensive plan or decree for world history**; he "works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will" (Eph. 1:11).

- His sovereignty is *exercised* and *displayed* in history in the work of creation, providence, and redemption.
- He rules the destiny of men and nations (Acts 14:15-17; 17:24-28).
- His providential rule is all-comprehensive:

Isaiah 45:7

I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.

- The **gospel itself displays God's sovereignty**; it is the "*power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes* (Rom. 1:16), and "*to those whom God has called*" Christ is "*the power of God*" (1 Cor. 1:24; cf. Eph. 1:18-22).
- The **authority of Scripture** is also an expression of the sovereignty of God since all Scripture is "God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16). That is why "the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35) and why everything in it will be fulfilled and accomplished (Matt. 5:18; Luke 24:44).

WHAT IS THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD?

(from the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 890, T. H. L. Parker)

- *Providence* is not a word that is found in the Bible, but which nevertheless represents a truly biblical doctrine. There is no Hebrew equivalent for *providence*, and the Greek word translated thus, *pronoia*, is used only of human foresight (Acts 24:2; Rom. 13:14). Rather, the Bible uses *ad hoc* words like "*he giveth food to all flesh*" (Ps. 136:25), or "*he sendeth forth springs into the valleys*" (Ps. 104:10), expressing in concrete situations God's mighty acts toward his children. We might define providence as "God cares for that which he has created."
- In the Book of Confessions, 7.011, Shorter Catechism, Q. 11, we read:
 - **What are God's works of providence?** A. God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions.
- We should not think of providence generally and independently of Christ. In Jesus Christ, God has set up the relationship between himself and his creatures, promising to carry through his purpose in creation to its triumphal conclusion.
- The **doctrine of providence** may be viewed from **three different aspects**:
 - **The creation is the stage on which are enacted God's dealings with humankind.** Providence is God's gracious outworking of his purpose in Christ which issues in his dealings with man, for from the beginning, God has ordered the course of events toward Jesus Christ and his incarnation. For example, the story of lust in Judah's dealings with Tamar (Gen. 38) fall into place in the genealogy of the Messiah (Matt. 1:3). Caesar

Augustus was on the throne in Rome for the sake of the unknown baby in its manger.

- **God's providence served also the purpose of bearing witness to God among the heathen** (Acts 14:17; 17:22-30; Rom. 1:18-23). God's fatherly care was a sign, pointing toward himself. The purpose of this witness of providence was simply to render man inexcusable for not knowing God. At this point also, therefore, providence is included in the doctrine of reconciliation.

Romans 1:20

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

- **The God who gives humankind life also preserves him while he is on the earth.** God is not a God of the soul alone, but of the body also. In Matt. 6:25-34 the disciples are reminded (by their Creator himself) of their creaturely relationship to God, and are freed from all anxiety about their earthly future.

The other creatures (as exemplified by the birds and all other creations) have been set in a definite relationship to God which he faithfully maintains by caring for their needs. Will God bestow less care upon man, to whom he has given a higher place in the creation (cf. Psalm 8:6-8)? Behind this doctrine lies the almighty and loving freedom of God.

- The doctrine of providence, therefore, tells us that the world and our lives are not ruled by chance or by fate but by God, who lays bare his purposes of providence in the incarnation of his Son.

NOW, LOOK FOR THE EVIDENCES OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND PROVIDENCE AS YOU READ EXODUS 1:1-22.

Exodus 1

These are the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt with Jacob, each with his family: 2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; 3 Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; 4 Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher. 5 The descendants of Jacob numbered seventy in all; Joseph was already in Egypt.

6 Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, 7 but the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them.

8 Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. 9 "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. 10 Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country."

11 So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. 12 But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites 13 and worked them ruthlessly. 14 They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly.

15 The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiprah and Puah, 16 "When you help the Hebrew women in childbirth and observe them on the delivery stool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live." 17 The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. 18 Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, "Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?"

19 The midwives answered Pharaoh, "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive."

20 So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. 21 And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

22 Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: "Every boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live."

➤ **What evidences do you see in this passage of God's providence?**

- God enabled the Israelites to multiply greatly so that the land "was filled with them."
- This was in keeping with God's covenant with Abraham:

Genesis 15:5-6

He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars — if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 22:17

I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.

➤ The Israelites were obviously hard workers, very productive, so why did Pharaoh perceive the Israelites a threat?

- If war broke out, the Israelites would join forces with the enemy and leave.
- Was this fear valid?

➤ **What was Pharaoh's solution to the problem?**

- He worked them even harder, but they kept getting stronger.
- He then ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill the boy babies as they were being born, but let the baby girls live.
 - ◆ Shiphrah and Puah were either the actual midwives, or they might have been the women who oversaw the midwives.

➤ **Why did the midwives refuse to comply with Pharaoh's order?**

- They **disobeyed** Pharaoh, letting the baby boys live **because they feared God**. They explained the situation by saying that the Hebrew women were so strong that they **gave birth before the midwives even arrived**. In so doing, they risked their own lives.
 - ◆ God has placed in us a natural conscience so that we instinctively know that taking a life is wrong. A total absence of conscience indicates a serious psychological/mental disorder.
 - ◆ God's law always trumps man's law:

Acts 5:27-29

Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. 28 "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."

Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"

GOD CHOOSES A LEADER:

- In this passage the names of Moses' parents are not given, but in Ex. 6:20, we learn they are **Amram** and **Jochabed**. They are both from the tribe of Levi. Moses' brother is **Aaron**, three years old at the time of Moses' birth, and his sister **Miriam** is a young girl.

Exodus 2:1-10

Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, 2 and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. 3 But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. 4 His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

- Moses' mother kept him hidden as long as possible, and then she placed him in a basket, made from papyrus reeds and caulked with pitch to make it watertight, and hid the basket among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. Clearly she was doing everything possible to protect her precious baby, for each individual action denoted love and hope for deliverance.

- The basket would be concealed by the tall reeds, but there was nothing to muffle the sound of a crying baby.

5 Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the river bank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to get it. 6 She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said.

- Her reaction to the baby is surprise and immediate recognition: “A Hebrew!” She had pity—felt sorry—for the baby. She entered into an alliance with him, and prepared to be his protector.
- She knew exactly what she was doing. She recognized the baby as a Hebrew baby, a child from the slave community, a child under royal ban, a child under death sentence from her father—and she spares his life!
- However, princesses do not tend to babies! Though she rescued this baby in defiance of a royal decree, a nursemaid must be found.

WHAT DID QUICK-THINKING MIRIAM DO TO RESCUE MOSES?

Exodus 2:7-10

Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?"

8 "Yes, go," she answered. And the girl went and got the baby's mother. 9 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. 10 When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water."

➤ What a beautiful illustration of the providence of God! Not only has the baby been spared, he will now be returned to his own home to be nursed by his own mother!

- We do not know how long Moses stayed with his parents, but babies were often nursed until five years of age. We do know it is the time span for growth and maturation. Thus, the most formative years of Moses' life are in the protective care of his Hebrew family.
- When the day came that Jochabed had to give up her son to the Pharaoh's daughter, she yields up her son to the care of the princess who had spared him.
- The future of the baby is now all in the hands of the princess, for the mother has finished her work and disappears from the narrative.
 - Pharaoh's daughter now adopts him as her own son, and by implication makes him an Egyptian prince. Moreover, in the act of adoption she names him Moses (v. 10), indicating that he is now fully hers.

- She has adopted a Hebrew baby who will ultimately be an instrument in the death of her father.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. God is not mentioned as a character or agent in the plot, but there is no doubt that God is present in this story. How do you see God at work in the lives of Moses' family?
2. Moses was educated and trained in leadership from infancy to adulthood. What were the major influences of your first five years at home? How did they form the foundation of your life?
3. Who (or what) is teaching and training your preschool children or grandchildren? What influence does electronics have on them?
4. What would be the advantage of Moses being raised in the palace of the Pharaoh? How would this impact the leadership assignment God will give him?
5. What does this story say to you about the value of human life? Pharaoh's daughter was willing to rescue a baby marked to die. Would you do that?
6. Many babies are in danger of being killed while still in the womb and in infancy. How should we as Christians respond? What is your attitude about rescuing babies and adopting them?
7. Has your church considered a ministry to unwed mothers?
8. How has God worked behind the circumstances of your life to bring you where you are today? What was God's unexpected provision for you?
9. How does the sovereignty of God give you comfort?
10. What do these verses mean to you personally as you reflect on your life?

Psalm 68:20, "Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign LORD comes escape from death."

Psalm 71:5-6, "For you have been my hope, O Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth. From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother's womb. I will ever praise you."

LESSON TWO
God's Call to Serve
Exodus 2:11 – 3:15
(Background scripture: Exodus 2:11-4:17)

In Lesson One, the infant Moses had been rescued from death when the defiant and courageous Hebrew midwives refused to obey the Pharaoh's edict to kill all Hebrew boy babies. When the presence of this Hebrew baby boy could no longer be concealed, his mother placed him in a papyrus basket, coated with tar and pitch, and placed the basket in the reeds along the Nile River. His sister Miriam watched nearby to see what would happen to him.

When Pharaoh's daughter went down to the river to bathe, she saw the basket and asked her female slave to get it for her. When she opened the basket, the baby boy was crying, and though she recognized him as one of the Hebrew babies, she felt sorry for him. Miriam stepped forward and volunteered to get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for her. In God's providence, Moses was back in his own home again, nursed by his own mother. When he had *grown* (no specific age is indicated), she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and she adopted him as her own son. She named him "Moses," which means, "I drew him out of the water." This was the beginning of God's plan to rescue his people from slavery.

It was in God's providence that Moses was raised by his own parents during the most formative years of his life. They had the opportunity to teach him all they knew about the God of his fathers. Whatever Moses' age when he was taken to the palace to be raised as the son the Pharaoh's daughter, at some point he realized he was a Hebrew. A Hebrew, who had been born under the edict of death, grows up in the palace of the Pharaoh of Egypt, with every advantage of royalty, receiving the finest education available in the known world. How does a man of such privilege go from all the luxuries of the palace in Egypt during his first forty years, to the wilderness where he raised sheep for forty years, and then back to Egypt to lead God's people out of slavery? He will be eighty years old when he hears the call of God to deliver his people from bondage.

Moses' response to God's call revealed a changed man, one who was no longer confident in his own strength. He is honest with God about his doubts, and God replies with the revelation of himself that Moses will have to rely on again and again.

As we study these passages, let us examine our own heart toward God. Have we heard God's call and responded with faith, humility and obedience? Do we trust who God says he is, rely on his power to set people free from bondage? Do we trust God's promise to be with us in times of persecution, should that be our call?

AN IMPETUOUS ACTION THAT CHANGED MOSES' LIFE:

Exodus 2:11-14

One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

13 The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, "Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?"

14 The man said, "Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?"

Then Moses was afraid and thought, "What I did must have become known."

- Early in his childhood or later, Moses had become aware of his Hebrew descent. He was now **forty years old** (see Acts 7:23) when these events took place that drove him out of Egypt.
 - Moses' **compassion** is evident in his reaction to seeing his own people being worked ruthlessly as slaves.
 - His **justice** is aroused when he sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew.
 - But he shows the **impetuous** side of his nature by taking matters into his own hands. "Glancing this way and that and seeing no one," **he killed the Egyptian**.
- The very next day, when Moses saw two Hebrews fighting, he tried to break it up by addressing the one in the wrong.
 - Again, his **sense of justice** compels him to intervene. Moses is the champion of the oppressed and underdogs. But the Hebrew who ought to have been grateful to Moses instead announced that he knew what Moses had done the day before.
 - ◆ This is the first hint of a recurring theme of **Israelite rebellion and rejection of Moses' leadership**.
 - Moses' murder of the Egyptian had been seen. He was a murderer, and now he was meddling in someone else's business.
 - Moses' surmised that this has now become public information, and he needed to leave Egypt as soon as possible.

MOSES' LIFE CHANGES OVERNIGHT!

Exodus 2:15

When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well.

- **Pharaoh's wrath** was not so much to avenge the death of an Egyptian as it was to deal with his discovery that **Moses was acting as a friend and possible champion of his sworn enemy, the Israelites.**
- Moses flees for his life, and suddenly he is cut off from all the privileges and status of Egypt. He is now a fugitive in another land.

MOSES' SOJOURN IN MIDIAN:

- Again we see the **providence of God** at work in the seeming **coincidences of life.** (With God, there are no coincidences!)

Exodus 2:16-22

Now a priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's flock.

17 Some shepherds came along and drove them away, but Moses got up and came to their rescue and watered their flock.

*18 When the girls returned to Reuel [later referred to as **Jethro**] their father, he asked them, "Why have you returned so early today?"*

19 They answered, "An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock." [They no doubt identified him as an Egyptian because of his clothing]

20 "And where is he?" he asked his daughters. "Why did you leave him? Invite him to have something to eat."

*21 Moses agreed to stay with the man, who gave his daughter **Zipporah** to Moses in marriage.*

22 Zipporah gave birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom, saying, "I have become an alien in a foreign land."

GOD IS NEVER ABSENT EVEN IN LONG PERIODS OF SILENCE:

Exodus 2:23-25

During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God.

24 God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. 25 So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

- What do you learn about God in these three verses?
 - God **hears** our cry for help.
 - God **remembers his covenant**—even promises made to our forefathers long before we were born.
 - God **sees our suffering.**

- God is **concerned** about his children.

MOSES' ENCOUNTER WITH GOD ON MT. HOREB:

Exodus 3:1-6

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight — why the bush does not burn up."

4 When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

And Moses said, "Here I am."

5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

6 Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

➤ While Moses was **actively engaged in one task, God called him to another.**

- Note the **contrast of the Moses 40 years prior**, striking against the abuses of power he had witnessed in Egypt, and the Moses now, humbly tending sheep in the desert.
- In our early years we often feel infinitely qualified to take on the world, but God thinks otherwise. One cannot be mightily used of God when leading from an attitude of self-confidence and personal power and achievement rather than **total dependence on God.**

Psalm 18:27 — You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty.

Psalm 25:9 — He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.

1 Peter 5:6 — Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

- One may have achieved great knowledge at a young age, but there is a maturity of walking with God can only come with years.
- Moses had forty years of the finest education and a life of privilege, wanting for nothing; then forty years of herding sheep in the desert. Only then was he ready to hear God's call to service.

THE MIRACLE OF THE BURNING BUSH:

Exodus 3:2-3

There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.

- The **burning bush was not consumed**—that was the **miracle**.
 - Miracle is used here, as it so typically is in Scripture, **to accredit God’s message** (or messenger).
 - Miracles are not circus side shows intended to entertain; rather they accredit the Word of God given to his special messengers. (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 315*).
- It was from **within the bush** that God called to Moses.
 - “God chose the small and despised burning bush as his medium of revelation, and waited to see **how sensitive Moses was toward the insignificant and small things of life** before he invested him with larger tasks.” (Ibid.)
 - God could have set the whole mountain ablaze with his presence, but this was just for Moses.
 - The **fire** symbolized God’s **powerful, consuming, and persevering presence**.

Hebrews 12:28-29

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."

WHY DID GOD REPEAT MOSES’ NAME?

Exodus 3:2-4

Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight — why the bush does not burn up."

4 When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

- God repeated Moses’ name to express the **urgency of the summons and the message**. (See also 1 Sam. 3:10.)
- Moses replied, “Here I am.” (v. 4b)

WHAT PREPARATION WAS REQUIRED TO ENTERED GOD’S PRESENCE?

Exodus 3:5

"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

➤ To enter the presence of God required preparation. Therefore, God set up arbitrary boundaries:

- **"Do not come any closer."**
- He should **remove his sandals**. Taking off his shoes was an **act of reverence**, conveying his own unworthiness before God.
- This was to prevent him from rashly intruding into the presence of God and **to teach him that God was separate and distinct from mortal men**.
- Because God was present, what had been **ordinary** became "**holy ground**" and consequently "**set apart**" for **distinct use**.
- The place where sheep and goats had traveled just a short time ago was **transformed into "holy ground" by God's presence**.
 - ◆ It was not the nature of the ground itself that was holy. It was holy relative only to and based on the divine appointment that remained true as long as God ordained it so.

WHEN THE CONDITION FOR MEETING GOD HAD BEEN SATISFIED, HOW DID GOD REVEAL HIMSELF?

Exodus 3:6

Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."

At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

- God assured Moses that it was through the God of his father (collective singular—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) that many were to receive the blessing of God. Therefore, he assured Moses that **the God of his father had not forsaken his repeated word of promise, or his people**, and he would certainly be with Moses in the commission he was about to receive.
- Moses removed his sandals and covered his face, conveying his own unworthiness before God.

WHAT IS THE COMMISSION THAT MOSES RECEIVES FROM GOD?

Exodus 3:7-10

The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a

good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey — the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

- Notice that the good land flowing with milk and honey was **already occupied**. This meant conquest.
 - The Canaanites was a term for all the various tribes living in that land. It is the land of Israel and Jordan today.
- Moses' commission was to go to Pharaoh to secure the release of the Israelites from Egypt.
 - Who in the world was better prepared to face Pharaoh than Moses?

WHAT WAS MOSES' RESPONSE? HOW DID GOD REPLY?

Exodus 3:11

But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

- Moses felt **totally inadequate** to do the job God was asking him to do. After forty years of reflection, Moses was now timid, unsure of himself, and shrank back from any self-assertiveness that his divine commission demanded of him.

Exodus 3:12

And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

- God would personally accompany Moses. And Israel would be set free to worship God. In fact, Israel would soon enter into covenant with God on this very mountain and present their gifts and offerings as part of their worship in order to build the tabernacle (36:1-7; Numbers 7).

"WHAT IF THEY ASK WHAT YOUR NAME IS?"

Exodus 3:13-15

Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

*14 God said to Moses, "**I AM WHO I AM**. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: '**I AM has sent me to you.**'"*

*15 God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The **LORD**, the God of your fathers — the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of*

Jacob — has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

- The Egyptians had many gods by many different names. Moses wanted to know God's name so the Hebrew people would know exactly who had sent them.
- God called himself **I AM**, a name describing his **eternal power** and **unchangeable character**.
 - God reminded Moses of his **covenant promises** to **Abraham** (Gen. 12:1-3; 15; 17), **Isaac** (Gen. 26:2-5), and **Jacob** (Gen. 28:13-15), and used **I AM** to show his unchanging nature.
 - What God promised to the patriarchs hundreds of years earlier he would fulfill through Moses.

HOW ARE THE COVENANT PROMISES FULFILLED TODAY?

- All God's promises are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who is the great **I AM**:

*John 8:58-59 - "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, **I am!**"*

*John 4:10 - Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you **living water** ."*

*John 6:35 - Then Jesus declared, "**I am the bread of life**. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.*

*John 8:12 - When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "**I am the light of the world**. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

*John 10:9 - **I am the gate**; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.*

*John 10:11 - "**I am the good shepherd**. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*

*John 15:1-2 - 15:1 "**I am the true vine**, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.*

*John 11:25-26 - Jesus said to her, "**I am the resurrection and the life** . He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. Has an impulsive action on your part ever cost you something or someone you held dear? If your actions were driven by honorable motives, how did you respond to the loss you experienced? Was it worth it? Would you do it again?

2. Have you ever suddenly found yourself uprooted and transplanted where you never wanted to be? Did you feel like an alien? How did you handle it?
3. How have you found God in darkness?
4. Read Psalm 28 and Psalm 61. What in these psalms is most comforting to you?
5. What do you consider today to be “holy ground”? Why? How do you treat it differently from any other place?
6. Have you ever thought God is slow in answering prayer? Why do you think God sometimes waits many generations before responding to the cries of his people?
7. Why do you think Moses was the perfect choice to receive his commission from God? Would not a highly trained, successful military officer, who had a long record of accomplishments have been a better choice than someone who had been herding sheep for the last 40 years?
8. How do you relate to Moses’ excuses? And what is God’s response?
- 9.** How would you explain God’s name *I AM* in terms of your own personal relationship with Jesus?

LESSON THREE

Set Free by God

Exodus 4:18-31; 12:21-39; 13:1-10

(Background scripture: Exodus 4:18 – 13:16)

When Moses fled Egypt for fear of his life, he went to live in Midian. There he met the daughters of Reuel, a priest of Midian, at the well where they were attempting to draw water for their father's flock. When shepherds attempted to drive them away, Moses came to their rescue and watered their flock. Long story short, this led to Moses being welcomed into Reuel's household, his marrying Zipporah, and their having a son Gershom. And these years represented the middle forty years of Moses' life, in the role of a shepherd.

Time passed, the king of Egypt died, and the Israelites cried out to God for deliverance from their slavery. God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and took action to deliver them. God's plan began by calling Moses out of his career as shepherd, to send him back to Egypt to lead his people out of bondage—the story of the burning bush. In chapter 3, Moses responded with a series of objections, stating why God had selected the wrong person. First, he was unqualified for the job; he had no credentials. Second, how could he explain to the Israelites who had sent him? He didn't know God's name. Third, what if they didn't believe him and wouldn't listen to him? Fourth, he was not an eloquent speaker, meaning that he most likely was not gifted in his use of Hebrew and Egyptian languages so that he would be able to effectively counter the arguments of his own people and Pharaoh. (However, Stephen declared that Moses was powerful in speech and action in Acts 7:22.) What was God's response? Exodus 4:11-12, *The LORD said to him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."* What comfort that should have been! How often I myself have claimed that promise as my own!

But Moses, the reluctant leader, was not convinced. He pleaded with God to send someone else, and this was God's response:

Exodus 4:13-17

But Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it."

14 Then the LORD's anger burned against Moses and he said, "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and his heart will be glad when he sees you. 15 You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. 16 He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him. 17 But take this staff in your hand so you can perform miraculous signs with it."

This should be a great encouragement to those of us who are reluctant servants. God did not put Moses on the shelf because of his protests—he was God’s man for the job—but God did give him help. In fact, at the prompting of God, Aaron was already on his way to meet Moses in the wilderness (Ex. 4:27). Let us never forget that God equips those whom he has called. We are never left to our own resources. Or to put it another way, we are destined to fail if we rely on our own resources rather than God.

We now pick up the story of Moses and his family leaving his father-in-law Jethro to return to Egypt.

PREPARING THE LEADER’S FAMILY – EXODUS 4:18-26

Exodus 4:18-31

Then Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, "Let me go back to my own people in Egypt to see if any of them are still alive."

Jethro said, "Go, and I wish you well."

Now the LORD had said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead." 20 So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand.

21 The LORD said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. 22 Then say to Pharaoh, "This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, 23 and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son."

24 At a lodging place on the way, the LORD met [Moses] and was about to kill him. 25 But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched [Moses'] feet with it. "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me," she said. 26 So the LORD let him alone. (At that time she said "bridegroom of blood," referring to circumcision.)

27 The LORD said to Aaron, "Go into the desert to meet Moses." So he met Moses at the mountain of God and kissed him. 28 Then Moses told Aaron everything the LORD had sent him to say, and also about all the miraculous signs he had commanded him to perform.

29 Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites, 30 and Aaron told them everything the LORD had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people, 31 and they believed. And when they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.

- The Lord rehearses a **summary of the previous directives to Moses** (4:21-23):

- You will **perform miracles** before Pharaoh.
- **Pharaoh will harden his heart and not release the people.**
- You are to inform him that since Israel is “*my firstborn son,*” the **Israelites must be set free so that they might worship me.**
- **Pharaoh’s refusal will lead to the death of his firstborn son.**

HOW ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND “HARDENING OF HEART”?

- There are ten places where “*hardening*” of Pharaoh is **ascribed to God** (4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17).
- But Pharaoh **hardened his own heart** in another ten passages (7:13, 14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34, 35; 13:15).
- Thus **hardening** was as much **Pharaoh’s own act** as it was the **work of God.**
 - **Pharaoh alone** was the **agent of the hardening** in the first sign and in all the first five plagues.
 - Not until the **sixth plague** was it stated that **God hardened Pharaoh’s heart** (9:12), as he had warned Moses in Midian that he would have to do (v. 21).
- God does not harden the heart of the person who is reaching out to him, who desires to please God, even though fumbling in his attempts to do so. Hardening of heart is the result of **neglect, wrong thinking, or persistent sin**, so that one eventually loses all inclination to turn to God.

Romans 9:18

Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

Hebrews 3:12-15

See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. 14 We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. 15 As has just been said:

“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.”

Psalms 73:7

From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits.

THE CIRCUMCISION OF MOSES' SON – 4:24-26

- God was about to kill Moses because Moses had not circumcised his son, according to God's instruction. Why hadn't Moses done this?
 - His first 40 years were lived in Pharaoh's palace, far from the teaching of Genesis 17:10-14. And the next 40 years had been spent in the Midian desert.

Genesis 17:10-14

This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. 12 For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner — those who are not your offspring. 13 Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. 14 Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

- The preparation of God's chosen servant included also the **preparation of his family.**
 - **Circumcision** identified Moses' son as his own, belonging to God's covenant people.
 - **Moses could not effectively serve as deliverer of God's people until he had fulfilled the conditions of God's covenant.** One of those conditions was circumcision. Moses and his family had to follow God's commands completely.
 - **Failure to circumcise your son** was to remove yourself and your family from God's blessings.

MOSES AND AARON MEET:

Exodus 4:27-31

The LORD said to Aaron, "Go into the desert to meet Moses." So he met Moses at the mountain of God and kissed him. 28 Then Moses told Aaron everything the LORD had sent him to say, and also about all the miraculous signs he had commanded him to perform.

29 Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites, 30 and Aaron told them everything the LORD had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people, 31 and they believed. And when they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.

- Aaron was now 83 years of age, and he met Moses midway en route to Egypt, at Mt. Horeb, the mountain of God. Moses shared with him everything that had happened in the 40 years since they had seen each other, but especially God's instructions to him and the signs God had commanded him to perform.
- Then they brought together all the elders of Israel, and they shared the good news that **God had seen their suffering and cared about them**. This caused the people to **bow down and worship**.
- The scene was now set for the God's miraculous plan of deliverance.

GOD SENDS MOSES TO PHARAOH – 5:1-21

- Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh to ask him to let the Israelites go into the wilderness to **hold a festival to the Lord**.
- Not only did Pharaoh **deny the request**, he ordered the slave drivers and overseers to **stop providing straw to make the bricks**. He ordered the Israelites to gather their own straw, yet demanded the same quota of bricks each day as before. The Israelite overseers blamed Moses and Aaron for this hardship.

GOD PROMISES DELIVERANCE: 5:22-6:8

Exodus 5:22-6:8

Moses returned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? 23 Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all."

6:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country."

2 God also said to Moses, "I am the LORD. 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. 4 I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens. 5 Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant."

*6 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: **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. 7 I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. 8 And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.**"*

Exodus 6:28-7:5

Now when the LORD spoke to Moses in Egypt, 29 he said to him, "I am the LORD. Tell Pharaoh king of Egypt everything I tell you." 30 But Moses said to the LORD, "Since I speak with faltering lips, why would Pharaoh listen to me?"

Exodus 7

Then the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. 2 You are to say everything I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his country. 3 **But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt, 4 he will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites. 5 And the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it.**"

AARON'S STAFF BECOMES GOD'S INSTRUMENT OF GOD'S JUDGMENT ON EGYPT:

Exodus 7:8-13

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 9 "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Perform a miracle,' then say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh, and it will become a snake.'"

So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. 11 Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: 12 Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. 13 Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

PHARAOH'S HARDENED HEART RESULTED IN TEN PLAGUES INFLICTED UPON EGYPT:

- First plague: **water turned to blood** (7:14-24)
- Second plague: **frogs** (7:25-8:15)
- Third plague: **gnats** (8:16-19)
- Fourth plague: **flies** (8:20-32)
- Fifth plague: against **livestock** (9:1-7)
- Sixth plague: **boils** (9:8-12)
- Seventh plague: **hail** (9:13-35)
- Eighth plague: **locusts** (10:1-20)
- Ninth plague: **darkness** (10:21-29)

- Tenth plague: **death of the firstborn** (Ch. 11)

WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE PLAGUES?

- "**By this you (Pharaoh) will know I am the Lord**" (7:17). That is, he will know the *one true God*; know **God's name** = "Yahweh", and what it signified.
- "That you will know that I, the Lord, am **in this land**" (8:22). That is, he will know God's providence and guidance in the world.
- "So you may know there is **no one like me in all the earth**" (9:14).
- Meaning, know that the **scope and force of God's power are beyond anything known to man** in all the earth.
 - Egypt, the leader of the known world, was **filled with idolatry**—the world must know that there is *one God, Yahweh*, before whom the whole world must bow.

TENTH PLAGUE: DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN – CH. 11

Exodus 11

Now the LORD had said to Moses, "I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here, and when he does, he will drive you out completely. 2 Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold." 3(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.)

4 So Moses said, "This is what the LORD says: 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. 5 Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. 6 There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt — worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. 7 But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any man or animal.' Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. 8 All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me and saying, 'Go, you and all the people who follow you!' After that I will leave." Then Moses, hot with anger, left Pharaoh.

9 The LORD had said to Moses, "Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you — so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt." 10 Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go out of his country.

- Why were the Egyptians generous toward the Israelites?
- The Lord made them favorably disposed toward Israel.

- Moses himself was highly regarded because of the esteem he had accumulated from the magicians (8:18-10), the court officials (9:20; 10:7), and Pharaoh himself (9:27, 10:16).
- The **firstborn of all Egyptian families—slaves and cattle** (v. 5)—would die at midnight, and an unprecedented outpouring of grief would follow.
- But among the Israelites there would be such tranquility on that evening that not a dog would have occasion to bark (vv. 6-7).

THE PASSOVER – 12:21-28

➤ **Celebration of the Passover:**

Exodus 12:1-13

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, 2 "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. 3 Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. 4 If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat.

5 The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. 6 Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. 7 Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.

8 That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. 9 Do not eat the meat raw or cooked in water, but roast it over the fire — head, legs and inner parts. 10 Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. 11 This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover.

12 "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn — both men and animals — and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. 13 The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

- Preparations were to begin on the **tenth day** of the month of **Abib** (v. 3).
- The head of each household was to select a **lamb or goat**, according to the number of people who would be present (v. 4).

- The animal was to be a **year old male, without any defects** (v. 5).
 - Each animal was to be slaughtered at twilight on the **fourteenth day** (v. 6).
 - The blood from the animals was to be **applied to the doorframe of each house** (v. 7).
 - That night each family was to **eat the roasted lamb or kid along with bitter herbs and unleavened bread** (v. 8).
 - The meat was to be roasted whole with the head and legs intact and the washed internals left inside; it was not to be eaten raw or boiled in water (v. 9).
 - **All leftovers were to be burnt**; nothing was to be allowed to become profane by putrefaction or superstitious abuse (v. 10, i.e., before daybreak according to 23:18; 34:25; Deut. 16:4)
 - The meal was to be **eaten with an air of haste and expectancy**. Therefore, the people's long robes were to be tucked in their belts, their sandals were to be worn, and their staffs were to be ready and on hand (v. 11; Deut. 16:3).
- On that same night, the 15th of Abib, the Lord would pass through Egypt and strike down the firstborn of all men and animals whose household **had not** been believingly placed under the blood of the **sacrificial substitute** (v. 12).
- This **blood was to be a “sign.”** This was to be a **pledge of God's mercy**. The Lord would “pass over” these homes, and no destructive plague would affect or touch them. **The blood of the lamb was the substitute for the death of the firstborn male of the household.**
 - All the **gods of Egypt** would be judged by this final plague of God (v. 12).
 - ◆ “Obviously, those deities whose representatives were linked with beasts were dealt direct blows—the bulls, cows, goats, jackals, lions, baboons, rams, etc. With the sudden death of these sacred representatives, there could be little doubt that **it would be interpreted as a direct blow to the gods of Egypt themselves.**” (*Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 372*)

➤ **Preparations for the Unleavened Bread (12:14-20)**

Exodus 12:14-20

"This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD — a lasting ordinance. 15 For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel. 16 On the first day hold a sacred assembly, and another one on the seventh

day. Do no work at all on these days, except to prepare food for everyone to eat — that is all you may do.

17 "Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. 18 In the first month you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day. 19 For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses. And whoever eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Israel, whether he is an alien or native-born. 20 Eat nothing made with yeast. Wherever you live, you must eat unleavened bread."

- Bread made **without yeast** was to **remember Israel's haste in leaving Egypt** (v. 39) since yeast would not have time to rise.
- And unleavened bread was to underscore the conviction that **impurity and corruption**, which leaven often symbolizes, **disqualified persons from religious services**.
- The **whole household** needed to be clean and pure of heart; therefore, yeast was to be removed from the entire house.

THE CELEBRATION OF THE PASSOVER – 12:21-28

Exodus 12:21-28

Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. 22 Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. Not one of you shall go out the door of his house until morning. 23 When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.

24 "Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. 25 When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. 26 And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' 27 then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.'" Then the people bowed down and worshiped. 28 The Israelites did just what the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron.

➤ Two new items are included here:

- **Blood was to be applied to each doorframe** by a "bunch of hyssop" dipped into a basin of blood.

- ◆ The grounds and means of Israel’s redemption was a **sacrificed substitute** and the **blood of atonement** in which the paschal animal **died in place of the firstborn** of all who took shelter from the stroke of the destroyer.
- No one was to leave the house “until morning” (v. 22).

DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT! – 12:29-51

➤ **The final plague—death!**

Exodus 12:29-32

At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. 30 Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead.

31 During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD as you have requested. 32 Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me."

- God had predicted that the effect of the tenth plague would be so hard that Pharaoh would drive them out completely (11:1).

➤ **Preparations for the Exodus:**

Exodus 12:33-36

The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country. "For otherwise," they said, "we will all die!" 34 So the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing. 35 The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. 36 The LORD had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians.

➤ **The journey begins:**

Exodus 12:37-39

The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth. There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. 38 Many other people went up with them, as well as large droves of livestock, both flocks and herds. 39 With the dough they had brought from Egypt, they baked cakes of unleavened bread. The dough was without yeast because they had been driven out of Egypt and did not have time to prepare food for themselves.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE FIRSTBORN – 13:1-16

Exodus 13:1-16

The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal."

3 Then Moses said to the people, "Commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the LORD brought you out of it with a mighty hand. Eat nothing containing yeast. 4 Today, in the month of Abib, you are leaving. 5 When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites and Jebusites — the land he swore to your forefathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey — you are to observe this ceremony in this month: 6 For seven days eat bread made without yeast and on the seventh day hold a festival to the LORD. 7 Eat unleavened bread during those seven days; nothing with yeast in it is to be seen among you, nor shall any yeast be seen anywhere within your borders. 8 On that day tell your son, 'I do this because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' 9 This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the law of the LORD is to be on your lips. For the LORD brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand. 10 You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time year after year.

11 "After the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and gives it to you, as he promised on oath to you and your forefathers, 12 you are to give over to the LORD the first offspring of every womb. All the firstborn males of your livestock belong to the LORD. 13 Redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. Redeem every firstborn among your sons.

14 "In days to come, when your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' say to him, 'With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 15 When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed every firstborn in Egypt, both man and animal. This is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons.' 16 And it will be like a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead that the LORD brought us out of Egypt with his mighty hand."

WHEN WE CELEBRATE THE LORD'S SUPPER, WHAT ARE WE REMEMBERING?

➤ **Jesus is the perfect Lamb of God**, who takes away the sins of the world:

Luke 22:14-20

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. 15 And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you

before I suffer. 16 For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

17 After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. 18 For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

*19 And he took **bread**, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "**This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.**"*

20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

➤ How are we to **prepare for the Lord's Supper?**

1 Corinthians 11:23-32

*For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, **took bread**, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "**This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.**" 25 In the same way, after supper he **took the cup**, saying, "**This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.**" 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

*27 Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an **unworthy manner** will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 **A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.** 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. 31 But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. 32 When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.*

➤ The Israelites were set free from bondage to slavery in Egypt. Through Christ's blood we are set free from bondage to sin.

2 Corinthians 5:17-18

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Romans 6:19-23

*When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. 21 What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! 22 **But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.** 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

(Resources: *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 2*; *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol. 4*; study notes of the *NIV Study Bible, 1985 Zondervan*)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. Has God ever called you to do something that you felt totally incapable of doing? Were your excuses justified? What made you finally say yes? Or no?
2. How do you recognize hardness of heart in your own life? What causes it? What are some of the results of hardness of heart? What is the remedy?
3. What is the best protection against developing hardness of heart?
4. Why is the Lord's Supper only for believers in Jesus Christ? What are we remembering when we partake of the elements?
5. What does it mean to partake of the Lord's Supper in an *unworthy manner*? What does it mean to *examine oneself*? When should this examination take place? In the pew? Before coming to worship?
6. Why is the shedding of blood necessary for the forgiveness of sins? See Hebrews 9:22.
7. The Israelites were in bondage in Egypt, and only God could deliver them from bondage. Describe bondage today. How is our bondage broken? Do you believe Jesus can break *any bondage*?
8. Leaven usually represents sin. How do you think leaven creeps into our personal lives and into the church today?
9. When you participate in the Lord's Supper, what does it mean to you spiritually?
- 10.** Have you ever refrained from taking the Lord's Supper because your heart was not prepared? Must all known sin in our lives be confessed before taking the bread and the cup?

LESSON FOUR

Passing Through the Waters

Exodus 13:17–31

(Key Scripture: Exodus 13:17-18; 14:5-14, 21-29; 15:20-21)

In this month of December, as we celebrate the birth of Christ, it is fitting that we remember **why** he came. Jesus was born to become the final sacrifice for our sins. It is **his blood that redeems all who place their faith in him**.

In Lesson Three, we left the Israelites having fulfilled the requirements of the Passover, having eaten the Passover lamb and **applying the blood of the lamb** on top and both sides of the doorframes of their houses, so that the Lord would see the blood and not permit the destroyer to enter their houses and strike down the firstborn male (12:23). And then we read:

“At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. 30 Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead. (Ex. 12:29-30, NIV)

The blood of the lamb signifies the ongoing story of redemption for all time, the central theme of the Bible. **Jesus became the Passover Lamb** who shed his own blood for our redemption. The blood of the Lamb is the **only acceptable covering for our own sins—there is no other way to be saved**.

Luke 22:20

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

John 6:54-57

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 *For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.*

Ephesians 1:7-9

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Hebrews 9:13-15

*The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. **How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the***

eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Hebrews 10:19-23

Therefore, brothers, 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 in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

1 Peter 1:18-19

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the **precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.**

Under the Old Covenant, God accepted the life of an animal in place of the life of the sinner. Under the New Covenant, God accepts the sacrifice of Jesus in place of the life of the sinner. It is **only the blood of Jesus** that can cleanse us from sin and bring us into fellowship with God. This is what we celebrate every time we partake of the Lord's Supper. We celebrate the breaking of our bondage to sin through Christ's blood so that we can be set free to live a life that is pleasing to God. The water of baptism is the symbol of our having trusted Christ as our Savior, so that by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we can live a new life, no longer in bondage.

What we are studying in Exodus is the Old Testament picture of **redemption**. God has provided deliverance from Israel's bondage in Egypt, set free to be God's light to the world. The blood applied to the doorframe of each house spared the firstborn son from death. But to experience freedom they had to pass through the waters, through the Red Sea to the other side. Their freedom required the exercise of their faith that God would deliver them.

Having experienced the tenth plague, the killing of the firstborn son of every Egyptian household, Pharaoh was finally ready to let the Hebrew people go.

The number of people leaving Egypt is estimated to be about two million (notes of *Life Application Study Bible*).

WHAT DID MOSES INSTRUCT THE PEOPLE TO DO?

- Moses told them to ask the Egyptians for **gold, silver, and clothing**, and they received it without question. *Why?*

Exodus 12:33-36

The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country. "For otherwise," they said, "we will all die!" 34 So the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing.

35 The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. 36 The LORD had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians.

- God knows our need before we do! His provision is not dependent on our own ingenuity or clever planning or begging. **God always provides the means to do his will!**
- It will become apparent why Moses instructed the Israelites to ask for these things. (Wait for Lesson Nine!)

THE JOURNEY TO THE RED SEA— 13:17- 14:31

- Instead of God leading the Israelites along the direct route from Egypt to the promised land, he took them by a longer route to avoid fighting with the Philistines, which might cause them to change their minds and return to Egypt.
- He led the people around by the “**desert road**” or “**the way of the wilderness**” **toward the Red Sea**, or “the Sea of Reeds” (13:18).
 - This is a reminder to us that the best way to accomplish our goal may not be the **shortest way** or the **easiest way**. Only God knows the path we need to take to accomplish his purpose for us.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

HOW DID GOD LEAD HIS PEOPLE?

Exodus 13:21-22

By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

- The **pillar of cloud** by day and the **pillar of fire** by night was called the **Shekinah glory cloud**.

- *Shekinah* comes from the Hebrew root word “*shek*” which means dwelling, inhabiting, or settling.
 - So the *Shekinah* glory was the physical sign of God dwelling among his people.
- The width of the pillar at the base was sufficiently large to provide cover for Israel from the intense heat:

Psalm 105:39

He spread out a cloud as a covering, and a fire to give light at night.

- It was a **visible symbol of the presence of Yahweh** in their midst.
- The **pillar of the cloud and fire** was but another name for “**the angel of God**”:

Exodus 14:19-20

Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, 20 coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long.

Exodus 23:20-24

"See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. 21 Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since my Name is in him. 22 If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you. 23 My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out.

- God’s name was “*in*” this angel who went before them to bring them into Canaan. He was the “*angel of his presence*” (Isa. 63:8-9).
- Malachi 3:1 calls this angel the “*messenger of the covenant*,” who is equated with the Lord, the owner of the temple. Obviously, then, the **Christ of the N.T. is the Shekinah glory or Yahweh of the O.T.**
- Through this cloudy pillar **the Lord would speak to Moses** (33:9-11) and **to the people** (Ps. 99:6-7).
- Such easy movement from the pillar of cloud and fire to the angel and back to the Lord himself has already been met in the same interchange between the burning bush, the angel, and the Lord in Exodus 3. (*Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 385.*)

WHY DID GOD HARDEN PHARAOH'S HEART? (14:1-14)

Exodus 14:1-4

1 Then the LORD said to Moses, 2 "Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon. 3 Pharaoh will think, 'The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert.' 4 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD." So the Israelites did this.

- Pharaoh assumed that Israel's divine help had run out and they were entangled on a dead-end trail since the desert, the sea, and marshes barred their way out of this trap.
- However, **God** had commanded Moses to take this impossible route to **show the Egyptians** once more that he was God. But this was also to **show Israel God's great power** (vv. 30-31).

PHARAOH AND HIS ARMY PURSUES THE ISREALITES: (14:5-9)

Exodus 14:5-9

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, "What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!"

6 So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. 7 He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them.

8 The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out boldly. 9 The Egyptians — all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, horsemen and troops — pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi Hahiroth, opposite Baal Zephon.

- No amount of suffering, even the death of his own son, could change Pharaoh's insatiable greed and his drive for cheap labor.

HOW DID THE ISRAELITES REACT TO THEIR CRISIS?

Exodus 14:10-12

As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD.

11 They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? 12 Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"

- Their immediate target was the Lord, but they quickly turned on Moses.

- They mocked in the most satirical tone possible since Egypt specialized in graves and had about three-fourths of their land area available for grave sites (*Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 387*).
- And then “*I told you so*” became their attack. Suddenly their hardships in Egypt didn’t seem so bad after all.

HOW DID MOSES ANSWER THE PEOPLE?

Exodus 14:13-14

Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. 14 The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

- In other words, “**Stop! Stop all action and become inactive**, for I the Lord will act by myself on your behalf” (cf. Gen. 34:5; 2 Kings 19:11; Ps. 5:3; 83:1).

WHAT WAS THE LORD’S INSTRUCTION TO MOSES?

Exodus 14:15-18

*Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. 16 Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. 17 I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And **I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen.** 18 The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen."*

- The Lord instructed Moses to **do the impossible**—what was **humanly impossible**—so that the **Egyptians would know that God is God, not the idols they worship**.
 - Moses was to **divide the water** through raising his staff and stretching out his hand over the sea.
 - The Israelites would go through the sea on **dry ground!**

HOW DID GOD PROTECT MOSES AND THE ISRAELITES SO THEY HAD TIME TO CROSS THE RED SEA?

Exodus 14:19-20

Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long.

- “What was **light for Israel** became **darkness for the Egyptians**. Thus the double nature of the **glory of God in salvation and judgment**, which later appears so frequently in Scripture, could not have been more graphically depicted.” (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 389*)

THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA:

- **The Israelites:**

Exodus 14:21-22

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

- God did the impossible—Israel witnessed a miracle!

- **The Egyptian army:**

Exodus 14:23-31

The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. 24 During the last watch of the night the LORD looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. 25 He made the wheels of their chariots come off so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, "Let's get away from the Israelites! The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."

26 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen." 27 Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. 28 The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen — the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived.

29 But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. 30 That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. 31 And when the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

HOW IS GOD’S GLORY REFLECTED IN THIS MIRACLE? THROUGH THE DEATH OF THE EGYPTIANS? THROUGH THE HEBREWS’ RESCUE?

- Both. In the **death of the Egyptians** God is demonstrating his **justice** to follow through on what he said he would do.

- It was **after Pharaoh changed his mind** and decided to rescind his liberation order that God hardened his heart.
 - The **consequences of his disobedience** affected only Pharaoh but all his men and their horses as well.
- In the **rescue and salvation of the Hebrews** God follows through on his promises to deliver them from the bondage of slavery in Egypt once and for all.
- When the Israelites saw the power of the Lord displayed before their very eyes **they put their trust in God and in Moses, the servant of the Lord.**

HOW DO WE RECEIVE GUIDANCE AND DIRECTION FROM THE LORD TODAY?

Psalm 119:9-16

*How can a young man keep his way pure? **By living according to your word.***

I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Praise be to you, O LORD; teach me your decrees.

With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth.

I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.

I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.

*I delight in your decrees; **I will not neglect your word.***

Psalm 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. Share an experience you've had when God provided for you beyond human expectation.
2. Have you or your church ever refused to step out in faith to do something you felt called to do because you looked only at human resources rather than the generosity and power of God?
3. Do you believe God is *sovereign* over all the nations of the world? Over all the kings and rulers? And has it occurred to you that God permits certain things to happen to show that he alone is God? Can you think of an example? How, then, does God show his power?
4. Have you ever found yourself wanting to undo a decision you have made in confidence at the time that it was the right thing to do? How did you handle it?
5. What do you think it means practically to "let the Lord act on your behalf"? What does this look like and feel like?
6. Has the Lord ever done the *impossible* in your life? How did it change you?

7. How do we receive direction from the Lord today?
8. How much time do you spend reading and meditating on God's Word each day?
9. What is your personal Egypt? Do you believe Christ can lead you to freedom?

LESSON FIVE

God Provides

Exodus 15:22-18:27

(Key Scripture: Exodus 15:22-25; 16:1-3, 13-15; 17:1-7; 18:12-24)

Throughout Scripture we see ourselves as if looking in a mirror. Most of us know the story of the travails of the Israelites wandering through the desert, and of Moses' utter frustration and anger in trying to lead people who were never satisfied for long. Looking back in history from our vantage point, I have found myself thinking, *Why didn't they get it? Why did they not learn?!* God had just done the impossible! He had freed them from slavery, parted the Red Sea so they could cross on dry ground, and then defeated the powerful Egyptian army who pursued them. He had spared the lives of the firstborn son of every household that applied the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of their houses. Wow! And prior to that, there were all the plagues from which they had been protected. Wouldn't you think that would make them the strongest people of faith in the whole world?

And furthermore, God gave them Moses, whom God had trained for eighty years to take on this task. Just think what a mess they would have been in without such a powerful leader! But that's not all. God made his continuous presence known through the cloud by day and fire by night. Miraculous! Fabulous! What more could they ask?

Well, a lot more, as we shall see. Only three days into their journey they encountered bitter water. But not to worry, Moses was able to sweeten the water. But then they came to a place where there was *no water*. Their response? Attack Moses, of course! The next emergency was *no food!* Now what to do? And the story goes on.

Perhaps most of us know the story too well to fully appreciate the ease with which one can go from exhilaration to total despair or from celebration of God's power to bankruptcy of faith. Most of us, or probably all of us, read this story from the comforts of home—hot and cold running water, food in the refrigerator, flush toilets, and clothes in the closet, heat or air-conditioning, and at least one car in the garage. As we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," there is probably no fear that there won't be bread today or tomorrow or for the foreseeable future. If we are sick, there is probably a doctor we can call. If we are disgruntled with our leaders, there is a process by which they can be replaced. In other words, few of us in this country are really helpless and without options. Rarely are we aware of our total dependency on God to survive—at least until an unexpected crisis hits and leaves us with no visible or reasonable options. Then what?

So as we read these scriptures maybe our prayer should be to ask the Lord to reveal our own lack of faith and our grumbling spirits as we stumble through our present wilderness, whatever it is. Where in your own life do you feel forsaken by God? Why hasn't God answered your cries for help as you expected? What is the Lord trying to teach us about ourselves? Or about *God himself?*

GOD'S PROVISION OF WATER:

Exodus 15:22-25

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. 23 When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) 24 So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?"

25 Then Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

There the LORD made a decree and a law for them, and there he tested them.

➤ **The problem – no water:**

- *Marah* is usually identified with Ain Hawarah, a site several miles inland from the Gulf. The basin of water there is six or eight feet in diameter, about two feet deep, and its taste is unpleasant, salty, and bitter. It is said that the Arabs consider it as the worst water in all these regions.
- The bitter waters at Marah made a strong enough impression that all the miracles of Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea seemed to be obliterated in the minds of the people. That was then—this is *now*.

➤ **God's provision:**

- God *showed* Moses a piece of wood. *Showed* is from the root that means "*to teach*" or "*instruct*." It is the same root from which we derive the word "*Torah*" (*instruction, law*).
- Israel was to learn that, after being freed from Egypt, **the instruction they needed would come from heaven**. This experience would prepare them for the precept of the laws that they would later receive.
- God gave Moses instruction in response to the despair of the people. The tree (branch) may have had little to do with the actual temporary healing of the water, but it may be only the **power of God** and a **test of obedience** that are present.

➤ **The promise:**

- God allowed Israel to go **three days** without water **to test them**.
- From now on obedience to commands and statutes would bring healing, both physically and morally.

Exodus 15:26-27

He said, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all

his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."

27 Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water.

➤ **God's abundance:**

- Blessing followed the test. They came to a place of twelve springs—no lack of water! This reminds us that our God is the God of **abundance:**

Ephesians 3:20

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us..."

GOD'S PROVISION OF FOOD:

Exodus 16:1-3

The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. 2 In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. 3 The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

➤ **The problem – no food!**

- Israel is now under another test, this time **no food**. God has permitted this situation so that they would learn some powerful lessons that would apply to God's people always.
- How did they respond to no food? Just like last time—they **grumbled**—not to God, but to Moses and Aaron who are leading them according to God's direction.
- Some people say, "Hindsight is 20-20." Not necessarily so! They had selective memory of what it had been like in Egypt—they remembered an abundance of food (*not* the abusive slavery)—and now they are facing starvation!

➤ **God's provision:**

(Note: This portion of scripture is not included in the *Horizons Bible Study*, and you may choose to omit this due to time constraints. I have included it because of the significance of the spiritual lessons we glean from this passage.)

Exodus 16:4-36

Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.

5 On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days."

6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, 7 and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?"

8 Moses also said, "You will know that it was the LORD when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD."

9 Then Moses told Aaron, "Say to the entire Israelite community, 'Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.'"

10 While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud.

11 The LORD said to Moses, 12 "I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.'"

13 That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14 When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. 15 When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, "It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat. 16 This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Each one is to gather as much as he needs. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.'"

17 The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little.

18 And when they measured it by the omer, he who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little. Each one gathered as much as he needed.

19 Then Moses said to them, "No one is to keep any of it until morning."

20 However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them.

21 Each morning everyone gathered as much as he needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away. 22 On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much — two omers for each person — and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. 23 He said to them, "This is what the LORD commanded: 'Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.'"

24 So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. 25 "Eat it today," Moses said, "because today is a Sabbath to the LORD. You will not find any of it on the ground today. 26 Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any."

27 Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. 28 Then the LORD said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? 29 Bear in mind that the LORD has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out." 30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

31 The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey. 32 Moses said, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Take an omer of manna and keep it for the generations to come, so they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the desert when I brought you out of Egypt.'"

33 So Moses said to Aaron, "Take a jar and put an omer of manna in it. Then place it before the LORD to be kept for the generations to come."

34 As the LORD commanded Moses, Aaron put the manna in front of the Testimony, that it might be kept. 35 The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a land that was settled; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan.

36(An omer is one tenth of an ephah.)

➤ **God's instructions:**

- Take only enough for **one day!** No hoarding! This was a demonstration of that God would provide what they needed for each day. Those who took more than enough for one day discovered that it spoiled.
- There would be **no bread on the seventh day**, and therefore, they should glean **twice as much on the sixth day**. God established this principle from Creation. He worked for six days and on the seventh day he rested. Therefore, God can be trusted to provide in six days all that we need.

Genesis 1:31-2:3

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning — the sixth day.

2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. 2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. 3 And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Exodus 20:8-11

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

- Note that the work week is **six days** (not five).
- Note also that the Sabbath day is a **day of rest**, but note also that God made it **holy**.

Isaiah 58:13-14

"If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob." The mouth of the LORD has spoken.

ANOTHER TEST REGARDING WATER:

Exodus 17:1-7

The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. 2 So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink."

- What had been a **gracious gift of God** through Moses' hands was demanded as a **magical solution** to their problem: "**Give it to us.**"
- God had directed his people to move from the Desert of Sin, where they **hungered** but afterwards were satisfied, to Rephidim, where they **thirsted**.

Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?"

3 But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"

- Instead of **submitting to the tests** the Lord was giving them, **they began to test the Lord**. (See Ps. 78:56; 106:7, 14, 25, 29)

- God's people **tempt or test the Lord** when they distrust his kindness and providential care of them and grumble against him and/or his leaders.

4 Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."

- One of Moses' most admirable traits is that he **took his difficulties to the Lord**. The Lord's response was to **move directly in sending relief**:

5 The LORD answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

- This is not to be confused with a similar event near the end of Israel's forty-year journey in Numbers 20:1-13, where the glory of the Lord is not present, and Moses is instructed that he is *not* to strike the rock but only to *speak* to it. This shows that **the only connection between Israel's need and God's supply was the divine Word**.
- In less than six months the Israelites had witnessed ten plagues, the pillar of cloud and fire, the opening and shutting of the Red Sea, the miraculous sweetening of the water, and the sending of food and meat from heaven. And yet their question came down to, "***Is the Lord among us or not?***"

THE CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP:

Exodus 18:1-27

Now Jethro, the priest of Midian and father-in-law of Moses, heard of everything God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, and how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt.

2 After Moses had sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro received her and her two sons. One son was named Gershom, for Moses said, "I have become an alien in a foreign land"; 4 and the other was named Eliezer, for he said, "My father's God was my helper; he saved me from the sword of Pharaoh."

5 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, together with Moses' sons and wife, came to him in the desert, where he was camped near the mountain of God. 6 Jethro had sent word to him, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons."

- Remember that Moses had stayed in Jethro's house for forty years after fleeing Egypt. Now **Jethro took the initiative** to make this connection with his son-in-law.

7 So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. They greeted each other and then went into the tent.

- Bowing down and kissing were **signs of great respect**.

8 Moses told his father-in-law about everything the LORD had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake and about all the hardships they had met along the way and how the LORD had saved them.

9 Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the LORD had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians. 10 He said, "Praise be to the LORD, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. 11 Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly." 12 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.

- While Midianites were not known to be worshippers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, **Jethro praises Moses' God and declares him to be greater than all gods.**
- **Psalm 145:3-7** — *Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. 4 One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. 5 They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. 6 They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will proclaim your great deeds. 7 They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness... 11 They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, 12 so that all men may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.*

➤ **Formula for burnout!**

13 The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. 14 When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?"

15 Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will. 16 Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and laws."

- People came to Moses for two things: (a) **instruction**; (2) **judicial settlements**.

➤ **The solution proposed by Jethro:**

17 Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. 18 You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone.

19 Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. 20 Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. 21 But select capable men from all the people — men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain — and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 22 Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. 23 If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied."

24 Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. 25 He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 26 They served as judges for the people at all times. The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves.

27 Then Moses sent his father-in-law on his way, and Jethro returned to his own country.

➤ **What was Moses to do?**

- **Select capable men.** The actual election of these men was the work of all the people (see Deut. 1:9-15).
- Give them a **leadership training course** which was to include instruction in: (1) **decrees**—specific enactments; (2) **laws**—general enactments; (3) the **way to live**—lifestyle and the path of duty; (4) **duties** each was to perform.

➤ **What were the qualifications of the men selected?**

- Must be **capable men**, that is, men with an **aptitude for judging** (today we would call this having the spiritual gifts of wisdom and discernment).
- Men who **feared God**—that is, had a **reverence for God** and **firm belief** in him.
- Men of **truth**—that is, **trustworthy**.
- Men who **hated all dishonest gain**.

➤ **How were they to be organized?**

- They were to be arranged in a decimal system of a graduated series or groups in multiples of ten, with Moses being the court of final appeal

(vv. 22, 26). [W. Kaiser, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 2, p. 413]

➤ **The result:**

- Moses **listened** to his father-in-law! He was humble enough to take advice.
- God permitted his servant to be taught by the wisdom and intelligence of a good man, though he was not of the Israelite community. It is remarkable that the establishment of organized leadership in Israel was suggested by a stranger and a Midianite.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. Having been miraculously delivered from bondage in Egypt, why would God then lead his people into a *desert*? What's the purpose?
2. Have you ever been released from bondage only to walk into a situation that was worse than what you left? How did you respond? What did you learn? What was God's purpose?
3. Has God allowed you to do without something you needed in order to test you? How did you respond to your circumstances? Did you grumble? Did you wait patiently? What did you ultimately learn from the experience?
4. Can you give an illustration from your own life of "selective memory"? How is memory of our past sometimes colored by our present circumstances? In what ways can memories hinder or discolor the present reality?
5. Do you know a grumbler? (Are *you* one?) What do you think is the best way to break the habit of grumbling?
6. How does the story of manna and quail teach us about God's provision? What principles apply to us today? What is your definition of hoarding?
7. Do you think that keeping the Sabbath no longer applies to God's people? If not, then what other of the Ten Commandments are no longer applicable today?
8. What should be priorities for you and your family on the Sabbath? What do you think should be eliminated from your Sabbath?
9. Do you still distrust God today? Name the events in your life where God has acted on your behalf. Why do you still grumble and distrust him?
10. How would you describe Moses' relationship with his father-in-law? How might you develop a similar relationship with your in-laws?
11. If you were with relatives during the holidays, how much time was spent sharing what the Lord has been doing in your lives? What impact did it have? If you could relive those recent days, how could your conversations have been different?
12. What lessons in leadership can we learn from Jethro's wisdom? How can we know who is qualified to lead?
13. Insecurity can cause one to hold tenaciously to a position of authority and power, while humility allows leadership to be shared. What are signs of humility that you look for in a leader?

LESSON SIX

Becoming a Holy People

Exodus 19 and 24

(Key Scripture: Exodus 19:3-6, 10-15; 24:3-8, 15-18; Deuteronomy 7:7-9)

(Resources: *Expositors Bible Commentary, Vol. 2; Evangelical Dictionary of Theology; Notes from the NIV Study Bible*); *Bible Dictionary, The Common English Bible*)

After a very stressful journey, as we come to Exodus 19, the Israelites have finally reached Mount Sinai. To refresh our memories, notice that Israel's deliverance from Egypt was a partial fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant:

Genesis 12:1-3

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Genesis 15:13-14

Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. 14 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.

Exodus 2:23-25

God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

Exodus 6:4-8

I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant.

6 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: '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. 7 I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. 8 And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.'"

What would God's own people look like? How would they live? How would they be different from the rest of the world?

Isaiah 42:5-7

This is what God the LORD says — he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness."

The people of God were to reflect the image of God, that is, reflect God's holy character. They were to be a light that called people in darkness to God, to experience life as God intended. We read in Leviticus 19:1-2, "*The LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.'"*"

The following passage from the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 623, helps us to see that God's law was an essential part of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, that Israel would become a great nation, that they would be blessed and be a blessing. God's law would show them how to live in relationship with God, with each other, and with all of God's creation.

Thus God's gracious act of deliverance also laid the basis for the revelation of God's law, as it reflected his character and/or his word. From the beginning God's law lay at the center of his dealings with man. The major stress in Genesis 2—the Creator's benevolence and bounty toward his chief creature—does not obscure the fact that man in the garden was man under law and that it was through obedience that he entered into life. The balance of things is seen in the contrast between "every tree" that is there for man's enjoyment and the single tree that is forbidden. Yet in that single tree was enshrined the principle of law. Thus at the outset the Bible joins together that enduring partnership, obedience and life. Obedience safeguarded the enjoyment of the life that was life indeed; disobedience not only forfeited that life but replaced it by a death-bearing opposite. In Genesis 3, with disobedience came the birth of a bad conscience (v. 8), the replacement of love by resentment (v. 12), the corruption of marriage (v. 16), and most notably from our present point of view, the dislocation of man from his environment (vv. 17-19), which turns to fight against him and only grudgingly and at great cost furnishes a sufficiency for life.

The rest of the Old Testament perpetuates this view of man in his environment: only by obedience to God's law can man live successfully and prosperously in God's world. The very environment itself turns against the disobedient. The earth is defiled by lawbreakers (Lev. 18:24-20) and "vomits out" those who fail to

keep the law (Lev. 20:22). Behind this concept of the moral vitality of the environment lies one aspect of the OT theology of the Spirit of the Lord: he was operative in creation (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 33:6) and his activity is seen in both the renewal and decay of plants (Ps. 104:30; Isa. 40:7). The life which vitalizes the environment is God's life, full of his holiness.

Thus the OT has a distinct environmentalism to share with us, and at its center lies the law of God the Creator. [*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 623]

Many Christians in our culture today believe that, because we are *not under the law, but under grace*, we can disregard God's law, thinking it no longer pertains to us. But Jesus makes it clear that we are not to disregard the law:

Matthew 5:17-20

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. 19 Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

THE FIRST EVENT IS AN ENCOUNTER BETWEEN MOSES AND GOD ALONE.

- This was the fulfillment of a promise God had given to Moses when he called him to deliver the Israelites from bondage in Egypt:

Exodus 3:11-12

But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

WHAT IS THE DESERT OF SINAI?

Exodus 19:1-2

In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt — on the very day — they came to the Desert of Sinai. 2 After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain.

- The Sinai Peninsula is a large triangular desert region that lies east of ancient Egypt and south of Canaan.
- The **Desert of Sinai** is a flat plain about 5000 ft. above sea level and stretches over 400 acres almost like an amphitheater with additional areas in adjoining valleys.
- **Mt. Sinai** is also called **Mt. Horeb**, where Moses received his call from God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

WHAT IS THE MESSAGE GOD GIVES TO MOSES FOR THE PEOPLE?

Exodus 19:3-4

Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel:

4 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

- The **title** used for the people of God is two-fold (v. 3):
 - **“House of Jacob”** – a reminder of their humble beginnings (cf. Gen. 28:13; 35:11; 49:7).
 - **“The people of Israel”** – a statement as to what they had become—**a nation**.

WHAT IS SIGNIFICANT ABOUT THE METAPHOR “EAGLES’ WINGS”?

Deuteronomy 32:9-11

For the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance. In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions.

- This is a metaphor describing the **loving compassion, protection, strength, and watchfulness of God over his people**.
 - As the young eagles were carried on the adult wings and brought out of their nests and taught to fly, so Yahweh had lovingly carried and safely delivered Israel.

WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS OF THE ENJOYMENT OF THE COVENANT?

Exodus 19:5-6

Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

- The **covenant**, given first to the patriarchs, which was **unconditional** in its bestowal, was indeed **conditional** with regard to its enjoyment and personal participation. The condition was **obedience**.

WHAT ARE THE BLESSINGS OF AN OBEDIENT AND COVENANT-KEEPING ISRAEL?

- They would be a **"treasured possession"** (v. 5).
 - They would be God's **valuable property** and **distinct treasure** (Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps. 135:4; Mal. 3:17; cf. Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9) set aside for a marked purpose.
- They would be **"a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"** (v. 6).
 - They were to be **priest-kings** and **royal-priests** (see Isa. 61:6; cf. 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6)—**everyone** in the whole nation.
 - The **whole nation** was to act as **mediators of God's grace to the nations of the earth**, even as Abraham had been promised that through him and his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:3).
 - **Israel would be a separate and distinct nation because her God was holy, separate, and distinct, as were his purposes and plans** (Deut. 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19; Isa. 62:12; cf. 1 Pet. 2:9).

HOW DID THE PEOPLE PURIFY AND CONSECRATE THEMSELVES IN PREPARATION FOR MEETING GOD?

Exodus 19:10-15

And the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes 11 and be ready by the third day, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. 12 Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, 'Be careful that you do not go up the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. 13 He shall surely be stoned or shot with arrows; not a hand is to be laid on him. Whether man or animal, he shall not be permitted to live.' Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they go up to the mountain."

14 After Moses had gone down the mountain to the people, he consecrated them, and they washed their clothes. 15 Then he said to the people, "Prepare yourselves for the third day. Abstain from sexual relations."

- A token of their **inward preparation** for meeting with God and their preparation for worship of God on the third day was to **wash their clothes, stay off the mountain, and abstain from sexual relations with their mates.**
 - The requirement for approaching the God of gods, King of kings, and Lord of lords is both **decorum** and **holistic sanctification of our bodies as well as our inner persons.** (See also 2 Tim. 2:22; Heb. 10:19-22; Rev. 21:22-27.)
 - This is not to say that there was intrinsic virtue in the mere act of washing clothes or abstaining from marital relations, but **the outward act indicated that one had sought the inner work of sanctification.**

THE TIME HAS COME FOR THE GIVING OF GOD'S LAW:

Exodus 19:16-25

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. 17 Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.

18 Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, 19 and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

20 The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up 21 and the LORD said to him, "Go down and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see the LORD and many of them perish. 22 Even the priests, who approach the LORD, must consecrate themselves, or the LORD will break out against them."

23 Moses said to the LORD, "The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because you yourself warned us, 'Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy.'"

24 The LORD replied, "Go down and bring Aaron up with you. But the priests and the people must not force their way through to come up to the LORD, or he will break out against them."

25 So Moses went down to the people and told them.

THE LAW IS GIVEN IN EXODUS 20-23. WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW?

- To **show man's awful sinfulness** in his moral distance from God
- To **show man's need for a mediator** if he ever was to approach God.
- To **show man how to live more abundantly** by using the unchangeable perfections of the nature of God as revealed in the moral law as his guide.

- However, “By observing the works of the law no one will be justified,” (Gal. 2:16).

Romans 3:19-20

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

AFTER THE LAW WAS GIVEN, HOW DID THE PEOPLE RESPOND?

Exodus 24:3-8

When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do." 4 Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said.

He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD. 6 Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. 7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey."

8 Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

- **The blood by which the covenant was ratified and sealed was the basis for the union between God and the people.**

- When the people promised to obey and observe all the Lord had said, they did not exchange the blessings of promise for the law. **The keeping of the “Lord’s words and laws” was to be based on the prior provision of sacrificial blood.** The blood *cleansed men and women* so that “doing” and “obeying” became possible for them. This was not “doing” to merit favor or salvation. [Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 449]

- **Likewise, the blood of Christ that cleanses us makes it possible to overcome sin in our lives:**

Romans 6:1-4

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him

through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

MOSES AND HIS AIDES HAVE A SPECIAL AUDIENCE WITH GOD:

Exodus 24:9-11

Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (the eldest sons of Aaron), and the seventy elders of Israel went up 10 and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself. 11 But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.

- **“They saw God”** seems to contradict John 1:18, *“No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.”*
 - But what they saw was a **“form of the Lord”** (Num. 12:8), just as Ezekiel and Isaiah saw an approximation or a faint resemblance, or a sketchy figure, of the incarnate Christ who was to come (see Ezek. 1:26; Isa. 6:1).
 - *Saw* as it is used here stresses **an inward, spiritual, or prophetic vision.**
- **“They ate and drank”** describes a **covenant meal celebrating the sealing of the covenant** described in vv. 3-8. However, there is no mention of God’s participating in the eating or drinking as a human partner.

Exodus 24:12-18

The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commands I have written for their instruction.”

13 Then Moses set out with Joshua his aide, and Moses went up on the mountain of God. 14 He said to the elders, “Wait here for us until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur are with you, and anyone involved in a dispute can go to them.”

15 When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, 16 and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud.

- When Moses ascended the mountain, all he could see was a **cloud**.
- When the *glory of God settled on the mountain*, the same word is used as the “Shekinah” glory, as in John 1:14, meaning Jesus, the Word, “tabernacled” among us.

John 1:14

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 20:29

Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

1 Peter 1:8-9

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

WHAT DID THE ISRAELITES SEE?

Exodus 24:17

To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. 18 Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

➤ The **three symbols of God's glory**, or his **presence**, are:

- The cloud
- The fire
- The voice of God.

➤ The radiance of his presence is **like a fiery furnace**:

Hebrews 12:29

...for our "God is a consuming fire."

➤ Once Moses entered the cloud, he would not be seen again for **forty days and forty nights**.

➤ During this time Moses received all the instructions on the tabernacle and its furnishings in chapters 25-31. Not until Exodus 32 will Moses and Joshua come down to face Israel's apostasy.

WHY DID GOD CHOOSE ISRAEL TO BE HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE?

Deuteronomy 7:7-9

The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples.

8 But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.

WHY DID GOD CHOOSE US TO BE HIS CHILDREN?

Romans 8:31-39

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? 33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. The Church is "Israel" of the N.T. In what way is the church today *holy*, *separate*, and *distinct* from the world?
2. Do you think we are too casual today in our approach to God? How do you prepare yourself for worship—or do you?
3. How does being *cleansed by the blood of Christ* make it possible for us to walk in obedience to God's laws?
4. What would you say to another Christian who was "stuck" in sin, or in bondage to a particular sin, and could not overcome it? Based on Scripture, what help could you give?
5. Does it matter to you that you have not *seen* God? How can you love someone you have not seen?
6. How would you describe to an unbeliever the *intimate relationship* you have with Christ? How is this relationship established? How is it maintained?
7. Are you afraid at the thought of literally *seeing* God? Why or why not? How would you feel if you knew you would see the Lord before this day is over?
8. We have seen that in the Old Testament there were always visible signs of God's presence (cloud, fire, smoke). What are the signs of God's presence today?

9. Why is blood necessary for the cleansing of sin? Hebrews 9:22, *“In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”* How does this relate to the argument of some that there are “many roads to heaven”?

LESSON SEVEN

Covenant Living – The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20-23; Deuteronomy 6:1-9

(Key Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17; 22:21-27; Deuteronomy 6:4-6)

(Note: The scriptures above are from the Horizons Bible Study, but are not covered in this lesson, except for the Ten Commandments in Exodus, plus cross-references.)

We have already seen that God's chosen people are to be a reflection of God on earth. They are to be the light for others to find their way to God. But because of the infection of sin in the human heart (Gen. 3), passed from one generation to the next, we are incapable of reflecting God's likeness. Rather, note the words of the prophet Jeremiah in the O.T., and Paul's words in Romans:

Jeremiah 17:9 — *The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*

Romans 3:10-18 — *As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."*

"Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit."

"The poison of vipers is on their lips."

"Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."

"Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know."

"There is no fear of God before their eyes." NIV

Therefore, God called Moses up to the top of Mt. Sinai to receive the law. "In both the Old and New Testaments, *torah* (meaning *teaching* or *instruction*) is understood to be a gift from God. It is divine instruction designed to show us how to live in a way that will let us receive the blessings of peace and wholeness, both as individuals and as a community. In this sense, *torah* is rooted in God's love and grace," (*Horizons, An Abiding Hope*, p. 63). "In earlier times, the term Torah referred directly to the five books of Moses, or the Pentateuch. Both the hearing and the doing of the law made the Torah. It was a manner of life, a way to live based upon the covenant that God made with his people," (from *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Copyright (c)1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers).

Some Christians have the notion that, because we are no longer under law but under grace, the O.T. law does not apply to us. However, it is helpful to understand that there are **three categories of law: moral, ceremonial, and civil**. God's ceremonial and

civil laws pertained specifically to Israel as a nation. They dealt with the proper use of land and property, and provided a system of justice. Ceremonial laws pertained to the worship of God, to temple worship, the priestly system with the offering of sacrifices, and the observance of special days. When Israel and Judah were conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians, they lost their temple and land, and they were dispersed among the nations. Therefore, they were subjected to the laws of the nations where they were captives. Ultimately a remnant returned to Israel and the temple was rebuilt, and they were able to resume the priestly system and offering of sacrifices. However, when Jesus died on the cross as the final sacrifice for sin, the whole sacrificial system became obsolete. And in A.D. 70 the temple was destroyed and the Jews were dispersed among the nations. Thus, there was no system whereby the Jews could continue to live by the ceremonial and civil laws. Those laws pertained to **temple and land**. But what about God's **moral laws**? Do they still apply?

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:17-20

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

19 Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus then goes on to raise the moral law to an even higher standard. For instance, continuing in Matthew 5:

Matthew 5:21-6:1

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

23 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

25 "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be

thrown into prison. 26 I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

31 "It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' 32 But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.

33 "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.' 34 But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. 37 Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' 39 But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

It is obvious that not one of us can keep God's moral law! Nevertheless, that is the standard we must keep before us, not as a condition of our salvation, but as a rule of practice, identifying us as God's own people, redeemed by Jesus Christ.

With this background, it is easier to understand our relationship to God's law. It sets for us boundaries as followers of Christ. It is a path to wisdom. It is worthy of our meditation and our prayers for living a holy life.

Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

We remember from last month's lesson that, when the law was given, the advent of God took place amid a most impressive display of **cosmic disruptions: Thunder and lightning** (Ex. 19:16; cf. Ps. 77:18; Heb. 12:18-19; Rev. 4:5; 8:5; 11:19, and exceedingly **loud trumpet blast** (cf. Rev. 1:10; 4:1), and a **thick cloud** (Ex. 19:9; 2 Chron. 5:14). A deep moral impression was made on the people, for **they were in the presence of the glorious majesty of the Holy God who was about to reveal his person and character in his law.** This magnificent event will be unexcelled until the Lord Jesus returns again in a blazing fire (see 2 Thess. 1:7-12). (*Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 418*)

This lesson will concentrate on the Ten Commandments, or *Decalogue*. These "ten words" were distinguished from the rest of the law in that they were audibly delivered to Moses by God himself and later written by God on two tables of stone.

Exodus 34:28

Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant — the Ten Commandments.

Deuteronomy 4:13

He declared to you his covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets.

Note that the first four commandments pertain to our relationship with God, and the remaining six pertain to our relationship with each other.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW OF GOD?

- **The law shows us our awful sinfulness** in our moral distance from God.

Galatians 3:24

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Romans 3:19-20

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

- **The law shows us our need for a mediator** if we would ever be able to approach God. God assigned to Moses the role of mediator, but this became the occasion for God to give the promise about “that prophet” who was to come (Deut. 18:15-19).

Deuteronomy 18:17-19

The LORD said to me: "What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. 19 If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.

- Stephen used Deuteronomy 18:18 to support his claim that Jesus Christ, God’s Son, is the Messiah (Acts 7:37). The coming of Jesus was not an afterthought, but part of God’s original plan.
- **The law shows us how to live more abundantly** by using the unchangeable perfections of the nature of God as revealed in the moral law as our guide.
 - However, the warning is sounded again and again in Scripture that “*By observing the works of the law no one will be justified*” (Gal. 2:16).

POINTS TO REMEMBER ABOUT THE LAW:

- The law is **imperative** in form, though **given in a loving spirit**. One course of action ought to or must be taken because **that course best reflects the character and nature of God**.
- Whether stated negatively or positively, the **moral law is always double-sided**. It **commands and prohibits**, for every *moral* action at the same time is refraining from an *immoral* action that could have been taken.
- **When an evil is forbidden** in one of the commandments, its **opposite good** must be understood as being encouraged.
- **When a command is stated, everything contrary is virtually forbidden**. For example, Calvin said that “Thou shall not kill” is not fulfilled merely by abstaining from all injury or desire to inflict injury. It means in addition that we are to **aid our brother**, for he would have us hold his life to be dear and valuable to us. **So when God forbids, he also at the same time demands all avenues of love that can contribute to the life of our neighbor**.
 - Jesus asked, “*Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?*” (Luke 6:9).

- We conclude that **to reject virtue is to choose vice**. In the moral realm mere negatives do have the force of positives.
- It is easier to state in a few words what a believer cannot do. One's freedom to obey God opens up more possibilities than the reverse; therefore, the law can be stated negatively more succinctly. The negative form also strives to meet the strong current of evil in the human heart.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT: NO OTHER GODS

Exodus 20:1-17

And God spoke all these words:

2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 3 "You shall have no other gods before me.

- This commandment reminds Israel of what God has done. Because Yahweh is the Savior of Israel, Israel is to have no other gods.
- Isaiah 45:5, "*I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God.*"
- Isaiah 42:8, "*I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.*"
 - This command **sets Israel apart from other nations** in a way that would be a striking contrast to them, and it is in contrast to their experience in Egypt where there was a multiplicity of gods. It is also in contrast to what they would face in Canaan.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT: NO IDOLS

4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

- There are many synonyms for idols and images. They might be made of silver, gold, carved from stone or wood, or made from metal. It refers to **statuary or real or imagined pictorial representations**. None of these are to be made with the intention to worship them.
- This was not meant to stifle artistic talent but only to avoid improper substitutes that, like the idols of Canaan, would steal hearts away from the true worship of God. If we remember the tabernacle with its ornate appointments, all under divine instruction, we see that making representations is not absolutely forbidden.

5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments.

- Part of this command is also to **prevent Israel from identifying the true God with any created thing**. To identify God with any created thing is merely one step from thinking of God in terms of that image.
- God is jealous for his people to remain truly faithful to him. When that jealousy is roused through disobedience, it leads to punishment. But when roused through obedience, the result is blessing. *Both* obedience *and* disobedience have far-reaching implications for Israel's life as God's covenant people. If they disobey, the effects will be felt for a long, long time.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT: DO NOT MISUSE GOD'S NAME

7 *"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.*

- This commandment does not deal with internal worship (first commandment) or external worship (second word), but with the **profession of the mouth in true adoration of God**.
- The *name of God* stands for much more than the mere pronouncing of his title of address. It includes:
 - His **nature, being, and very person** (Ps. 20:1; Luke 24:47; John 1:12).
 - His **teaching or doctrine** (Ps. 22:22; John 17:6, 26).
 - His **moral and ethical teaching** (Mic. 4:5).
 - To *misuse the name of the Lord* means **to use it for no purpose**. For example: (1) to express mild surprise; (2) to fill in the gaps in speeches or prayers; (3) to confirm something that is false.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT: KEEP THE SABBATH DAY HOLY

8 *"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

- **Sabbath** is derived from the Hebrew verb **"to rest or cease from work."**
- The Hebrews were to **set aside every seventh day** as belonging to the Lord their God.
- To **"remember"** the Sabbath day is not merely a mental exercise, any more than remembering your wedding anniversary means simply recalling it. **Biblical remembrance requires action**. By remembering the Sabbath, the Israelites were **required to act in a certain way**.

- The command to **remember** the Sabbath is *moral* insofar as it requires of a person a due portion of his or her time dedicated to the worship and service of God, but it is *ceremonial* in that it prescribes the seventh day.
- The Christian church is required to observe the **morality of time** by setting aside one day in seven to the Lord, but it has chosen to change the **ceremonial observance** of that day from the **seventh to the first**.
- The reason for the memorializing this day is based on **two works of God**:
 - **Creation.** The pattern of creation is six days of work followed by one day of rest. The “work week” is a reflection of the original work week.
 - **Deliverance.** Remembering God’s deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt, and for Christians, our deliverance from the bondage of sin through the death and resurrection of Christ.
- The Sabbath is **holy**. It is to be distinctly different from the other six days of the week.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT: HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER

12 "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you."

- The first four commands focus on our **relationship with God**. The fifth through tenth commandments focus on our **relationships with each other**.
- The commandment to honor one’s parents heads this list because it is the most **basic of human relationships**.
- To **honor our parents** involves prizing them highly; caring, showing affection for them; showing respect, or revering them and delivering them from trouble; showing respect, fear, or revering them (Lev. 19:3).
- The **promise** attached this command—**long life in the land, and long life on the earth**—refers primarily to the land of Canaan and the people of Israel (see Deut. 4:26, 33, 40; 32:46-47. The captivity of Israel would be caused, in part, by a failure to honor their parents (Ezek. 22:7, 15).
- The present-day individual application, as is intended by all the commandments, is **intended to give a new quality of life**.

Ephesians 6:1-3

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise- 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

- When Eph. 6:1 says, “*Obey your parents,*” it immediately and necessarily qualifies it with “*in the Lord.*” Parents are to be shown honor

(vs. 2), but nowhere is their word to rival or be a substitute for God's Word.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT: DO NOT MURDER

13 "You shall not murder."

- The ethical theology that lies behind this prohibition is the fact that **all men and women have been created in the image of God** (Gen. 1:26-27; 9:6).
- There are seven words in Hebrew that mean *killing*, but the word used here appears where factors of **premeditation** and **intentionality** are present. It means **intentional violence**.
 - This prohibition **does not apply** to **beasts** (Gen. 9:3), to **defending one's home** from nighttime burglars (Exod. 22:3), to **accidental killings** (Deut. 19:5, to the **execution of murderers by the state** (Gen. 9:6), or to involvement with one's nation in certain types of **war** as illustrated by Israel's history.
 - It **does** apply to **self-murder** (i.e., suicide), to all **accessories to murder** (2 Sam. 12:9), and to **those who have authority but fail to use it to punish known murderers** (1 Kings 21:19).
- Jesus expands the definition of murder:

Matthew 5:21-22

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT: ADULTERY IS FORBIDDEN

14 "You shall not commit adultery."

- The verb "to commit adultery" can be used for **either men or women**. Since the punishment for adultery is death (Deut. 22:22) while the penalty for the seduction of a virgin is an offer to marriage or money (Ex. 22:16-17; Deut. 22:23-29), **adultery** is distinguished from **fornication** in the O.T.
- Jesus brings an even **narrower definition of adultery**:

Matthew 5:27-28

"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
- An **allegory on marital fidelity**:

Proverbs 5:15-23

Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.

A loving doe, a graceful deer — may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?

For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths. The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast. He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT: PROHIBITION AGAINST STEALING

15 "You shall not steal."

- This command **prohibits stealing from either a person or an object.**
- It recognizes that the **Lord owns everything in heaven and earth** (Ps. 24:1; 115:16) and **only he can take it away.** Therefore no one has a right to enslave or kidnap another person or usurp the rights to property he has not owned or been given.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT: DO NOT GIVE FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR

16 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."

- This command calls for **sanctity of truth in all areas of life.** To despise the truth was to despise God whose very being and character are truth. The reference to lying in Hosea 4:2 shows the broad application of this command:

Hosea 4:2-3

There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. Because of this the land mourns, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea are dying.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT: DO NOT COVET

17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

- To **covet** means to “to desire earnestly,” “to long after.” This deals with a **person’s inner heart.**

1 Timothy 6:6-10

But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

9 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

THE SUMMARY OF THE COMMANDMENTS:

Romans 13:8-10

The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Romans 7:7-12

What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." 8 But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. 9 Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. 10 I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. 11 For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. 12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. Are the Ten Commandments intended for all people? Or only God's people?
2. Where does the ability to obey come from? Our self determination?
3. Do you tend to think the Ten Commandments are less important because you know you are covered by God's grace through Christ? Or does your relationship with Christ give you increased impetus to obey the commandments?
4. Which of the commandments do you find hardest to keep?
5. Most people do not think of our land as filled with idols. Israel vowed not to worship idols, but they ended up filling the temple with idols and doing as the nations around them, which led to loss of their land. What are some of America's idols?
6. Which commands speak to the sanctity of marriage and family?

7. It is evident that keeping the Sabbath means more than thinking about it—it means doing (or not doing) something about it.
8. How serious is it to use God’s name in a casual or meaningless way? Is exclaiming “Oh, my God!” to express surprise or outrage taking his name in vain?
9. Jesus expands the meaning of adultery in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:27-28). Considering the loose morals of our culture and immodest, provocative dress in public, how can a Christian protect himself/herself from committing adultery?
10. What do you think is the relationship between personal debt and covetousness? How important is outward show of material things to you?
11. In what ways can adult children honor their parents? Or dishonor them? How is this made more difficult, or easier, depending on the family relationship since childhood? What can be done to resolve a history of family conflict?
12. How serious a sin do you think is covetousness? What other sins does it lead to?