

YOBL

Year of Biblical Literacy

Week 4: Out of Slavery

Daily Reading for Week

- Exodus 10-12, Psalm 20
- Exodus 13-15, Psalm 21
- Exodus 16-18, Psalm 22
- Exodus 19-21, Psalm 23
- Exodus 22-24, Psalm 24
- Exodus 25-27, Psalm 25
- Exodus 28-29, Psalm 26
- Video: Exodus 19-40
- Minimum Reading: Exodus 2:23-3:22, 6:1-13, 12:31-42, 13:17-14:31

Focus of time together

To enter into the great Exodus story of Israel's liberation from slavery and reflect on our own readiness for freedom.

Connecting (10 minutes)

What are your highs and lows from this past week? In other words, what moment brought you the most joy and what moment brought you the least?

Opening Prayer (3 minutes)

Have someone read Israel's liberation song in Exodus 15:1-18 aloud as a prayer.

Intro to Discussion

The Exodus story is the foundational story of the Jewish people and the entire Old Testament. It was so miraculous that it established the paradigm upon which Jewish identity and theology has been shaped ever since. Later books of the Old Testament written during future tough times in Israel's history drew consistently upon this story of a God-orchestrated exodus out of slavery and oppression and into freedom in the promised land as a paradigm for what was needed and what to hope for. During the many hundreds of years in exile under various oppressive empires, Israel longed for God to send another Moses to lead another exodus. This is what they were hoping for, under brutal Roman rule, when Jesus arrived. And so it shouldn't surprise us that the New Testament is full of references to Moses and the Exodus. This exodus story was the lens through which the early church interpreted Christ's life and death; it was the

paradigm they believed Christ fulfilled. Jesus was indeed a new Moses leading a new liberation, bringing a new judgment upon the evil empire. And for Israel to be spared this judgment, as with the plagues, they would need to identify themselves under the blood of a Passover Lamb which would “cover over them”. This language is how the New Testament writers tried to make sense of Jesus, and it’s all Exodus language.

In other words, most of the things we are told about Christ are in direct reference to this 4,000 year-old story about God freeing a nation of slaves. If we don’t understand the story and it’s language, then we will be very confused about what it means for Jesus to be a “passover lamb” which “atoned for our sins”. Without understanding this Exodus story in particular, we’ll end up totally corrupting and misconstruing what the New Testament is saying about Christ. This story, above all others from Israel’s long history, is one we absolutely must be familiar with in order to have any shot at knowing Jesus. Familiarity with Exodus is a prerequisite for Christianity.

So the goal of our time today will be to become more familiar with the story, both mentally and emotionally. Understand what happened, what it meant, and how it would have felt.

Whole Group Discussion (40 minutes)

Questions for Basic Understanding

These questions are to help us interpret and understand the text as it was intended to be interpreted and understood.

1. Have you ever thought about Jesus in connection to Exodus before as alluded to? Or what, if anything, has the Exodus story meant to you in the past?
2. If someone asked you to tell the famous story of Israel’s exodus in your own words, how would you tell it?

Questions for Listening to Scripture

These questions are to help us be affected by scripture in the way it was intended to affect us.

Read Exodus 14:5-31.

How do you think it would have felt to be with them as they stood on the far side of the Red Sea after their miraculous escape?

As you imagine what it would have felt like to reach this incredible climax in the story, read Israel’s first worship song aloud once again (Exodus 15:1-18), remembering the context for their singing: They had just escaped from Egypt and through the sea after 400 years of slavery and “saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore” as they sang.

Questions for Interacting with Scripture

These questions are to help us slow down to taste and notice Scripture, savour its richness and meditate on the complexity of its meaning.

What do you find beautiful or ugly about the Exodus story?

Questions for Examining Ourselves

These questions are to help us look at ourselves, be aware and honest about who we are in light of our interaction with Scripture and consider any appropriate action.

Read Exodus 6:1-9.

This is a striking passage. God was declaring good news (gospel) of Israel's liberation. Perhaps we expect this would have been universally accepted and celebrated. Instead, it says that Israel didn't listen because of their broken spirits and harsh slavery. Knowing nothing in life but slavery, freedom was simply an unbelievable notion to Israel, and perhaps a terrifying thought as well. Looking back on our discussion last week about our own slavery to sin and thinking about Exodus as the primary paradigm for understanding Christ, do you have any resistance in you to the good news of possible freedom from sin? Does that idea strike you as unbelievable? Does being set free scare you?

Small Group Discussion (20 minutes)

Gather with the same group as last week

Questions for Examining Ourselves

These questions are to help us look at ourselves, be aware and honest about who we are in light of our interaction with Scripture and consider any appropriate action.

Recall your small group discussion last week and any feelings of disappoint or enslavement that were shared. Now be brutally honest with yourself and the group. Are you actually ready and willing to leave everything about your old life in metaphorical Egypt behind and participate in your own liberation? Or is it possible you actually prefer slavery to freedom? Does the notion of a complete departure from this sin actually strike you as good news that you believe in? Again, be brutally honest with one another about where you are. Don't fake it.

Closing Time of Prayer (10 minutes)

Take some time to confess honestly to God where you are with this. It does no good to pray to God to deliver you from sin and temptation that you actually desire to hold onto. Instead, if that's where you're at, confess this desire to keep your sin to God. St. Augustine once prayed "Lord grant me chastity and continence; but not yet". Though his prayer was partly in jest, it makes the point that it is better to make a true confession to God than to lie to Him about a piety you don't actually want. If you do truly desire an exodus from sin, spend a few minutes in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to reveal what it would look like for you to participate practically in your own liberation. Count the cost of such repentance and decide soberly whether you're willing to pay such a cost. If and when you're ready to pay this price for liberation, ask God to guide you into freedom. Continue this prayer journey each day this week as you read through the Psalms.