

Sunday, February 4, 2018—Exodus 25-27

When God called Moses to the mountain, He showed him marvelous things. Some of those details concerned the tabernacle the people would build to provide a place for the presence of God so He could live among them and lead them to the place He prepared for them.

Moses' first task was to call for an offering of precious metals and stones and fine fabrics from the people. Only those willing to give were to do so. This was not a mandatory offering. The people had not long before been slaves in Egypt with very few possessions, yet here they were in the desert with the ability to give freely of an abundance of items to make a home for Yahweh. He had moved the people of Egypt to be generous. Now He was asking His people to do the same in response to His grace.

In just a few paragraphs, Yahweh provides significant details about the furnishings, the coverings, the support pieces, and their function. They are not figuring this out on their own. (He tells Moses He will give even more information to Moses when he meets Him on the mountain.) He gives them the specifics because He wants to be approachable yet not taken lightly. The gold on so many pieces speaks to the majesty of the place. The bronze speaks to the repetitive, hard work which will take place there.

Praise God for making a way to be in relationship with Him through Jesus. Praise Him for providing the Way and giving instruction on how to walk with Him.

Saturday, February 3, 2018—Exodus 21-24

By the first days of February, many new-year's resolutions have fallen by the wayside. Life gets busy. Commitment is hard. One of those resolutions is often reading the Bible. When readers reach this point in Exodus (or the committed who make it a little further to Leviticus), they grow weary reading about oxen goring people and bad-mouthed sons. Why does the Bible include such strange, uncomfortable, information?

God had one goal in all of this. He told the Hebrews, "Be my holy people . . ." (22:31a). Never before was there an entire nation devoted to Yahweh, so He had to give them specific instruction on living daily life and interacting with one another with holiness and justice. When He told them to give life for life and eye for eye (21:23-25), He was limiting their selfish, human response. Flesh wants vengeance. God wants holiness and justice.

When God gave them the Sabbath (23:12), He was making provision for rest and refreshment. The Sabbath was a gift, not a burden, but the flesh can rebel against what God gives as good and see it as bad. The Sabbath says Yahweh is above all, and the world can go on without His people doing any work, but the world can't go on without Him. God's call to holiness was a call to obedience, and He promised provision and protection if the people would obey (23:20-22). Otherwise, they would be as rebels to Him. "We will obey," they said (24:3, 7).

Pray for faithful obedience that leads to holiness and justice.

Friday, February 2, 2018—Exodus 18-20

In their book *Growing Young*, the researchers discuss characteristics of churches who are reaching teens and young adults and making disciples of them. One of the first elements is what they call “keychain leadership.” Those leaders realized the “keys” they held to leadership and service positions and were willing to hand those “keys” to others who might find significant places to contribute. They did not do all the work themselves.

When Moses led the people into the Sinai wilderness, his father-in-law Jethro met him there. They celebrated what God had done to deliver them from Pharaoh, but Jethro saw a troubling development. Moses was handling all the judgment himself. From morning to evening, he was swamped with the needs of the people, and Jethro knew he had to have help if he wanted to prolong his leadership and help the people thrive. Moses agreed and enabled capable men to carry the load.

This did not diminish Moses’ overall leadership. When he led the people to Mt. Sinai to hear from God, they trembled at the power they saw and sensed. They wanted Moses to speak directly to God and then relay the message. They could not imagine approaching God on their own even though God had described the entire nation as being His people, His treasured possession, and His kingdom of priests. They were all welcome, but they were not all willing.

Pray for a faith which balances awe with intimacy, fearing Him yet being near Him. Pray for faithfulness to serve and to equip others to serve.

Thursday, February 1, 2018—Exodus 14-17

Chess pieces have no say in the game. They are pawns in the hands of the player. At times, those who know God may feel as if they are simple pieces in a game He is playing. Job, for example, did not know the greater story behind his suffering. The Hebrews, on their release from Egypt, become wandering bait to draw Pharaoh in pursuit of them (14:4).

The difference (one of many) between inanimate game tokens and living bearers of the image of God is the relationship between God and His people. They may not know the full story, but they know Him, and they can communicate with Him. They can choose to obey or disobey, and they can enjoy the blessings of His receiving glory. Pawns feel the same before and after the victory of their master. God’s people feel awe, joy, love, peace, and more when they see their Master glorified by believer and unbeliever.

This does not mean the process is easy or enjoyable. The Hebrews were terrified at the approach of Pharaoh and his army, yet God showed Himself capable of defending and delivering. The sea opened for them and closed on Pharaoh, and they sang, “Lord, who is like you . . .?” (15:11). Their praise did not sanctify them enough to keep them from grumbling, yet God was faithful to provide everything they needed, even in ways that were tangible but incomprehensible (16:15).

Pray for patience during difficulty. Praise God before and after He provides and delivers. Thank Him for being your Banner (17:15).

Wednesday, January 31, 2018—Exodus 11-13

“Are you ready to go?” This question is asked countless times each day. Parents, children, coaches, drivers, and friends know the leaving of one place to head to another requires preparation. If one simply

leaves without considering what is necessary, they may leave something behind or not be prepared for the journey ahead.

God was preparing His people for their departure from Egypt, and He gave them a few tasks. They were to ask for silver and gold from their Egyptian neighbors (11:2) and to select a lamb or goat without blemish from the flock. On the 14th day of the month, they were to kill the innocent creature and place its blood on the doorposts and lintel of their homes and eat a meal with the meat, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. They were to eat the meal while dressed for travel (12:11), being ready when God moved.

What was God going to do? They had never seen anything like the nine previous plagues. They had no concept of being freed from slavery through the passing over of an angel of death, yet they were to obey Yahweh and be ready for what He had planned. As they traveled away from Egypt, they ate the unleavened bread each day. This bread was easier to transport and was a daily reminder of His mighty hand (13:16) and the freedom He promised and delivered to His people.

Pray for a readiness each day to go where God sends and do what God says. Praise Him for freedom in Christ which leads to true life.

Tuesday, January 30, 2018—Exodus 8-10

“Let my people go that they may worship me” (8:1). The request was seemingly simple. Moses wanted Pharaoh to allow the Hebrews to leave Egypt and go to the desert to worship Yahweh. Pharaoh had no idea who Yahweh was and no desire to see Him worshiped, so this simple request was ludicrous in his eyes. The Hebrews were going nowhere, so God began to plague the land to show His power over the gods of Egypt.

First, the frogs invaded the land, but Pharaoh’s magicians were able to replicate the feat. (Isn’t that ironic? They were able to increase the problem simply to demonstrate their power. Humans are strange creatures.) Then, the gnats infested everything, and the magicians could not mimic this. They themselves admitted this was the finger of God (8:18). Pharaoh, however, refused to relent and release the Hebrews. When the flies came, Pharaoh agreed to allow the Hebrews to worship in Egypt, but this was not God’s request. Man cannot change God’s plans to suit his desires.

Despite the powerful display, Pharaoh continued to say no. Even his officials knew he should let them go (10:7). Despite Pharaoh’s refusal, Moses went morning after morning to say again, “Let the people go.” At times, God has His people walking a repetitious, frustrating path in order to accomplish His task and bring about His glory.

Consider all God has done to make it possible for you to worship Him. Thank Him for Jesus. Take time to spend time with Him today.

Monday, January 29, 2018—Exodus 5-7

Obedience to God requires conforming to the new standards. This non-conformity to the old ways can be confusing at best and dangerous at worst. Chick-fil-A is one of the most successful fast-food chains in America though they are closed on Sunday to honor the Lord. Their non-

conformity is confusing to many, and their stand on certain moral issues has caused anger, but they remain successful.

Others who follow Christ, however, don't have the same result. Many who leave Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist tradition to serve Jesus find themselves abandoned by their families and threatened with death if they ever return to their home or village. Moses saw this same burdensome result when he spoke for Yahweh. Pharaoh said he did not know Yahweh and accused the Hebrews of being lazy, so he increased their quota and decreased their supplies, making life more miserable. What Moses saw then remains true today—obedience to God may be difficult or even dangerous.

God told Moses good news: this difficulty paved the way for Pharaoh to see the strong hand of Yahweh (6:1). Short-term difficulty may be the exact pathway God is using to bring long-term victory and glory. God remembered His covenant promises (6:5) and was going to bring His people out of slavery and into the Promised Land.

As with Job, God was working in the Hebrews for a larger purpose—showing Pharaoh and Egypt the power and glory of Yahweh. He is able to work good from evil leading to blessing and worship.