God affirmed the dignity of every human being—man and woman, slave and free. Each person had worth, and His people would live in a way far different from the cultures that would surround them. The ownership of property was a blessing from Him and gave His people the ability to produce crops, give people the opportunity to work, and provide for the poor. Those same poor people were to live responsibly (23:3) but never to be taken advantage of (23:6).

 To affirm God’s sovereignty and supremacy, His people were to gather three times each year to celebrate together (23:14). Yahweh made absolutely clear, “No one is to appear before me empty-handed” (23:15). No matter the financial condition or social standing, His people were blessed by Him to have anything and everything. To come before Him with nothing was an act of rebellion. He was worthy of worship.

 Thank God for His call on your life and the blessings He has given. Worship Him and consecrate all you have to Him.

Saturday, February 4, 2017—Exodus 25-27

 God gives all things to us, so all things ultimately belong to Him. In His wisdom and love, He asks us to give some of those things back to Him—in part or in whole—in order to remind us He is sovereign. He is greater than any possession or position, and He knows how we might hoard those things out of short-sightedness, pride, and fear. To give to Him is an act of worship and a kindness which keeps us spiritually healthy.

 After confirming the covenant with Moses in powerful fashion, the first thing God asked for was an offering. Their unusual and expensive offerings were to come from those whose hearts prompted them, and they were in large part the result of gifts given by the Egyptians when they left the country. God was giving them the opportunity to give part of what He richly, graciously provided. Would they freely give, or would they already be deluded by sin into thinking these possessions where “theirs,” not His?

 The payoff for giving the offering was the construction of the tabernacle. God was going to dwell with His people! The presence of God would be in the tent, but His people would not be able to approach Him without first providing sacrifice outside the tent. To provide Him a dwelling place and to institute a system of sacrifice required attention to detail and humble, gracious giving from the people.

 Thank God for giving Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice to secure His holiness and presence in your life. Offer everything you have to Him.

*Read the Bible Through 2017*

Week 5

Sunday, January 29, 2017—Exodus 5-7

 Exodus 4 closes with these powerful words, “and they believed. And when they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.” Moses had brought them the message of hope and the name of Yahweh and the signs that confirmed it all, and the people responded with faith and praise. This was vital as the coming days would be darker than before.

 Pharaoh did not know Yahweh, and the last thing he would want was the people leaving their work for him to go in the desert to worship an unknown God. Pharaoh accused them of being lazy and increased their work quotas while reducing the supplies Egypt had provided. The Israelites expressed their deep concern to Moses and Aaron who, in turn, cried out to God. Speaking to Pharaoh made things worse, not better (5:23).

 Yahweh reassured Moses. Pharaoh had heard the name of Yahweh, but soon he would see the power of His name. He was making Himself known both to His own people and to the nations so that He would receive the glory of the impossible deliverance that was to come. They were surely going to be His people and receive the land He had promised Abraham (6:7-8). Despite the assurance, Moses was uncertain because of his lack of speaking skills (6:12, 30), so God faithfully provided words and signs for Moses and Aaron alike.

 Pray for faithfulness to obey and endurance in hardship. Thank God for being I Am.

Monday, January 30, 2017—Exodus 8-10

 In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve chose to disobey God. Whether they knew or not, this was a choice about worship. Whom would they trust? They chose to worship self and paid a high price.

 When God came to redeem His people, He told Moses to tell Pharaoh to allow the people to leave so they might worship Him (8:1, 9:1). If Pharaoh wasn’t open to allowing the people to worship, he and his people would pay a high price (8:2-4). God is always destructive to those forces that make approaching Him and relating to Him difficult.

 Pharaoh was temporarily swayed by some of the plagues God sent, but he would subsequently harden his heart. He offered a compromise to the Israelites—worship God, but stay in the land—which Moses rejected. The sacrifices would be detestable to the Egyptians, and God had called them to sacrifice outside the land. God is not interested in our compromise. He wants complete obedience on His terms.

 In sending the plagues, God was attacking the gods of the Egyptian pantheon, demonstrating His superiority to any of the gods the people of Egypt might worship, including the Pharaoh. He was showing Pharaoh who was truly worthy of worship, yet his heart “was unyielding, and he would not let the people go” (9:7). God was using Moses and Aaron to show His power so His name might be proclaimed in all the earth (9:16).

 Each day brings choices for worship. Choose God to live fully.

Tuesday, January 31, 2017—Exodus 11-13

 The final plague on Egypt and the events surrounding it were an historic event, and they are a symbol of what following God in faith has always required. The first step was preparation. God told the Israelites to ask their Egyptian neighbors for silver and gold. They were about to embark on a journey. Life was about to change, and they would need resources. The beautiful truth is this: they did not produce these resources on their own. God provided them. They simply needed to prepare.

 That preparation also included faith. They needed not only to decide to leave their old lives, but they had to sacrifice an innocent lamb and apply its blood to the doorposts of their homes. Anyone who chose to have this faith avoided the plague of death that passed over Egypt. Anyone who did not submit in faith experienced profound sorrow.

 Preparation and faith produced expectation. They gathered their resources, and they prepared bread without yeast so they could travel and eat along the way. Their preparation was also for generations to come who would observe the same week-long festivities as a remembrance of what He had done. Then, silently yet powerfully, God delivered His people by His hand. Death brought freedom to all who had faith.

 Preparation, faith, expectation, and deliverance moved the people to consecration. Because God had fulfilled His promises, He deserved everything, yet He only asked for the firstborn. Thank God for your faith in Jesus and the deliverance He gives. Consecrate your all to Him today.

Wednesday, February 1, 2017—Exodus 14-17

 God is always at work—even in our most difficult days—to bring Himself glory. Our human nature might modify this thought to say He is always at work for our comfort, but that is incorrect. His greatest desire is His own glory—not because He is arrogant or selfish but because His glory is the absolute highest good. We are more blessed when He is glorified than when we are comfortable.

 Knowing Pharaoh was about to pursue His people after they left Egypt, God told Moses He would gain glory for Himself through the Pharaoh’s actions and prove to Egypt He was Yahweh (14:4). Moses assured the people, “Stand firm . . . the Lord will fight for you” (14:13-14). God parted the waters, destroyed the Egyptians, and “. . . the people feared the Lord and put their trust in Him and Moses His servant” (14:31).

 Despite the great deliverance, the people were quick to complain, but God was gracious. “If you pay attention to his command 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” (15:26). He provided food and water before He allowed them to go into battle. He became Provider and Healer so He could become their Banner in battle.

 Thank God for His greatness and graciousness. Praise Him for the ways He has provided, protected, and healed. Glorify Him as your banner in the battles of life.

Thursday, February 2, 2017—Exodus 18-20

 God calls us to a personal faith, but he never intends for faith to be private. We are to follow Him by personal choice, but He gives us a faith community with whom to learn and grow. Moses’ life exemplifies this.

 When the Israelites faced their first battle, he stood on a hill with his hands raised, showing God was their banner. Aaron and Hur stood on either side of him, supporting his arms. He could not lead alone. When his father-in-law saw the burden Moses bore in providing judgment for the people, Jethro urged him to surround himself with God-fearing men who hated dishonest gain to judge in smaller matters (19:22).

 Imagine the load this lifted for Moses. Imagine the burdens and distractions this removed, making him available to God for greater tasks. Because of Moses’ availability, God told him to declare to Israel they would become His treasured possession if they would obey His covenant guidelines (19:5). The people said they would do so, and God came to them in a powerful, awe-inspiring display, giving them these two overall ideas—love God and love people (20:1-21). He wanted them to live faithfully with Him and with one another, and these 10 commandments became the foundation for living as the people of God.

 Spur your community of faith to live faithfully, supporting one another in love for God and for others. Thank God for those who have walked alongside you to make you more like Christ.

Friday, February 3, 2017—Exodus 21-24

 Never before had a nation represented Yahweh to the watching world. How would they live in a way that honored Him and blessed each other? In order for Israel to be the people God called them to be—a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, His treasured possession (Exodus 19:5-6)—the people had a set of expectations. “These are the laws you are to set before them,” God said to Moses (21:1). These laws covered every aspect of life—worship, social responsibility, property ownership, and more.