



Exodus Core Group Study

This is a ten-week study on the book of Exodus. In this study, you will travel with the Israelites (God's people) through their journey with the Lord from the beginning to a place of maturity. Thankfully, the Israelites encountered many of the same obstacles we encounter in our journeys with God! By studying the book of Exodus, we are able to see how we can respond in these difficult and joyful times.

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Week One: Exodus 3:1-10

Invitation to a Journey with God

Objective

Moses sees the burning bush and has the choice: go and see what God might say or turn away and tend to his sheep, continuing on with his regular schedule. Will you turn away and connect with God to see what He might say?

Opening Question

1. Most of us have a routine or some sort of schedule that we follow daily. Tell about a time this week when your regular flow of activity was disrupted. How did you react?

Body of the Study

Before you and your group read Exodus 3:1-10, give a little background information so the students can relate to the text more effectively.

Key Characters & Prior Events:

Moses was born during a time when the King of Egypt gave an order that every Israelite baby boy must be thrown into the Nile River, because he was concerned that their number was becoming too great. When Moses' parents saw that he was a special child, they risked their lives to keep their baby boy alive. However, when they could not hide him any longer, his mother placed him in the reeds by the river so that someone would find him. Moses was found by Pharaoh's daughter and she took him in as her own.

After Moses had grown, he went out one day to see his people, the Israelites. When Moses saw that an Egyptian was beating one of his people, he stepped in and killed the Egyptian. When word got out about the murder, Pharaoh tried to kill him and Moses fled to a place called Midian.

In Midian, he met his wife Zipporah and had a son named Gershom. Throughout his stay in Midian, Moses became a shepherd for his father-in-law Jethro and led his father-in-law's sheep around the desert for forty years! Here is where we pick up in Exodus 3, forty years later on one ordinary day...

Text Questions

Read Exodus 3:1-6.

1. Describe what you think Moses may have been feeling and thinking as he awoke that morning to lead the sheep to the back side of the mountain.
2. Why do you think God chose a burning bush to get Moses' attention?
3. As you look back at your time at UVA, can you see times where God has been trying to get your attention? Share one of these times. What was your reaction?



4. How did Moses respond to God's invitation at the burning bush?
5. In verses 5-6 what is God revealing about Himself? When God told Moses to take off his sandals what was He revealing to Moses? What was God saying about Himself in verse 6? Why did He say, "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?" What does He signify by using their names? (God is all-powerful and personal!)

Read Exodus 3:7-10.

1. Knowing that Moses was a shepherd, what would have been the potential ramifications to his day for turning aside to meet with God on the mountain? *(The sheep might have wandered. It may have been inconvenient. It could mean more work later. Others may question his decision.)*
2. How would Moses' life be different if He didn't take time to investigate the burning bush? *(He may have felt regret for not taking the chance to go see. He could have lived in shame for the rest of his life about killing the Egyptian. He would always be separated from his people. He would never see God move in the miraculous ways to come).*

Application Questions

1. What things/feelings/fears often keep us from turning aside from our daily tasks and activities to connect with God?
2. What are ways you, as an individual or as a community, could help make it more likely that you would answer God when He calls out to you?

Spiritual Application

This week, find a time every day to go outside, away from other tasks and activities, and talk with God. He desires to meet with you so you can know Him on a personal level. Will you respond?





Week Two: Exodus 3:7- 4:9

Saying Yes to God

Objective

When God called Moses to lead His people out of Egypt, Moses quickly gave God a list of reasons why he thought he was not the man for the task. God answers Moses' doubts about himself and his God-given mission with promises about Himself and how He'd move. God desires to use me and you; what excuses have we been using? Tonight we'll see that God's promises to Moses can also apply to us.

Opening Question

1. Have you ever felt inadequate for a job you've had? Talk about a time when you felt unskilled for a job or task that you've had to do. What was your response? Did you do it? Did you give up? Get someone else to help you?

Body of the Study

Recap last week's take-away and background for new members. Ask if anyone experienced a change in the way they responded to God this past week. Did last week's story of Moses have any other impacts? Open up discussion in your group.

Text Questions

Read Exodus 3:7-10.

1. What is God's goal for meeting with Moses? (*to rescue his people, the Israelites, through Moses.*)
2. Knowing Moses was a shepherd for the last forty years in Midian and that he fled from Egypt for killing an Egyptian, how do you think you would have responded to God's call if you were Moses?

Read Exodus 3:10-4:16.

1. What are five excuses Moses gives to God's call? (*consider writing them down on a whiteboard or sheet of paper so everyone can see as you talk*)
 - a. Who am I that I should go? (v. 3:11)
 - b. What if they ask the name of the God who sent me? (v. 3:13)
 - c. What if they don't believe me or listen to me? (v. 4:1)
 - d. I am slow of speech and tongue (v. 4:10)
 - e. Please send someone else (v. 4:13)
2. What does every one of Moses' excuses seem to be focused on? (Himself. Whether his background, knowledge, or skills)
3. What are the answers God gives to each excuse? (*consider writing God's responses next to Moses' objections*)
 - a. Moses: Who am I that I should go? (v. 3:11) // God: I will be with you (v 3:12)



- b. Moses: What if they ask the name of the God who sent me? (v. 3:13) // God: gives his name “I Am Who I Am” and His mission (to save them) and even a short message about how it will all play out (v3:14-21)
 - c. Moses: What if they don’t believe me or listen to me? (v. 4:1) // God: *works miracles* I will work miracles so they believe (v 4:2-9)
 - d. Moses: I am slow of speech and tongue (v. 4:10) // God: Am I not the one who even made humans to have mouths? I will help you. (v. 4:11-12)
 - e. Moses: Please send someone else (v. 4:13) // God: No, but I’ll send someone to help you. (v 4:14-16)
4. What do God’s responses to Moses focus on? *(Not on Moses’ faults or qualifications, but rather on who God Himself is and His qualifications)*
 5. As you examine how God responds to Moses’ excuses with reassurance of the fact that He will be with Him and that He is all-powerful, what is God really asking of Moses? *(to trust Him and for us to open our lives to be used by Him)*

Application Questions

1. What are places in your life that you think God may be asking you to step out and do something, but you are scared?
2. What are some of the excuses that we have given God when He asks us to do something?
3. If God is looking for us to trust Him and for us to open our lives to be used by Him, how does that encourage you in your current circumstances?

Spiritual Application

This week, make a list of things you have always believed make you inadequate for your dreams or the things God is asking of you. Write a promise God gives Moses to combat that feeling, and pray for God to release you from those inadequacies.





Week Three: Exodus -- The Plagues

Idolatry: Our Biggest Plague

Objective

This week, we'll learn about God as protector and that He doesn't allow idolatry. We see His response to the idolatry of Egypt in the story of the ten plagues which lead to Israel's opportunity to leave Egypt. This week's study is long, so feel free to pick and choose which passages you want to summarize and which you want to read through.

Opening Question

1. What kinds of things could become idols in our lives today as college students? How or why do you think this happens? (Remind your group that idols are things that have a higher priority in our lives than God.)

Body of the Study

The first week we talked about how Moses was called – the burning bush – and that we need to take time out of our day to see what God has to say to us.

The second week we talked about all of the excuses Moses gave God as to why he shouldn't be the one to go tell Pharaoh to release the Hebrew people. God had promises about Himself for each excuse Moses came up with. We realized through that lesson that God will do awesome things through us if we are just willing; that it is God who supplies the skills; we're the vessel He chooses to use.

Tonight we will see Pharaoh's response to Moses' demand that he let the Hebrew people (Israelites) go. Remember our first question about idols because we will see that Pharaoh worships many things that are not God including himself.

Text Questions: *consider having a different person read each section of Scripture.*

Read Exodus 4:29-Exodus 5:2. The delivery of the message.

1. What is the Israelites' response to hearing what God's about to do?
2. What is Pharaoh's response to God's command?
3. How would you feel in this moment if you were Moses?

Read Exodus 7:13-24. #1 Blood. *Possibly a message against the idolatry of Egyptian God Hapi who was a water bearer. To Egypt, the Nile from which they received water was a source of life and worship for the God's who impacted it. Without the Nile, Egypt would only be a desert with no water source and minimal rainfall.*



1. Why was the Nile considered the sacred source of life in Egypt? What would the implications of no river be for those living in Egypt?
2. What was Pharaoh's response? *He refuses to allow their request.*

Read Exodus 8:1-15. #2 Frogs. *Possibly a message against the idolatry of Heket the Egyptian Goddess of fertility, who had the head of a frog. Note: frogs were sacred in Egypt and therefore they should not have been killed.*

1. What was Pharaoh's response to the plague of frogs? *(He asks Moses to remove them and says he'll let the people go worship, but then doesn't follow through.)*
2. What was God's response to Pharaoh? What does this tell us about God? *(He is just and keeps His promises.)*

Reference Exodus 8:16-19. #3 Gnats. *Possibly a message against the idolatry of The Egyptian God Geb who was over the dust of the earth. The court magicians could not duplicate this plague or any other following. After this plague, Pharaoh never called on them again, yet still wouldn't fear God. Pharaoh still wouldn't let the people go.*

Reference Exodus 8:20-32. #4 Flies. *Possibly a message against the idolatry of Khepri, the Egyptian god of creation who had the head of a fly. Pharaoh says they can go as long as they don't go far, but then changes his mind. This is the first plague the Lord distinguishes between Israel and Egypt, protecting the Israelites. He continues to protect Israel up until the final plague where, while not specifically excluded, He gives them instructions on how to be "Passed Over" by the plague.*

Reference Exodus 9:1-7. #5 Animals. *Possibly a message against the idolatry of the Egyptian Goddess Hathor, Goddess of Love, who was depicted with the head of a cow. The Lord still protected Israel, and yet Pharaoh would not let them go.*

Reference Exodus 9:8-12. #6 Boils. *Possibly a message against the idolatry of Isis- Egyptian Goddess of Medicine and Peace. The Lord still protected Israel, and yet Pharaoh would not let them go. Here is the first time that we see it stated that God hardened Pharaoh's heart.*

Read Exodus 9:13-35. #7 Thunder, hail, and lightning. *Possibly a message against the idolatry of Nut- Egyptian Goddess of the Sky.*

1. What do you notice about Pharaoh's response? Does Pharaoh think he can face God? *(He says explicitly that he has sinned, begs relief, promises freedom, but ultimately Pharaoh and his officials harden their hearts.)*

Reference Exodus 10:3-20. #8 Locusts. *Possibly a message against the idolatry of Seth- Egyptian God of Storms and Disorder. Pharaoh says he has sinned and asks them to remove the plague. They do. The text goes on to say that God hardens Pharaoh's heart and that Pharaoh still won't let the Israelites go.*

Reference Exodus 10:21-29. #9 Darkness. *Possibly a message against the idolatry of Ra- The Sun God. Here, Pharaoh says they can go, but without their livestock, and Moses says that won't work*



because they need to make sacrifices. Then, the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart and Pharaoh does not allow them to leave with their animals.

Read Exodus 11:1-10, Exodus 12:21-32. Exodus 14:5. #10 Death of the firstborn. *Possibly a message against the idolatry of Pharaoh- The Ultimate Power of Egypt, and his son who would have one day likely been Pharaoh.*

*****Note:** If anyone is concerned with the question of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, consider watching this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jH_aojNJM3E
2:45-4:30 discusses Pharaoh and/or the Lord hardening Pharaoh's heart, but the whole video is great to review what you've learned so far, and even give a preview for next week!

Application Questions

1. Why do you think God systematically worked through 10 plagues instead of just a few, or even one? *Ex. God wanted to give Egypt many chances. God wanted to show His superiority over each of the Egyptians main gods. God wanted to convince the Israelites that He was with and for them (just once and they might have thought it was a coincidence). There are a lot of reasons!*
 - a. After reading and/or discussing these plagues, how can we see this as a story of God's love?
2. Pharaoh had 10 chances to turn to God, repent, and obey by letting the Israelites go. In your relationship with God, have you ever needed multiple chances to repent?
3. Think about idols in your own life or in our culture. What are they? How have they impacted your relationship with God?
4. What did you learn about God in this story? How do you think God would respond to you about idols in your life? *(Talk about how God systematically takes away the idols of Egypt through the judgment of the plagues; each one corresponds with an Egyptian idol.)*
5. Why should we still trust in God, even if it looks like our culture or the people of influence in our stories will never stop serving their idols? *(God can use anyone's disobedience to bring glory to Himself, and can still find ways to deliver and bless his people)*

Spiritual Application

This week, pray that God would reveal anything you are putting before Him. Pray that He would help you remove those idols we make into gods. Pray and discuss with a lunch buddy or Core Group leader what those things are and ways you can keep them in their rightful places.





Week Four: Exodus 13:17-22, 14:1-31

The Journey Begins

Objective

Do we turn to our old ways when following God is hard? This week we'll look at what kinds of signs we have of God's protection when we desire to turn back to an old way of life. The journey begins!

Opening Question

1. What is something that brought you comfort when you were little?

Text Questions

Read Exodus 13:17-22.

1. Why did God lead the Israelites around the desert road? (v. 17)
2. How did this impact Israel's journey? How did God guide them?
3. How involved was God in Israel's path? (*He was with them always, but he also made it possible for them to choose whether to travel by night or by day.*)

Read Exodus 14:1-14.

1. What do you think Moses thought of God's plan? (*Note: They turned back so that Pharaoh would pursue them.*)
2. How did the Israelites react when they saw the Egyptians pursuing them? What did this reveal about their relationship with God?
3. How has Moses grown since he met God at the burning bush? (*Think back to the insecurities he initially shared with God.*)
4. What seems to be God's purpose in this plan? (*God is shifting emphasis to His glory to show both the Israelites and the Egyptians that He is Lord.*)

Read Exodus 14:15-31.

1. What did God's escape plan require of Moses and the Israelites?
2. How did this experience change the relationship between God and Israel?
3. How was God glorified through Pharaoh and his army?

Application Questions

1. Describe a time in your life when you experienced a frustrating detour from your plans, but in hindsight, it turned out to be a blessing. What did that teach you about God's leadership?
2. When was a time you knew that God was leading you? (*maybe not a fire or cloud but there are other ways we recognize God's handiwork*)



3. Think back to the beginning of tonight's study and the item that brought you comfort as a child. Is there something in your life right now you use for comfort? (Think about a relationship, item, habit, part of your schedule, etc.). How can you begin to rely on God for comfort instead?

Spiritual Application

This week, pray for those who are on a tough road right now, either yourself or someone you know. Ask God to bring His peace. Pray for those who need to let go of something they're holding onto and putting in a place of comfort before they ask for God's comfort. Take a step of faith to get rid of those comfort items/habits!





Week Five: Exodus 15:27-16:5

Sabbath & Trust

Objective

God leads the Israelites and provides for them through manna and rest. This week, we'll discuss God's provision for the Israelites and how they respond to it.

Opening Question

1. What's your concept of rest? When do you feel most rested?

Body of the Study

We pick up after the journey out of Egypt has begun, after Pharaoh has released the Israelites completely. Set the beginning of the story up and add details like "they were in the desert, on foot, wearing the same clothes day in & day out, streams and water were scarce, their path was sandy, uncomfortable, smelly" -- whatever details you can think of. Feel free to ask students what they think their feelings would have been on the journey had they been in the desert.

Text Questions

Read Exodus 15:27-16:5.

1. What do you think their reaction was when they arrived in Elim? (Re-read verse 27.)
2. How would you feel if you were an Israelite and Moses had you leave Elim?
3. Where is God leading the Israelites? (*back into the desert*)
4. What does God's plan seem to be? (*Think about the fact that He wants the Israelites to trust Him, and why He wants them to trust Him.*)

Read Exodus 16:9-30.

1. Summarize this section. What happened and why?
2. Were the Israelites grateful for this? What was their response?
3. What was the point of the Sabbath? Why was it so hard for the Israelites to adhere to?
4. What does God's response and actions say about the relationship He desires with the Israelites?

Application Questions

1. Can you see any resemblance to us & the Israelites? In what ways?
2. In what ways can going through trials of testing from God strengthen our faith?
3. Read Matthew 4:4, Luke 11:3, and John 6:26-27. What does Jesus have to say about the provision of manna?



4. What might it look like for us to gather manna today? (*real devotional life: you need it daily, it might look different from person to person, today's manna can't be tomorrow's manna*)
 - a. Consider having a leader share what it looks like for them to "gather manna" daily in their devotional life.
5. What might it look like for us to practice Sabbath today? (*not to work. To trust God to give us what we need for the rest of the week rather than rely on ourselves. To realize that disobeying God can lead to chaos and mess in our lives*)
 - a. Ask if anyone has a testimony about Sabbath in their own lives. Consider having a leader share about why they practice the Sabbath.

Spiritual Application

This week, take some time to reflect on God's provision for the Israelites. Remember what it must have felt like for them that God provided food and rest in their journey through the wilderness. Think about what it feels like when God provides for you, and share with a friend about when you have experienced those things in your life.





Week Six: Exodus 16:31-34

Building Altars to Remember

Objective

This week, we'll look at the Israelites' reflection, remembering, and reacting to what God has done for them. This will teach us about how we can show other people what God has done, but also remember it ourselves.

Opening Question

1. Share about a time you forgot something important. What happened?

Body of the Study

Today's passage we pick up on the Israelites journey when they are similar to last week: wandering around, hot, tired and complaining but their stomachs are full because God has provided for them each day, with the understanding that they have a day of rest.

Text Questions

Read Exodus 16:31-34.

1. Think back to last week when we spoke about the manna. What was something the Israelites learned about God through receiving manna? (*He wanted to provide for them, and have them rely on Him*).
2. Why do you think God had them keep manna for the future generations?
3. Do you think just telling them to remember would have worked? Why or why not?
4. Do you see any similarities between your own life and the Israelites?

Read Exodus 17:8-15.

1. What is something the Israelites learned about God in this story? (*He wanted them to know that they could win in battle when He was on their side. He wanted them to know that He cared about their wellbeing. He wanted them to know their survival was in him, not their own strength, etc*).
2. Why do you think God had them keep a scroll to record this event?
3. We see 3 types of "remembrance" records in these stories. What are they? (*keeping a physical item from a event you want to remember, writing something down, and building something so it reminds you of an event*)



Application Questions

1. Why do you think it was hard for the Israelites to remember that God provided for them? How can we trust God in our circumstances instead of complaining and not remembering how God has provided for us before?
2. What are some practical ways we can remember what God has done and reflect on His faithfulness?

Spiritual Application

Spend some time in Core Group providing materials to create “memorials” to the Lord for things he has done. Maybe these are jars or boxes where you put in slips of paper recording what God has done. Maybe you paint pictures. Or you bring flat rocks where people can write a word representing what God did, and keep it as a memento. Whatever you do, close by spending some time sharing testimonies from each of your mementos.





Week Seven: Exodus 19:1-25

Real Relationship

Objective

This week, we'll talk about becoming close with God and how to further our relationships with Him. As with any relationship, developing closeness takes time and vulnerability!

Opening Question

1. Share about close friendships you've experienced. How did you get to know one another? What factors allowed your relationship to remain close?

Body of the Study

We've seen God's provision for the Israelites over and over again throughout their journey out of Egypt and to the promised land. We are now in the third month after the Israelites left Egypt and are camped in the Desert of Mt. Sinai.

Text Questions

Read Exodus 19:1-25.

1. Describe the relationship between Moses and God thus far. What can we learn about their relationship?
2. What does God say is the requirement between Him and Israel, for them to be His treasured people? (*vs. 5 they must keep the covenant, or the law that is to come*).
3. How does the Israelites' relationship with God differ from Moses'? (*Think about how only Moses was allowed on the mountain, except with specific permission. Moses had more access than the rest of Israel.*)
4. Why do you think the Israelites consecrate themselves before they encounter God? (*because of their sin*) Why do you think the priests also need to consecrate themselves before approaching God? (*because they are not sinless or holy either*)
5. What do you think God wanted to accomplish by letting the Israelites hear His voice and see Him come down before all His people?
6. Why did God give strict orders not to touch the mountain?
7. What did the Israelites experience on the third day and how did they react?

Read Hebrews 3:1-6.

1. What differences between Moses and Jesus does this passage highlight?
2. What so you think it means that in Moses, we served the house of God, but in Jesus, we are the house of God?



Read Hebrews 7:18-25.

1. What does verse 18 say about the previous way of doing things? (*it has been set aside*)
2. What does verse 22 say the new way of doing things is found in? (*Jesus*)
3. Why do we now have access to God? (*because Jesus is the perfect and never-ending priest we need to present us to God.*)

Application Questions

1. In what ways does your relationship with God resemble Moses' relationship? How about Israel's? (*Ex. Is your faith based on your own access to God or someone else's, like your parents?*)
2. How did Jesus change the experience of the average person in the community of God? (*they didn't have to receive access to God second hand, and only personally experience the terrifying presence of God. Instead, we are given access through Jesus, who is always interceding for us.*)
 - a. When you approach God, do you expect it to be more like the Exodus account, or more like approaching a friend/brother?
3. What are some ways you approach God? How do you initiate contact with Him? What have these experiences taught you?

Spiritual Application

Consider closing Core Group with some time of seeking the Lord and asking for his presence this week. Maybe have people pray over each other in twos or threes that they would experience the joy and presence of the Lord in the coming days.





Week Eight: Exodus 20:1-17

Guidance from a Loving God

Objective

This week, we'll discuss the Ten Commandments given by God to His people. We'll focus specifically on our relationship to other people as addressed in the last five commandments.

Opening Question

1. Has your attitude toward your parents changed since you've come to college?
2. How has your view of discipline changed as you've gotten older?

Body of the Study

The book of Exodus describes the development of the nation of Israel. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob settled in Egypt, and became slaves. Under the leadership of Moses and Aaron, and God's power and provision, they escape from bondage in Egypt. The book of Exodus reveals a lot about the God of heaven and earth: his name, character, ways, and how to relate to him. The heart of this revelation is focused on the giving of the commandments to Moses at Mt. Sinai.

Text Questions

Read Exodus 20:1-17.

1. Why is verse 2 important? *(This is God's reminder of who He is and who the Israelites are.)*
2. The first four commandments are set up to show how our relationship with God is supposed to be. What do you learn about God's feelings or character through them? *(He is jealous over us, he will not hold with idols, he wants to be our rest.)*
3. The last six tell us about our relationship with others and what God wants that to look like. What are these commands? *(Have someone summarize.)*
4. How would breaking each of these laws break community? Why do you think God put so much emphasis on how we treat others?

Read Matthew 5:21-30.

1. What is Jesus teaching about the law in this sermon? *(Jesus is actually radicalizing the ten commandments, emphasizing all the more how important it is to treat others well.)*
2. How does Jesus emphasize issues of the heart? Are they as important as actions? Why or why not?
3. Talk about the other commandments. Which ones are normalized in our culture?



Application Questions

1. Which of the Ten Commandments is most difficult for you to follow?
2. Is God asking you to be obedient in something this week? What are ways you can respond to Him in this?
3. How would the world look different if everyone obeyed these commands?
4. What do you think would need to happen for the whole world to live this way? (*we would need God to enable us to!*)

Read: Ezekiel 36:24-28

As you end the Exodus study, take a few minutes as a group to reflect on what God has done this semester in your individual lives and in your Core Group. Talk about the ways that, like Moses, your relationship with God has changed as you walk your own journey with Him. Read the Ezekiel verse and pray that God would do this in you as a Core Group, in our Community, At UVA, in our Nation, and in the World Together. Then, celebrate together! God will be victorious!

