

# Devotionals From Exodus

**These devotionals were originally a series of emails by Pete Bullette which came out of his own personal devotional times.**

## How to turn the tide?

### **“The midwives, however, feared God...” Exodus 1:17**

Have you ever been in a place that was so dishonoring to God that you wondered if it could ever become a place that honored the Lord? It could have been a country you visited, your dorm suite, your workplace, or the home you grew up in. Where would you start? How could the tide ever be turned?

The story of Exodus starts with the people of God in dire circumstances. The king of Egypt, the superpower of the world, had turned the Israelites into slaves and was working them ruthlessly (1:14). But, as we will see as we journey through Exodus, the tide did turn. But what was the first cause? How did it start? It started in a place that you wouldn't expect. It started with two young ladies who were midwives named Shiphrah and Puah. Yep, you read it right, Shiphrah and Puah. Never heard of them? I wonder why these names didn't stick and become names we use today. God used these women who were in relative obscurity to turn the tide for the people of Israel. You may jump ahead and say, “No, God used Moses to turn the tide”, but it was because of these two young ladies that Moses was ever able to breath his second breath.

These two women were told to kill every Hebrew boy that was born. But these women refused. Wow! Why were they willing to risk everything to live out their convictions to honor Him above all else? Where did they get such strength? Because of two things: 1. These women feared God (1:17). They knew God. God had captured the affections of their heart! They walked with God and He was first in their lives. 2. They were together. What would have happened if there was only one midwife who feared God? Would she have had the courage she needed to disobey the king, to go against the culture and fight for justice? We will never know. But we do know that courage is increased when we do not stand alone; when we are with people who share common beliefs. We are more courageous when we have someone to celebrate victories with us and who can accompany us in our suffering. Simply said, we are more courageous in living out our faith together than we are alone!

Let me encourage you this summer to make sure you have a Real Devotional life. As you do, He will capture the affections of your heart and will be the priority of your life. Also, I encourage you to pursue Real Community this summer! As you do these two things, who knows how God could impact where you are this summer. Maybe you will be the next Shiphrah! Find your Puah and, by the grace of God, help turn the tide for the glory of God

## Enough Maturity to handle your destiny

Have you ever seen someone who has more passion than they have wisdom or maturity? I have. I have been that person. I remember in college, when I was a youth pastor at my local church, roping off the back pews one Sunday when I was speaking and the senior Pastor was out of town. I was hoping to push people forward and make them more engaged. Not a good idea. I had one person leave, because their seat was roped off. I had more passion than wisdom. This describes many college students, and it also describes Moses.

As we read Exodus 2, we are introduced to Moses. Right away, we get two stories about Moses' young adult life that show us he is a man of passion. When he sees injustice, we see him respond with passion at that injustice. One time, it ends up badly-- he kills a man (2:12). He flees for his life into Midian and when he gets there, we see he again encounters injustice. This time it ends a little better! Moses couldn't sit and watch women get mistreated by some bully shepherds who were denying the ladies access to the well, so it says that "he came to their rescue". Standing up to the local shepherds was a gutsy move for a man who is brand new to the neighborhood.

The passion we see in Moses was a God-given passion, and this passion was connected with God's destiny on his life. God would use Moses' passion against injustice to help rescue His people from oppression and slavery. But first, Moses must have enough maturity and humility to handle his destiny.

How would this happen? It would take time and it wouldn't be glamorous. It would involve a season of doing the mundane in a less than hospitable terrain of desert. Moses spent the next season of his life in the desert watching sheep. Yep, that was as exciting as it sounds. How long was he there? Long enough to get married and have a few sons. It was no short season. But what about his passion? God uses the time to mature Moses. We see Moses go from a guy who takes things into his own hands and kills a man, to a man of profound humility and dependence on the Lord. Moses knows He is in way over his head accomplishing what God has called him to do. Only after a season in the desert is his character ready for his destiny, and is his maturity able to rightly wield his God-given passion.

You may be a bit bored this summer and wonder how your God given passion and sense of destiny matches your current assignment. I can't answer that, but I do know this: God often uses the seemingly mundane seasons of our lives to humble us, teach us dependence on Him, and to increase our maturity to match our destiny. Stay faithful and value how God can use this summer to grow your character and increase your maturity!

## That's the God I serve!

**“God heard their groanings and he remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob.” Exodus 2:24**

Have you ever gone through a tough season in life? Have you ever felt like you just can't catch a break? Have you ever thought you couldn't handle any more only to find out that things have gone from bad to worse? In that moment, have you ever wondered where God was, and if He cares about your turmoil? And if He does care about your turmoil, why doesn't He do something about it! If so, then you need to read this!

At the end of chapter two, we see that the Israelites were groaning in their slavery and crying out to God, desperate for His help. I am sure they often wondered if God cared. As I read through Chapters 2-4, I notice what it says about the God we worship. In 2:24 it says that God “heard their groanings and he remembered his covenant...” In 3:7 He says, “I am concerned about their suffering...” In 4:31 it says, “When they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshipped.”

In these verses we get a great picture of the heart of God. He hears our groanings! He is a God who is committed to His people! He is concerned about our situation! He sees us in our misery! He hears, sees, is concerned, and committed...and ultimately He is active on our behalf. That's the God I serve!

The Israelites didn't know that God was active on their behalf until Moses and Aaron showed up on the scene in the last verse of chapter 4. But, we can see that God had been active on their behalf to bring about their deliverance for a long time. The Israelites were in distress in Egypt, and God heard their cry and began to work in Midian to ultimately deliver His people in Egypt. They could have easily mistaken his perceived silence for His lack of activity on their behalf.

Wherever you are today, rest assured that God hears your cry! God sees you right where you are! He is concerned! And don't mistake His perceived silence for His lack of activity. He could be at work on your behalf right now, and you don't even know. That's the God I serve!

## What is your attention span?

**“Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Exodus 3:5**

We live in a culture with a notoriously short attention span. So short that you are already tempted to just scan this email rather than stop and actually read it, absorb it, and hear how God may want to speak to you through it. In fact, I dare you to read all of this word for word :) In Chapter 3 of Exodus, we see God go to extreme measures to get Moses' attention through a burning bush (3:3).

We see that when Moses sees the burning bush, he does something very consequential. He doesn't go back to his I-phone, or trolling Facebook; He steps aside. He puts aside what he was doing, and says three little words. “Here am I” (3:4). These three little words are the same words uttered by Abraham before offering his son Isaac for sacrifice: the same words that Isaiah responded with when He encountered a glorious vision of God: the same words Jacob spoke when God gave him a dream. They were words that in the Hebrew meant that the person was listening and ready to obey- words a servant would say to their master!

When Moses stepped aside, it was consequential. Chances are his sheep began to scatter. He probably had to work harder later. But the fact remains, Moses gave God his attention anyway. As a result, Moses heard how God wanted to work through his life.

I wonder how often God is at work in our lives, trying to get our attention, and we totally miss it? The better question, even, is what am I doing to give God my attention, to allow Him to speak to me, teach me, and to contemplate His majesty?

Once God has Moses' attention, there are three key moments. You will likely experience these three moments when God gets your attention as well.

1. Here I am (v4)—When we commune with God we should come to Him with a heart that is ready to listen and to obey.
2. Who am I (v11)—When we commune with Him we will likely find ourselves uttering these words -- like Moses did -- as we recognize our dependence on Him and our need for Him to accomplish what He has laid before us to do. We may also find ourselves uttering these words like David did in 2 Samuel 7:18, as we discover how much we are loved, accepted, and treasured by our Heavenly Father.
3. I am that I am (v14)—As we say “who am I,” God will refocus our attention on who He is. He will focus our attention on His greatness and His majesty. He is the God who is with us! He is the God who is present. Yes, He is the God of the past, and the God of the future; but, He is also the God of the present. He is “I am that I am.” He is the self-sufficient, ever present God of glory! Where ever you go, there He is!

Let me encourage you to step aside, give God your attention and say “Here I am!”

## Whose staff is it?

### “Then the Lord said to him ‘What is that in your hand?’” Exodus 4:2

As we enter into Chapter 4 of Exodus, we encounter one of the weirdest miracles of the Bible. God asks Moses, “what is that in your hand?”. “A staff” he replied. The Lord said “throw it on the ground.” Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake. Then, as we read on, we see that Moses was told to grab the snake and it turned back into a staff.

What is going on? On a primary level, we see God is teaching Moses that he can trust Him. But, on another level, I believe that there is something else going on as well. Why the staff? Out of all the things God could have done to show Moses that He was with him... Why this?

Like all ancient shepherds, Moses had a staff. It was probably about 6 feet long with a curve on the end. It was his modern-day Swiss army knife. He could use it for about everything. It was his walking stick. It was a weapon. It was a prod used to guide the flock. It was his standard operating equipment.

But, as Mark Batterson points out: “It was his badge. It was his ID. The shepherd staff represented two things to Moses. His identity and security. He was a shepherd. This is how he made a living. When God asked Moses to throw down his staff He was asking Moses to throw down his identity and his security. The staff represented his physical security and his financial security.”

Let me ask you a question. What is in your hand? Where do you find your identity? What is your source of security? Your career prospects? Your GPA? A relationship? All of these are good things. But, if they are the source of your identity and security, they are in the wrong place. Throw down your staff before the cross! And let Jesus become the source of your security, value, and identity.

This is what God has Moses do. Something that I noticed as I read chapter 4: In verse 20 it says that the staff that Moses threw down and submitted before God is now the staff of God. This is what happens when we throw down before God that which has had a tendency to come before Him. What happens? It becomes God's! And then God can use it for His glory once we loose our grip on it. Then He can use the gifts, talents, and potential for His glory and His purposes. The career becomes his career. The influence, His influence.

As I once heard Mark Batterson say, “Our greatest assets can become our greatest liabilities if they are not submitted to Christ.” Let me encourage you today to throw down your staff, so that it can become God's! God will use it a whole lot better than you ever could!

## The Moment of Truth

### **“Who is the Lord that I should obey him and let Israel go?” Exodus 5:1**

The moment of truth comes! We all have these moments in our lives: the moment when we finally have to step out in faith. The moment you share your faith with a coworker. The moment when we ask the woman to marry us. The moment when we go in to interview for our dream job. Or it could be the moment you have to stand before the super-power of the world, as a former shepherd and demand that he let hundreds of thousands of slaves go free. Good luck with that one. Well, that is exactly what God had Moses do!

Moses said “The LORD, the God of Israel, says “Let my people go...”, to which Pharaoh replies: “Who is the LORD, that I should obey Him and let Israel go?”

This question sets the stage for the next six chapters of Exodus. God will decisively answer Pharaoh’s question. He is the One true God! There were nine plagues and each of them knocked off a different idol in Egypt. The Nile was a sacred river to the Egyptians-- a place where they would offer prayers and incense to the river spirit. It turned to a place of death (Ch7). Then the plague of frogs came (ch8). One of the most widely worshiped of Egyptian gods was Heki, the frog goddess. If a frog was accidentally killed by one of the people, often their act was punished by death. The Egyptians considered even the dust of their land sacred and holy, so to have it turn to the disgusting creatures like gnats must have been a terrible blow to their idolatrous thoughts (ch8). There are examples for each of the plagues, but finally we see that there were three days of darkness. The sun itself, as far as the land of Egypt was concerned, and Pharaoh -- “the son of the sun” -- both went into eclipse on those days. Each of the plagues were knocking off the idols of Egypt and confirming that the LORD is the One true God, who is Lord over all! This is who the LORD is that we should obey Him! The One true God!

We see in these passages that God refuses to make peace with our idols. Just as He desired to set the Israelites free from their slavery to Egypt, He was also desiring to set them free from the idols of Egypt. Jesus came to bring a new exodus to set us free! He came to set us free from the sins that enslave us, and the idols that attempt to steal our affection. The LORD is the One true God! He is the one worthy of your worship, affection, and devotion! Set the compass of your heart on Him! Is there some re-calibrating in your heart that needs to be done?

## On whose terms?

**“No! Have only the men go and worship the Lord, since that is what you have been asking for.” Exodus 10:11**

As a parent of three kids, I can attest to the fact that one thing that is bound up in the hearts of us all is a willingness to obey on our own terms. Little kids will claim they intend to obey, though it is obvious that what they really mean is they intend to obey at their own pace and on their own terms. They want to obey just enough to not get sent to the step, no more and no less. On whose terms do we obey?

As we read about Pharaoh's response to the plagues, we see that he wants to obey on his own terms. In 10:11, we see that He wants the plague to stop, so he now says he is willing to let the Israelites go and worship the Lord-- but he says don't take the women and children, only the men. That would be obedience on his terms, not God's. Then, later in the chapter, after another plague, in verse 24 we see he says “Go, worship the LORD. Even your women and children may go with you; only leave your flocks and herds behind.” Again, that would be obedience on his terms, not God's. This is what an unrepentant heart looks like trying to obey God. They want to get rid of the punishment but they don't want to give anything up. Their response to God is all about them. They are still the center of their universe. This is what Pharaoh is used to—being the king of his own kingdom. This is what we are used to as well. So, we often try to obey but on our terms so that we can still be our own king and live for our own kingdom.

But, when we really repent, there is a cataclysmic shift that happens in our world. God becomes the center of our universe and we submit to another king: Jesus. Jesus is our new King and we live in His kingdom. The good news is that He is a loving and benevolent king! Yet, when we come into God's kingdom, He demands that we lay down our sword of authority. He calls the shots. He is our authority!

Unfortunately, we often want to respond, much like Pharaoh, with obedience on our terms. Like Pharaoh we want to pick up our own sword of authority and start wielding it. How does that work for Pharaoh? As we read this story, it seems that every time Pharaoh wields his sword of authority he ends up cutting himself. This isn't just true for Pharaoh; it is true for us as well. When we pick up our own swords again, it often leads to broken lives and relationships, loneliness, debt, addiction, and so much more.

Do you need to truly repent and make Jesus your King? Is there an area you need to submit to God on His terms? Let me encourage you to stop trying to wield your own sword only to keep wounding yourself. Give Jesus your sword and rest under the leadership of your loving and benevolent King!

## THE WAY to Freedom

### **“When I see the blood, I will pass over you...” Exodus 12:13**

Have you ever looked at something that you know is broken, but not been sure how to fix it? This happens to me way more often than I care to admit. If I am transparent with you, when I try to fix something, I often make it worse. It now just lays there in more pieces and I am not even sure how to put it back together to its previous broken state. The sink leaks worse than when I started. The truth is, this is how it often works when we try to fix the problems of the world that are caused from sin. As much as I don't want to admit it—we are not an election away, a non-profit away, a blog away, or even a philanthropic campaign away from solving the world's problems. We cannot set ourselves free. We cannot put the pieces back together by ourselves. But there is a way to ultimate freedom and ultimate restoration. We get shadows of it in the Passover.

I was once talking to a Rabbi and I asked him “what is the most important moment of the whole Old Testament?” He quickly said that it was the Passover. I knew the answer, I just wanted to hear a Rabbi tell me, so I could quote a Rabbi!

What happened at the Passover? Those that put their trust in God's way of salvation and put the blood of the unblemished lamb over the door of their house experienced safety from the wrath of God, and freedom from their slavery! Their lives were changed forever!

God told them to make sure they celebrated this event every year so they wouldn't ever forget it. Why? Because one would come who would live a sinless life, and during the feast of Passover would shed his blood so that we could escape the wrath our sin deserves and be set free from our enslavement to sin and death. Jesus is the one who brings our freedom. He is the one who can restore us from the curse of sin! He is the hope of the world! He is restoring us and setting us free, one at a time! We are told in the book of revelation that one day He will bring freedom and restoration to all of creation—“I am making everything new!” He is leading the greatest exodus in the history of the world!

Praise the Lamb!

## The shortest way or the best way?

**“When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter.” Exodus 13:17**

I remember applying for internships in order to train for a career in campus ministry. I got turned down from three internships! Yep, that is right-- three internships. I have never heard of anyone else ever getting turned down from three Chi Alpha internships. I thought, “a leading accounting firm in the world wants me, but Chi Alpha internships don’t.” But here are the facts: if I would have gotten accepted into any of the first three internships I applied to, I would not have ever planted Chi Alpha at the University of Virginia. The fourth internship I applied for was in Washington, DC which is what brought me to the east coast and ultimately led me to UVA. This is often how God works! He is more concerned about us taking the best path than He is concerned with us taking the shortest path. When we understand this, it will explain a lot of confusion in our Christian experience.

This is what we see God doing for Israel. God didn’t lead them on the road through the Philistine country though that road was shorter. God knew that they were not ready to face war yet, and that maybe they would change their mind and want to go back to Egypt. The fact is, God was gracious to the Israelites by putting a detour sign in their way.

We may get frustrated and say, “I don’t know why it had to go like this”, but the fact is that God may be saving us from something that we are not ready for quite yet. So, instead of leading them into a war zone, He led them into a desert. They grumbled and complained about the desert, but little did they know what God was saving them from.

We must walk in faith and embrace the idea that God is sovereign in our lives. We don’t know what God is saving us from. We don’t know how a setback may actually be the gracious hand of God. God isn’t worried about the shortest path. He is much more concerned that we take the best path.

Walk the path you are given with great faith and faithfulness! The shortest path isn’t always the best path!

## Faith or Fear?

**“...the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord.” Exodus 14:10**

What is your default setting? Is it to expect to see God’s gracious hand of goodness in your life? Or is it to anticipate the worst? We all have a default setting and it is going to be either towards living a life of faith or a life of fear.

Sometimes I get frustrated with myself when I see how, at times, I respond with fear. I can look back and see the faithfulness of God in my life in so many ways. But I will still catch myself quickly drifting towards a life of fear. This is where the people of Israel are in this moment.

In the last 48 hours they had been delivered out of their slavery from Egypt by the powerful hand of God. God had spared their first born sons when all the first born sons of Egypt were dying. They had a front-row seat to the plagues that led to this point. They had seen the power of God on their behalf and His care for them. Yet, when they look up and see the army of Egypt coming their way, they go back to their default setting. They respond with fear, despair, and grumbling.

However, we see there is another person with a different default setting. Moses doesn’t see God in light of his circumstances. He sees his circumstances in light of God. He knew God to be faithful. So his default setting of faith took over. He told the people of Israel “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today” (14:13).

A sentence I say to myself often is “Pete, walk in faith, not in fear!” Let me encourage you to change your default settings and walk with great faith in your powerful and faithful God! Expect to see His gracious hand of goodness in your life.

## Day by day, by day, by day

**“The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day.” Exodus 16:4**

I remember watching “Meet the Parents” and laughing out loud when Ben Stiller pronounced the blessing over the food. He prayed by saying “day by day, by day, by day”. It is a funny moment, but in some ways it sums up what God desired to teach His people through providing them with manna.

He told them to only gather up enough for each day. I find this very interesting. God could have rained down 2 feet of manna 4 times a year. They could have put it in stockpiles and gone to the manna pile any day they needed a little more. But, that is not what He chose to do. He chose to give them their daily allotment, day by day. On Friday there would be enough for two days, so they didn’t need to glean on the Sabbath. But, beyond that, it was daily provision. Why does God do this?

He is teaching His people that they need to rely on Him daily. A life of faith isn’t about trusting in God one day and then living independent of Him the next day. A life of faith isn’t about a time when you trusted Him in the past. No. It is about a life of continual dependence on Him. It is about a continual posture of heart that knows you need Him each and every day.

In fact, Jesus teaches us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread”. We are to commune with God and receive from Him what we need for each day—the strength, grace, provision, faith, love...all we need to go about our days.

May you ask Him for your daily bread! And as you do “May you see Him more clearly, follow Him more nearly and love Him more dearly...day by day by day!”

## Getting Egypt out of us

### **“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery” Exodus 20:2**

This is probably one of the best known chapters of the Bible—the 10 commandments. What is often overlooked is how the commandments start. They start by affirming the relationship that God has with His people, Israel. God is reminding them of the grace that He has shown them.

The commandments are not conditions of entering into a relationship with God. They already have a relationship with Him. But, now that God has gotten them out of Egypt, He now desires to get Egypt out of them. That is no easy task. He wants His people to bear His resemblance. After all, as the people of God, we are responsible for putting His character and nature on display to the world.

Each of the commands show us the character of God and how we are to bear the resemblance of our Father. Here is a list of the 10 commandments in words that speak of what each command is affirming:

1. God shall be your ultimate! Don't turn a good thing into an ultimate thing. The primary source of your identity, security or value is to be God.
2. Any image you could make of God could never do Him justice—He is greater, and more holy than you could ever imagine.
3. We are to be good bearers of His name.
4. We are to be worshippers and people of faith.
5. The true test of character—We are to be people who honor authority and love well at home.
6. We are to value life because God values life.
7. We are to be pure because God is pure.
8. We are to be content with what God has given us.
9. We are to be people who care about truth and justice because God does.
10. We shall not live in competition with each other.

Where do you still see the residue of Egypt in you? The good news is that as people saved by God's grace through Jesus Christ, we receive the Holy Spirit and He is transforming our hearts from the inside out so that we can bear His family resemblance.

Keep your eyes on Jesus who embodied the law perfectly, and walk in the Spirit who will form the resemblance of Christ in you!

## **Anointed for work and blessed to rest**

**“For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord” Exodus 31:15**

This verse hits on two places where our culture tends to struggle: a theology of work, and an ability to rest.

Firstly, inherent in this command is the fact that God cares about our work. He affirms that much of our lives will involve work! We are to work hard. He doesn't even guarantee us a full weekend. At the beginning of the chapter, it talks about how God gifted a couple of men with an anointing for craftsmanship to build the tabernacle (31:3). We see that God is relevant in our work. Whatever skills you need for work, God knows them. He cares about our work.

But, also inherent within this command is the deep commitment to be people who practice Sabbath rest. In Exodus 34:21, He says, “even when it is during plowing season and harvest you must rest.” He doesn't leave an option for us. He commands us to rest. Even when you don't feel like you can afford to take a Sabbath. Why?

Well, for one, we need to rest. Our bodies were only meant to work on a 6:1 ratio. But there is more to the command than that. It takes faith to take a Sabbath, especially when you are one good storm away from losing your crop. When we rest, we are reminding ourselves that we are not the one who is in control, but God is and we trust Him. We are reminded that we are not machines but relational beings made in the image of God, by God, and for God. Our bodies are restored, our faith refreshed, and our perspective reoriented on the Sabbath.

In Exodus 31:13 it says that we are to take a Sabbath so that we may “know that I (God) am the Lord, who makes you holy.” The Sabbath reminds us of the gospel of grace. We are reminded that our status before God is not in what we produce, even if it is spiritual stuff we are producing (like the Tabernacle, in this situation). It is God who makes us Holy. How often do we subtly start to think our standing before God is in what we do for Him, in our Spiritual activity, or in what we produce for God? The fact of the matter is, the Sabbath reminds us that it is by His grace we are saved. He is the one who makes us Holy.

Work hard for the glory of God and rest! Rest in His grace!

## What makes you different?

**“What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?” Exodus 33:16**

I have often asked students a question that is very important; “If someone asked you what it meant to be a Christian, what would you say?” Inevitably, they will almost always say the same thing. They will say, it means you follow Jesus and trust in Him. Yes. This is true. But, it is incomplete. There is another key reality to what it means to be a Christian that is often left out of the picture, but is vital to the Christian life.

Moses declares that what distinguishes God’s people from all of the other people on the face of the earth is not just their creed, but it is the very power and presence of God among them. To be a Christian means we are people who live in the power and presence of God through the Holy Spirit.

Moses could have pointed to a lot of other things that distinguished them from all the other people on the earth. He could have thought circumcision was the distinguishing factor. After all, in the old covenant, this was very important. He could have pointed to the 10 commandments. But, instead he knew that what differentiates God’s people is God’s presence among them.

As followers of Jesus, we have received the gift of the Spirit, and the Spirit’s presence in our lives is what differentiates us from the rest of the world. His presence in our lives is not static, but dynamic! He is the one who is to animate our lives. He is the one who transforms us into the image of Christ. He is the one who brings us into communion with God. He is the one who empowers us for the Christian life and mission. May we not be content with just an intellectual faith, but may we long to see our creed joined together with the dynamic work of the Spirit in our lives, through our lives, and in our community.

The Spirit impacts every aspect of the Christian life. As Galatians says, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit!”

## Why all this detail?

### **“They made curtains of goat hair for the tent over the tabernacle—eleven altogether” Exodus 36:14**

Ok, I need you to be honest with me. Have you ever wondered why we get all of the detail of how they constructed the tabernacle? It talks about it in so much detail from what type of wood they used for a crossbar to what kind of hair they used to make the tent. Why? I think I have a couple of reasons why this is in the canon of Scripture:

1. Because the place that would house the presence of God was so important to the people of Israel. Have you ever talked to someone who had just bought a house or a new car, or a guy who just got a new tool? They will tell you every feature that came with the tool. They will tell you the color, the pros and cons to the certain model of the car that they bought. The detail expresses the fact that it is very valuable to them.

When these chapters describe all of the fixtures of the Tabernacle, I can't help but think about how important it was for the people of Israel. It was the place where the presence of God would dwell among them. This was the most important reality of their existence. What other hope would they have for their journey through the wilderness other than the fact that God was with them? What more precious possession or privilege could they ever obtain that would be greater than the presence of God among them? The tabernacle represented God's grace to dwell among them, lead them, and to bless them. So, it makes perfect sense that we wouldn't get a cursory explanation of such a precious reality, but we would get full colored detail of the Tabernacle! May we treasure our relationship with God in the same way.

2. The second reason why I think we get all of the details of the Tabernacle is because it reminds us that God is Holy, and He must have a Holy place to dwell. The good news of our salvation isn't about our perfection, but about Christ's perfection which is credited to us! When we hear that God needs a Holy place to dwell, it could lead us straight into the ditch of legalism. It could cause us to always be trying to better ourselves so we can commune with God.

Or we can hear it as people of the gospel and have it lead us into a greater revelation of God's grace. It can led us into a deeper understanding of the fact that, “yes, God is holy and so we must be holy to stand before Him in His presence, but because of Jesus and our justification in Him, we can stand before God with confidence.” We have been cleansed through what Titus calls the “washing of rebirth” and we can boldly approach the throne of grace! Not in fear, but in the righteousness of Christ, as children of God, in God's love, with great faith! Praise God!

## Follow the cloud!

**“Whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out...”**  
**Exodus 40:37**

One of the questions that college students often ask is “how to discern God’s will” for their lives. Of course, there are principles that can be discussed on how God guides His people. But there is one overarching reality that we are to live by—We are to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

In the book of Exodus, the people of God were led by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. We see that immediately after coming out of Egypt they are met by this cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. It says the cloud was always in front of the people (13:22). They didn’t move and try to get the Spirit to follow them. No, He moved and they followed Him.

As we journey through this wilderness of life between our deliverance from bondage and entering into our promise land (when we are with God forever), we are led the same way, by the Spirit. This is why it is so important that we keep a conscience that is sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

People often ask me how long I will be at UVA leading Chi Alpha. I tell them that I don’t know but I hope it is a long time. Ultimately, the answer to this question is in the final chapter of Exodus. I am here until the cloud moves. I don’t want to stay a minute longer that the Spirit desires for me to be here. But, I don’t want to leave a minute before the cloud moves. I want my life to always be led by the Spirit of God. I don’t want to move for any other reason.

The obvious question that follows is—What does it look like for the cloud to move in our day and age? I am not totally sure, but I am sure if our hearts are sensitive to the Spirit, we will know. I anticipate it will look like a restlessness that wasn’t previously as pronounced. I anticipate it will look like the birthing of a new vision or a rising of a vision that has been dormant for a long time. I imagine it would look like voices externally saying the same thing to me from different angles. I think it could look like a burden lifting. It may look like all of the above. I am not sure. But I am confident that when we have hearts that are sensitive to the Holy Spirit, we will sense that the cloud is moving when He desires to bring a transition in our lives.

I know this: I want to follow the Cloud more than I want the praise of man: more than I want the riches of man: more than I want the easy life: more than I want anything else.

May we all follow the Cloud of God’s presence, walk with Him, and be led by Him for His glory and our good!