

EXODUS – JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

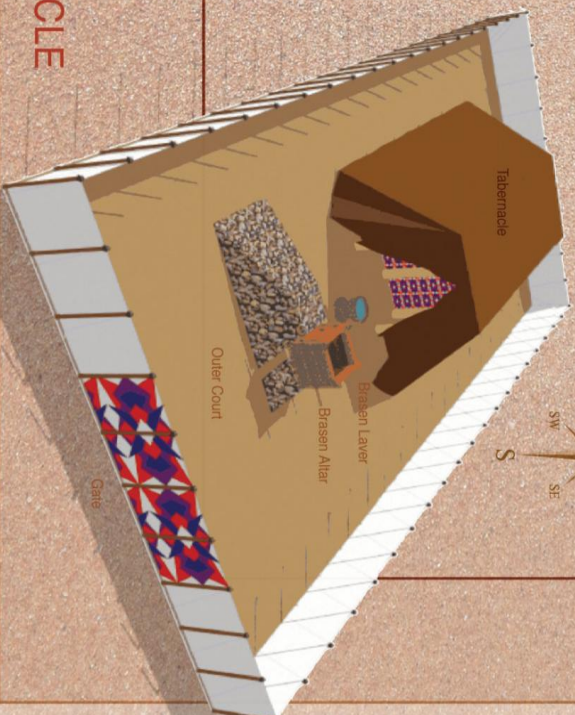
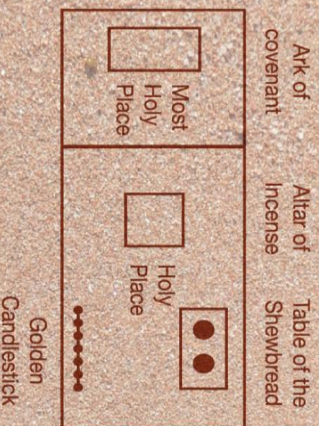
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LIVING LIFE AS GOD INTENDED



This illustration shows the relative positions of the
 Tabernacle furniture used in Israelite worship.
 The Tabernacle has been enlarged for clarity.

THE PLAN OF THE TABERNACLE

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THIS ISSUE

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EXODUS

— journey to freedom

In this edition of Thrive we will journey through the amazing story of the book of Exodus. The story of Genesis flows seamlessly into the life of Moses and the Exodus from Egypt. Exodus gives us some of the most important symbols of the biblical faith and as such there is so much of depth here to explore. I am confident that this will be an enriching and enlightening journey. So please continue with me in this edition of Thrive as we see and learn amazing things from the word of God.

MJ

BLESSING & OPPOSITION

Exodus 1

The book of Exodus tells the story of the birth of Israel as a nation. The various ingredients that make up the story of this book are also the ingredients that make up the identity of God's people. The story begins with Israel being blessed in Egypt (where they had settled when Joseph was prime minister). So first up we are reminded that this people is a people favoured and blessed by God. In view of this it should not therefore surprise us to see an attempt to curb the growth and blessing of this people. This fulfils the prediction made in Genesis 3:15 that, as God's people (the seed of the woman) rise to a position of great influence in the world, Satan will attempt to thwart their growth. This is what happens in Egypt as Pharaoh enslaves the Israelites and tries to cull their population. As you read Exodus, I would encourage you to let this book shape both your identity and your expectations. Know that you are favoured and blessed by God. But know also, that because of this, Satan will do everything he can to try to curb the growth of God's blessing in and through you. Don't expect a smooth ride. I do not say this to make you afraid but simply to make you aware. You have nothing to fear. God will turn Satan's attempts to harm you into still more blessing for you. Trust God, therefore, and, like the Hebrew midwives in this account, focus on doing the *right* thing in every situation.

Read Exodus 1

What can you do today that will thwart the plans of the enemy against you?

FRIDAY
2 MAY

CURSE TO BLESSING

Exodus **2:1-10**

I said yesterday that no matter what your spiritual enemy, Satan, tries to do to thwart God's plans for you, if you trust God and do the right thing then you have nothing to worry about. In fact, you will have a lot to be excited about because God can turn whatever the enemy throws at you into further blessing for you in the long run. That is the great wisdom of God. We see a perfect example of that here in Exodus chapter 2. Pharaoh issues an edict to kill all the newborn Hebrew boys to try and curb the influence of the Jews in Egypt. The Hebrew midwives do the right thing and let the boys live, including one boy named Moses. To protect Moses from further danger his mother places him in a floating basket in the Nile, where he is discovered and then adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. So, Pharaoh's attempts to curb the blessing and influence of this people have now led to the Israelite's future deliverer being adopted into the central position of influence in Egypt. Talk about a twist! And no one loses out here! Moses' mother ends up getting hired to nurse the child. Not only is her son alive; not only has he been made a prince of Egypt; but she is getting paid to nurse him. If you trust God and do the right thing, God will turn every circumstance into blessing for you ultimately. The plans of the enemy against you will not only fail, but they will be turned into God's plans to bless you.

Read Exodus 2:1-10

Think about how God is wanting you to trust him and do the right thing today.

Weak Enough – Exodus **2:11-25**

Moses grew up in Pharaoh's household as a prince of Egypt, but he was aware that he was a Hebrew (he would have been circumcised). At some point he also felt that he should do something about the situation his people were in. The problem was that he didn't seem to know how to go about it. He killed an Egyptian for beating a Hebrew which he may have thought would make him look like a hero. But, in fact, it just made him look a fool in the eyes of the Hebrews. When you read this you might wonder what the difference is between Moses at this point in the story and the Moses that did eventually lead the Hebrews out of Egypt. The answer is simple. The Moses who led the people out of Egypt acted in obedience to God. In the early stage, Moses had no such mandate from God to do what he did. He was a proud young man. But 40 years herding goats in the desert would deal with this. God would not use Moses to deliver his people until Moses was weak enough to do so. The Moses who killed the Egyptian was a young man who felt that he could do something about the plight of his people. The Moses that parted the sea and led the Israelites to the promised land was a humble old man who knew that he could do nothing apart from God. Which of the two will you choose to be? Are you weak enough to be used by God for great things?

Read **Exodus 2:11-25**. Are you trying to serve God depending on your own gifts and abilities? Think about how you can become more dependent on God.

MONDAY
5 MAY

FROM PRINCE TO SHEPHERD

Exodus **2:11-25**
& 2 Corinthians **12:7-10**

Moses went from having one of the highest positions in the Egyptian empire to having one of the lowest positions. This man who had been prince of Egypt was now a shepherd, and shepherds were right at the bottom of the Egyptian social ladder. The Israelites/Hebrews were identified in Egypt as being a class of shepherds (see Genesis 46:31-34) and so what is happening here is that Moses is undergoing a change of identity. While he certainly identified himself as a Hebrew he was not seen as such by the Egyptians and thus neither by the Israelites. This transition is significant for Moses' calling. If he is going to serve God, it will be as a humble Israelite shepherd not as an Egyptian prince. God didn't need Moses' position of power to work his plans. He just needed Moses to be a humble Israelite. God wants you to identify yourself to the world as one of his people. He doesn't want you to see yourself according to your position in society. He wants people to know you as a Christian. People may think less of you for this but that is not the point. As you live out of this identity you are in the best position to be used by God to lead people out of slavery to this world system, into the promised land of God's blessings in Christ.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 along with Exodus 2:11-25
Think about how you can be a better
representative of Christ today.

NOT CONSUMED

TUESDAY

6 MAY

Exodus **3:1-5**; Luke **4:16-21**
& Acts **2:1-4**

After 40 years in the desert, Moses, now an old man of about 80, is visited by God. And notice how God appeared to him: through a bush that burned but was not consumed. The way that God appears here declares something already before any words are spoken. Fire is a symbol of the presence of God in Scripture. It carries with it the idea of holiness and even judgement. It symbolises the purging holiness of God. But what we see here is that although the bush is burning it was not being consumed. God was calling Moses to bear his presence just as the bush did, and like the bush, Moses would not be consumed. This is the same for us, as God's people. We are able to bear God's presence without being consumed by it. This miracle is possible because Christ was judged for our guilt in our place. This means that, for us, the presence of God is a purifying fire, not a destroying fire. We must trust deeply in Christ for this, otherwise, we will forever be afraid to draw near to God. Many Christians still labour under a sense of condemnation and therefore struggle to believe that God means well for them. But you can be assured that God comes upon you to gently purify you, not to destroy you. You are the like the bush that burns but is not consumed. His fire, for you, is a fire that heals, cleanses and invigorates. As the burning bush was a beacon to Moses, so Christ makes you a beacon of the light of his grace to all people.

Read Exodus 3:1-5 as well as Luke 4:16-21 & Acts 2:1-4
Ask God to fill you with his Holy Spirit today.

WEDNESDAY

7 MAY

WAITING FOR FAITHFULNESS

Exodus 3:6-10

God reveals himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses would have heard of this God in stories about his ancestors from hundreds of years ago. But by this stage it is possible that all God has become to Moses is a character from these stories. Although we can see the obvious providence surrounding the events of Moses' life as we read the book of Exodus, it does not appear that Moses himself has recognised any of these signs of God's presence. The Israelites may well have given up on this God who had told Abraham that his descendants would be blessed and that whoever cursed them would be cursed. There had been no sign of any fulfilment of this lately. They had cried out to God for a long time but there had been no answer. One would imagine that many of them would have lost faith altogether. But now God announces that he is going to be true to his promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is going to save them from their slavery and lead them into the place of blessing, the promised land. I always remember the Israelites in Egypt when long periods go by without any answers to my prayers. These stories tell me that God will ultimately be faithful to his promises, but it may take a long time. We don't know why God waited so long to save his people. We don't need to know. We just need to know that in the end he showed himself faithful and he will show himself faithful to us as well.

Read Exodus 3:6-10

Thank God that he is always there and trust him with your circumstances.

WHO AM I?

Exodus 3:11-12
& 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

In Genesis 3 God tells Moses that he is to be the one by whose hand God will deliver the Israelites. Moses then reacts with what could be mistaken for humility. “Who am I,” he says, “that I should go...?” Often we act like this thinking it is humility when actually it is disobedience. We hold back from taking ministry opportunities and even leadership opportunities because we think we aren’t worthy. If you have responded to a ministry opportunity like this then you may have made the same mistake as Moses makes here in Genesis 3. You might be under the mistaken assumption that ministry and leadership is about you and your qualifications. In reality, all that matters, at least initially, is a willingness to serve God. God loves to use those who are willing, in order that he might glorify himself through weakness. You are not qualified for ministry, and neither are you disqualified. But, if you are *willing*, God will use what abilities you have. God wants to work through you. I have seen many seemingly unremarkable people do remarkable things for God. There have also been many seemingly remarkable people whose lives nevertheless bore little fruit for God. God loves a willing servant. Step forward for responsibility. Don’t disguise humility as an unwillingness to carry responsibility. Step forward for God and you will see what he will do through you.

Read Exodus 3:11-12 along with 1 Corinthians 1:26-31
Think about how you can step forward to serve God.

Moses' question about God's name might seem strange to us but in a culture that had many different gods it is not strange at all. Moses anticipates that the Israelites are going to want to know which 'god' Moses is claiming to speak for. The answer is spectacular: God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM". (The name 'YHWH,' translated as 'LORD' in most Bibles, is derived from the Hebrew 'I AM'.) This name with which God refers to himself at once casts his divine person infinitely beyond anything that people were dealing with in the religions of the ancient world. He is the infinite and eternal creator of all things. He is both transcendent (that is, above and beyond all things) and immanent (always working in and through all things). He is not just *a being*, he is, as the Westminster Confession of Faith says, the "fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things". Don't therefore treat Yahweh like a finite god who is 'up there somewhere' and who occasionally pops by to help us. You are immersed in God's presence now. Your very being and life flow from him. You are experiencing God right now in a constant and fundamental sense. It is in fact the very constancy and primacy of God's presence that makes him unnoticeable to us. And so, we often look for tangible experiences and even, as in the ancient world, we prefer the tangible experience to the reality of the intangible God. This is what leads to idolatry. All people know God, but few people worship him for who he is.

Read Exodus 3:13-15

Acknowledge God's presence and thank him for all he is doing for you.