

Exodus

Core Group Study Guide

By the Chi Alpha Staff at UVa

This is a ten week study on the Book of Exodus. We are excited about this resource because we feel it covers many different topics that believers go through. 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 and by studying the book of Exodus we are able to see how we can respond in these difficult and joyful times.
Enjoy!

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Overview of the Study

Breakdown of Studies:

Week 1: Connect With God/Turn away from your busy schedule.

Chapter 3:1-10

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?

Week 2: God Gives Promises to Use Us Despite Our Excuses, He wants a willing vessel.

Chapter 3:1-4:9

God answers Moses' doubts about himself/his God-given mission and God answers them with promises to Moses.

God desires to use you and I; what excuses have we been using?

Week 3: Plagues: Our Biggest Plague Today: Idolatry.

Chapters 7-10

This one needs lots of revisions based on your cg. You can go the route of God as protector or God doesn't mess with idolatry – we can't put anything before him.

Week 4: Do we turn to our old ways when following God demands tough times?

Chapter 14

What kind of signs do we have of God's protection in our lives? Do we ever desire to turn back? What broken cisterns do we turn to: Our old way of life?

Week 5: Chapter 16 Trusting God & Taking Sabbath go together. God leads the Israelites & provides for them through manna but makes them take a day off. This is also a test of their trust of Him.

Week 6: Reflection. Remembering. Reacting because of those first two things. Making something to remind us of what God has done for us in the past. To show people but to also help US remember.

Week 7: Becoming close with God. How to further your relationship with the Lord, Similar to relationships here on earth: it takes time spent and vulnerability.

Week 8: Ten Commandments (#6-10 specifically) these focus on our relationship to people whereas the first focus on our relationship to God.

Week 9: Recap. Tell the journey. This would be a good time for core group members to participate by each preparing a paragraph about the passage and lesson for each week. You could pair them together as well if you have more than 8 members. Have them share and have a time of reflection at the end. Pray a lot. Ask each person to state one of the principles/promises/truths we've learned that they need to still work on right now.

Week One: Invitation to a Journey with God

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?

*Optional Idea: Start worship tonight by having everyone remove their shoes to help them personally interact with the text you will be studying later in the evening.

Background Info

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, 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 she placed him in the reeds of the Nile so that someone would find him. *Moses* was found by *Pharaoh's daughter* in the Nile and she took him 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 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 & TEXT QUESTIONS

1. Read Exodus 3:1-6

2. 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 that day?

3. Why do you think God chose a burning bush to get *Moses'* attention?

Hint: Acts 17:26b-27 says "He determined the times set from them and the exact places where they should live. *God did this so that men would seek Him* and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us"

4. As you look back at your time at UVA (or for first years maybe the summer and first part of their time here), can you see times where God has been trying to get your attention? Share one of these times. What was your reaction?

5. How did Moses respond to God's invitation at the burning bush?

6. 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 is it significant that he used their names?

Hint: We see that God is all powerful, is personal and seeks out people on the back side of the desert (and even in Hereford)! 😊

Read v7-10

7. Knowing that Moses was a shepherd, what would have been the potential ramifications to his day for giving God his attention by going to the bush and meeting with God?

Hint...what do you think happened to the sheep during this time? He probably had to work a little harder once he got done. Can you relate?

8. How would Moses' life be different if he didn't take time to investigate the burning bush?

Regret? No Adventure? Living in Shame over killing the Egyptian.

Application Qtns:

What things often keep us from turning aside from our daily tasks and activities to connect with God?

Think back to times God has tried to get your attention. If you didn't, what kept you from responding?

THIS WEEK: Find a time every day to go outside, away from our tasks and other activities and talk with God. He desires to meet you and for you to know Him on a personal level. Will you respond?

Week Two: Saying “Yes” to God

Background Info:

Recap last week’s take away (and maybe a little more background if there are new people) - “Find a time every day to go outside, away from our tasks and other activities and talk with God. He desires to meet you and for you to know Him on a personal level. Will you respond?”

Ask if anyone experienced a change in the way they responded to God, or maybe just someone else this week. Did last week’s story of Moses impact anyone’s week this past week?

Opening Question

(*Optional Idea: Have Pixie Sticks as a candy for everyone to have during core group this week. The main point will be that we are to be God’s vessel and you can make this point later by asking what the important part of a pixie stick is; what the essential part is; and it’s the inside/content (or in Moses’ case it was God working through him).)

1. Have you ever felt inadequate for a job you’ve had? Tell 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 just give up? Get someone else to help you? What’s your normal response to this?

We’ll see tonight how Moses responded when he felt inadequate for the task at hand: 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.

Text & Text Questions

Read Exodus 3:1 – 6

1. A. Why do you think Moses hid his face?

Hint: Perhaps because of his past? He had killed the Egyptian and now God was becoming him. I bet he was fearful.

B. Can you relate to this reaction? Do you hide when you feel God may be speaking to you because you feel unworthy? Do you believe God only calls “perfect” people? Really? How about when you think about the people in this group. Do you compare yourself and feel inferior?

Let’s see God’s reaction to Moses hiding.

Read Exodus 3:7-10

2. Does anything strike you as being weird about God’s call on Moses’ life?

Hint: He chose a man that was marred and haunted by a murder he committed *not a perfect man like we often imagine God calling on.

v. 10 God chose Moses and He commanded him to go, He never asked Moses if he

wanted to go He just told him to go. God doesn't give him the option of backing out.

3. Knowing Moses was a shepherd for the last forty years in Midian and that he fled from Egypt for his life, how do you think you would have responded to God's call if you were Moses?

Read Exodus 3:10-4:16 (A good idea is to have everyone take a couple of verses and read aloud just make sure people are comfortable doing so).

5. What are the five excuses Moses gives to God's call?

Who am I? (Ex 3:11), What if they ask me a question I cannot answer (Ex 3:13)

What if they don't believe me? (Ex 4:1) I have never been eloquent in speech (Ex 4:10) Please send someone else (Ex 4:13)

6. What are some of the excuses that we have given God when he asks us to do something?

7. What does every one of Moses' excuses seem to be so focused on?

Hint: Himself, he is looking at who he is in the natural. Everything he uttered was about himself and his inadequacies as a human.

8. Take a minute to recap each excuse and ask what God's response was.

9. As you examine how God gently responds to Moses' excuses with reassurance of the fact that He will be with him and that He is the all powerful great I Am, what do you think God is really asking of Moses?

Hint: God just wants Moses to put all his trust in Him that He will be the one to do the miraculous, he just wants Moses to be the vessel. A vessel isn't much; just a tube what really matters are the contents.

(PIXIE STICKS – if you used this here is where I would say how what really matters is the sugar inside, some people might reach for a blue one but it really doesn't matter what the outside is made up of, it's what is on the inside ☺).

10. If God is really just looking for us to trust Him and for us to open our lives to be used by Him, as He calls us, how does that encourage you in the current circumstances you are in today?

Re-Read Ex. 4:1-9

11. What do you think God wanted Moses to realize by God using the staff in Moses' hand?

Hint: God wanted to point out to Moses that while Moses saw a piece of wood God saw an instrument He could use for the supernatural.

12. What do you think God was communicating to Moses using the staff he already had in his hand?

Hint: God was probably saying that He would take whatever Moses had already and use it.

13. Are there any areas in your life that you are having trouble trusting God in? Maybe it's a career calling, maybe a relationship you have, maybe a dream you've had but are fearful of failing? (ask what promise of God relates to each shared).

Pray

Tonight when you pray for each other ask God to help increase everyone's faith and trust in the Him so that they may say yes to all that God has for them. Ask God to help everyone overcome their insecurities and fear so that they can walk out in faith and obedience.

Application Thoughts & Questions:

God desires to use you. He is the one that is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-seeing. If He asks something of you will you be faithful to do what you think He is leading you to do?

This week: Make a list of things you have always believed make you inadequate for your dreams or for things God has asked of you. Next, write a promise God gives Moses to combat that feeling. Then pray and release to God all of your inadequacies.

End Core Group listening and reflecting on the song "Take My Life" or "Here Am I"

Week Three: Idolatry; Our Biggest Plague

A Note: This study is probably the longest that we will have. It goes over the plagues which cover many chapters. Feel free to condense as you see necessary but try to pay attention to the “Take Away” ensuring that you don’t take away portions that would directly relate

Opening Question:

In the Bible people worshipped and put many things as a higher priority in their lives that weren’t God. We refer to these things as “idols”.

What kind of things could become idols in our lives today as college students?

How/Why? (some things: boyfriend/girlfriends, school, family, a certain job or status after college, movie stars, mentors, friends, tv.... Basically anything you worship)

Recap from last week: In this recap be sure to : emphasize the cruel brutality of the Egyptians, the human weaknesses of Moses, and Pharaoh’s intense desire to be the god-figure to all people.

Background Info:

the recap is a good chance to ask people in your small group to help explain

Recap from last week: In this recap be sure to : emphasize the cruel brutality of the Egyptians, the human weaknesses of Moses, and Pharaoh’s intense desire to be the god-figure to all people.

The first week we talked about how Moses was called on – 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 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.

Background Text & Questions

Read Exodus 4:29-31 as background – Moses goes to the Hebrews/Israelites and he tells them what he’s about to do.

1. What is the Israelites response to Moses telling them what he’s about to do.

Read Exodus 5:1-2

1. How would you feel at this moment if you were Moses?

God tells Moses that he WILL make Pharaoh let the Israelites go.

We see in the next few chapters how God does this:

Note: The plagues did not have to occur if Pharaoh had simply obeyed God and let them go in the first place, but Pharaoh decided to be against God; which is not the best idea ☺

Text & Text Questions

(The text here is about the plagues – two things to emphasize for each: pharaoh's response and God's protection of the Israelities *Feel free to summarize a few and read a few for time's sake!*)

1, Water turns to blood- (7:13-24) (Several gods were associated with the Nile. The Nile was the sacred source of all life in Egypt. Why? Without the Nile, it was only a desert, no water, 2" annual rainfall) Seeing 365 days of the year without water- no cooking, bathing, cleaning, drinking, crops on side of river, fish could not be eaten and fish were vital for food. Did not only curse the Nile but every bucket and pitcher. After 7 days of no water: the fish died and stunk, vegetables along banks died. "River of life" became "river of death".

- A. What is the significance of water in this culture?
- B. What was Pharaoh's response? Hint: Vs. 22

2. Frogs- (8:1-15) Because frogs were sacred, the Egyptians worshipped them! (Like cows in India). Thus they could not be killed! No way to fight them, they were helpless. When these died, their corpses also stunk (vs. 14). What does Pharaoh do? (vs. 8)? But when pressure was off- Pharaoh again hardened his heart.

- A. What was Pharaoh's response?
- B. How did God respond to Pharaoh's first response? What does this tell us about God? (he is JUST and keeps His promises)

3. Lots of Gnats- (8:16-19) The court magicians could not duplicate this plague or any other. This one came unannounced. It was a plague against the land, the rich soil and against the people to defile them. Biting, stinging insects would penetrate the nostrils and ears. IN your hair, down you neck, up your nose, in your mouth, eyes, ears. Vs. 19- gives us Pharaoh's last words to his magicians. He never called on them again. And Pharaoh? He still would not fear the Lord.

- A. What happened when the magicians tried to imitate God's power? What does this tell us about our God?
- B. Pharaoh's response?

4. Insects, Flies- (8:20-32) a type of bloodsucking insect that laid more eggs to hatch. They came in swarms like mosquitoes!) Many insects were worshipped as gods but now they are intolerable. (Vs. 22). Yet the Hebrews were totally surrounded by a shield of favor and they were protected. This was because of God's covenant! They enjoyed divine protection. We can too! Never doubt God's protective hand over your life if you are His! Pharaoh? (8:28 & 32).

- A. Verse 22 – 24 What do these verses show us about God? (He protects His people and those who follow Him)
- B. Pharaoh's response?

5. Death of animals- (9:1-7) the plagues had already removed fish and water, now meat and milk in the form of horses, donkeys, camels, cows, sheep, goats, and cattle. A popular cult in Egypt was that of a "bull god". In their shrines sacred bulls were kept and worshipped. (GThink of the olden calf in desert later in the book)
A cow was a goddess of fertility, yet for all her powers, could not keep cows from dying. Animals were of enormous importance to Egypt. This plague was severe, contagious and fatal. Think of the carcasses strewn across the land. They were supposed to have sacred burial grounds.

Similarity to the plague before:

- A. What about the Hebrew livestock? (vs 9:6), they are found grazing peacefully in green meadows, they are prospering and never even got sick.
- B. Pharaoh's Response? vs. 7
- C. So far – what would you do differently if you were pharaoh? If you were Moses?

6. Boils- (9:8-12) afflicted the bodies of the people. Inflamed eruptions broke out all over the body causing deep ulcers that were open with running pus. Soot from a furnace was thrown into the air and came down as dust particles to cause these eruptions. Very ironic! *The Egyptians sprinkled ashes as a sacred rite to their gods to bring blessing on their people. Here it is a curse.*

The priests would have used those ashes to bless the people, but now could not even touch them! It defiled them.

- Where were the healing gods of Egypt? Famous for their medical cures?

Note: vs. 11- the magicians could no longer stand before Pharaoh. When a person is in this condition, you don't want anything to touch you.

- A. How do you think the Israelites were feeling at this point?
- B. Pharaoh's Response? (9:12)

7. Thunder, hail, lighting- (9:13-35) directed toward the gods of the skies and the atmosphere. Remember, Egypt was a place of very little rain and rarely if ever, hail. Now the skies were full of clouds, hail came, fireballs darted and zigzagged on the

ground. This would finish off the remainder of the animals left. Yet in Goshen where the Hebrews lived, it did not hail.

A. What do you see about Pharaoh's response here? *Pharaoh- 9:27 begs relief, 9:28 promises freedom, 9:35 hardens heart again. Pharaoh decides he can outlast God; this proved to be a bad decision because the worse is yet to come.

8. Locusts- (10:1-20) all day and all night, with a strong east wind, the Lord brought a terrifying invasion of locusts. They devoured what was left in the field. (note vs. 15 that "**nothing** green remained."). The water supply and fish are gone, the livestock are dead.

A. DO you think these questions were going through the minds of the Egyptians? - *Where is the goddess of the grain? Where is the god of the harvest?* Vs. 14 says it was "very severe" because this plague was so destructive.

B. What is the response of some of the Egyptians? The Egyptians could look across the border and see that with the Hebrews all was well and green and plentiful. Their cattle grassed, their fruit trees blossomed with fruit, and not one locust afflicted the Hebrews. (vs. 7) Nobles came to Pharaoh and begged him to let the Hebrews go before it came (10:11).

C. What is the response of Pharaoh? 10:17 and 10:20.

9. Plague of Darkness & Death of the firstborn :
Just summarizing these will be fine : remember the sun God "Ra" is the most important god of the Egyptians! And the first born was the most important because they would overtake everything once the parent died.

Read – Exodus 12:31-32

WOW. Take a second and reflect on what just happened. What a journey for everyone!

FINAL QUESTIONS:

Ask: How can we see this as a story of God's love?

God gave Pharaoh 9 opportunities to repent and worship Him. NINE!

1. How did Pharaoh respond when asked each time about obeying God and letting the Israelites go?

Hint: He refused to do what God was asking.

2. Who took action when Pharaoh responded to Moses?

Hint: God

We see that God takes action on behalf of Moses – when God tells you to do something he will have your “back” so to speak. We need to remember who we walk in the authority of the one who sends us; and that is God –

3. What do we see about God in this passage?

Hint: (The things might be varied but here are a few that we noticed)

- God does not tolerate people saying no to His commands.
- He is ALL-Powerful and more powerful than anyone/thing else.
- Teaches that God is protector of His people
- God does not tolerate pride
- He will ALWAYS show who He is if we ask.

4. *****VERY IMPORTANT QUESTION*****

How were the plagues similar? (This might take a few minutes of silent reflection to decide – tell the group this and allow 3 minutes or so before you ask for a response).

Hint: They were all God taking away something that was placed in high regard/idolized/worshiped by Pharaoh and the Egyptians in general.

- God does not compromise with idolatry. He judges it.
- God does not tolerate false gods or anything other than Him being worshiped. He judges them for He says, “You shall have no other gods before me.” (1st Commandment).

Take Away

1. Don't be in the danger zone of ignoring God's warnings. If we shove aside His truths, our hearts too will become hardened. We all know people who place themselves above God, ignore His truth, His appeals, His warning. They have a stiff neck. You cannot be this way and not receive judgment from God. Never doubt that His judgments come to those who resist Him.

God judges those who place any other god before Him. He blesses those who bless Him. Thou shalt have “no other gods before me”.

2. Likewise- when God blesses, He holds nothing back. While the Egyptians were in darkness, the Hebrews had full light flooding them like a shining city! God offers to those who love Him great grace and favor everyday. He offers us His protection, provision, and blessings. Nothing is more wonderful than His care! Remember the phrase in the hymn “Be Thou My Vision”: “...waking or sleeping, THY PRESENCE MY LIGHT.”

There is nothing God cannot deliver me from!

Ask: Is there anything that is in your life you worship? Anything that could be an idol in your life?

Ask: Do you believe in God's protection and blessing?

To do – Faith in Action

Tonight/This week : Pray that God would reveal anything you are putting before Him. Pray that he would help you remove those high places, those idols that we make into little g-gods, pray and then get with a partner to discuss some of those things and ways that you can ensure that you keep them in their rightful place; not being worshipped and not before God.

Week Four: The Journey Begins

Opening Question:

1. What is something that always brought you comfort when you were little? Maybe it was a bear, ninja turtle, a blanket, etc.. (This ties in at the end)

Text & Text Questions

Read Exodus 13:17-22

1. Why did God lead the Israelites around by the way of the desert road toward the Red Sea?? hint : v.17
2. How did this affect Israel's journey?
3. Have you ever experienced a time when you thought you knew the best way but for some reason (God) had other plans? (we will share more on this later – **optional** for now)
4. How did God guide the Israelites?
5. How involved was God in the Israelites path? Did he make them travel at a certain time of the day/a certain path? (follow up: Is that what you previously thought of God's involvement in your life?)

God was with them and He went before them. God made it hard for them to journey off course because He made the way clear. He did not force them to travel at certain times but made it clear that He was with them and ready for them at all times, allowing the Israelites to decide when they wanted to move forward.

Read Exodus 14:1-14

6. If you were Moses, how would you have reacted to God's plan? (plan: turning back so that Pharaoh would pursue them)
7. What seems to be God's ultimate purpose in this plan?
Hint: That He would gain glory for Himself and the Egyptians would know He is the Lord & that they could TRUST him to provide better than their old lives under the Egyptians!

(follow up) What does it mean to bring God glory?

We bring God glory *by being who He created us to be in Christ*. This brings God glory because as we allow Christ to live through us our lives would scream of who He is, causing others to know He is the Lord.

8. How did the Israelites react when they looked up and saw the Egyptian army marching toward them?

Hint: They were terrified and cried out to the Lord, thought they would die, being in slavery all of a sudden was a better circumstance than their current one, slavery would have been better, in fact they wanted to stay in slavery

9. What did their reaction reveal about their relationship with the Lord?

They really did not trust the Lord, they lived in fear not by faith. They would rather have the security of bondage/slavery than the living in the adventure of faith.

10. Describe a time when you experienced a test in which you reacted in fear not faith.

11. Think back to Moses' burning bush experience. Now think of his response to the Israelites' worries – what areas of Moses' faith have grown??

Hint: Moses is confident in his God, he trusts in the power of his God to deliver. Moses knew his God, he knew it is the Lord that fights our battles.

Read Exodus 14:15-31

13. What did God's plan of escape require of Moses and the Israelites?

Faith and Obedience (v.15/16/31)

14. How did this experience change the relationship between God and Israel?

The Israelites had faith in the Lord, understood His power & trusted Him

15. How was God glorified through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen?

It was because Pharaoh pursued the Israelites that they witnessed to the power of their

God and that brought them closer to Him because not only did they fear the Lord but they trusted Him and His servant Moses.

Application Questions ☺

The first & second are two different ways you could go with this study as for the take away.... So pay attention to which one you want them to take away & then make sure to keep questions that go along with that particular take away (OR I suggest that you can do both for the different people in your group and ask them to identify which one they need more prayer for)

1. Describe a time in your life when you experienced a frustrating detour from your plans, but in hindsight it turned out to be one of God's blessings. Do you need direction right now? How are you making sure to let God lead?

This one you can talk about God's direction & how we need to seek His direction & have FAITH & NOT FEAR in those areas.

2. Think back to the very beginning of our study tonight; the first question asked about something we kept for comfort when we were little. Is there something in your life NOW that you have kept around because it's comfortable? Think about people in your life maybe it's a relationship, maybe it's a habit you keep turning back to, something in your life that you know isn't helping you get to where God wants you to go; God wants to take you from that and give you something better; it's up to YOU however if you do that.

Prayer

1. Pray for those who feel as though God has taken them down the long hard road. Ask God to bring His peace, that they would know they are in His hand.
2. Pray for the people in your group that need to LET GO of something they have been holding onto in order to get to where God wants them to be.

To do: Get rid of anything that you're just holding onto; believe God that He has great plans for you & let Him lead this week.

Week Five: Sabbath & Trust

Opening Activity – Share a snack (have everyone in the group eat a bunch of salt free crackers and don't allow them to drink anything). Ask how everyone *feels* (say emotionally – angry at core group leaders etc., physically – dry etc)

*(Note these things down maybe on a white board or large piece of paper.. this will be used later @ the end).

Reflect on the past weeks lessons during worship:

Rewind from the past weeks:

Week 1 – Moses & Burning Bush: God called Moses, but Moses had to be willing to go out of his way & respond to God's call. We chose to follow God that week & make sure that we took time out of our day to listen to what God might be saying.

Week 2 – Moses' excuses: We saw that Moses had a list of reasons why He was not the best one for the job at hand, but God showed Moses that all he had to do was rely & trust in God, that God would be the one working THROUGH Moses. We became willing vessels for God to use us as He wishes.

Week 3 – We learned about the plagues and how Pharaoh was very prideful and how pride corrupts, we also learned about God's protection of His children.

Week 4 – We saw that God took the Israelites around a different path than they thought best. We learned that sometimes God takes us a different path because he knows that is best for us. We surrendered our paths to God & agreed to ask Him for where he wanted us to go & how to get there.

Text & Text Questions

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. Also feel free to ask students what their journey would have been like had they been in the desert..

Read Exodus 15:22-27

1. What was the Israelites first reaction to being in the desert? Have we seen this from them before? (complaining, yes we saw it when God took them around a different path.)
2. What was God's response to their grumbling?
3. What was God's law/testing and why was this significant?
4. What do you think their reaction was when they arrived in Elim? (v. 27).

Read 16:1

5. How would you feel if you were an Israelite & Moses had you leave Elim?
6. Where is God leading the Israelites? Keep this in mind.
7. Where is God leading us eventually? (Heaven... Eternal life with God...)
8. Can you see any resemblance to us & the Israelites? In what ways?

Let's keep reading and see their reaction to what God does.

Read 16:1-5

9. So what does God's plan seem to be? Why the stipulations? Hint: think 7th day.... Sabbath... then commandments... also to see if they will trust him even for a day's food after he's proven himself (over & over & over again)

Read 16:9-28

*note at verse 10 that God APPEARS to them. WOW!

10. What happened? Why?

11. Were the Israelites grateful for this? What was their response? Still see any similarities between us & them?

12. What was the point of the Sabbath? Why was it so hard for the Israelites to adhere to?

Read 16:28-30

13. What does God's response & his actions in this chapter say about the relationship God desires with the Israelites? Hint: He wants to provide for you in a relationship where you trust Him.

Closing Questions:

1. How does it feel that God wants to provide for your needs?
2. In what ways can going through trials of testing from God strengthen our faith?
3. How does Sabbath reflect your relationship with God?
4. How can you practice Sabbath in your life? (take a day off to spend time with God, trust that your work will get done because that's what God desires, take a sundown to sundown day of rest.. don't get to law(y) on them)
5. Read Matthew 4:4, Luke 11:3, and John 6:26. What does Jesus have to say about the provision of manna?

Application Questions:

Look back to the list of descriptions of how everyone felt when they had the saltines without water. Tell how this is similar to what the Israelites were feeling. It was because they didn't stop to let God help them, they just kept on keeping-on, kept on going. It was Moses who went to God for provision. Moses trusted God for that. So can we. When we're feeling dry we can go to God. Often we let our emotions sway us because we're stressed, whatever but we really need God to be our provider – WE CAN'T DO IT ALONE. HE IS OUR STRENGTH. Refer back to the passages in the

closing questions. As you read them aloud have everyone close their eyes and really meditate on what that means.

End with everyone writing down a few ways they can really trust God to provide for them & how they can incorporate Sabbath. And end in Prayer Corporately –

Something like “God help US know you are our provider, help us to TRUST you to be providing for us. Remind us that it is in YOUR strength that we can do anything. Help refresh us with your living water during this busy and stressful season. Help us to remember to keep our eyes on you & to stop looking at the immediate emotional surroundings that often sway us. Thank you for your provisions and for your covenant with us!”

Week Six: Building Alters to Remember

Opening Questions/Activity:

Think about a way that God has come through for you in the past. Are there any distinct times that you remember feeling like God had heard you, or had protected you or had spoken to you? (You can make this creative by having them draw with colored pencils & paper times or just have them say aloud).

Most people would only have few come to their minds. Ask why this might be. Sometimes it is difficult to remember things God has done for you, but how much easier is it to trust someone when you know they are reliable from times past?

Background:

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/ Sabbath (main point from last week: Sabbath & Trust work together).

Read Exodus 16:31-34

1. Why do you think God had them keep manna for the future generations?
2. Do you think just telling them to remember would have worked? Why/Why not?
3. Do you see any similarities between your own life & the Israelites? Think about the situations that you talked about in the opener, times God has come through. Is that an extensive list?

Have several people read aloud the following passages in order:
(passages from exodus where God has come through for the Israelites prior to this over & over again yet they don't trust him in tough times...)

Read these accounts of the Exodus.

1. Exodus 14:10-16 & 28-31
2. Exodus 15: 22- 25
3. Exodus 16:2 – 4 & 10 – 15

Those are only 3 accounts of God saving them, not mentioning protection from the plagues & the fact that they aren't slaves to the Egyptians anymore... feel free to add some more accounts to read!

4. Why do you think it is so hard for the Israelites to remember that God is their provider & to trust him?
5. What does it mean to believe your cause is greater than your circumstances?

6. How might that play out in our own lives here at UVA?

Read Exodus 17: 1-7

Sometimes its easy for us to look back at the Israelites & say “what in the world why wouldn’t you trust God? Can’t you see He has provided for you?”

Tell about a time when you had a friend that was in a pattern of behaviors that YOU could see but THEY couldn’t? Or Maybe you were the friend & someone pointed out a pattern in your life? How is that similar to the Israelites?

Look ahead to John 6 – We see that the Jewish people refer to the bread, the manna that God gave their ancestors in this Exodus passage – So we see it being used as a tool to show others, even those who didn’t experience it as a sign of God’s provision!

Application Questions:

(How can we ensure that we trust God in our circumstances instead of complaining like the Israelites did without thinking of all the past times God had come through for them?)

Let’s go back to the Cause & Circumstances:

1. What is our “cause”
2. How can we ensure that we are above all trusting God in our circumstances?
3. What are some practical ways that we can do that? (Brainstorm with partners then come back & share ideas)

This week: Make it a habit to daily thank God for some times he has come through for you. Try to brainstorm even now some of those times so we can continue to live in faith and trust in God no matter what the present circumstances!

Creative Activity:

Have everyone make an “alter” or a “keepsake” some ideas are – A solo cup turn upside down that you draw/write things God has done on to put somewhere that you will see daily, Having everyone decorate a journal to keep those things in, Decorate a keepsake box with slips of paper to write things God has done in & keep. Even guys can journal their thoughts. Other ideas include just keeping a sign of something God has done in your room, visible to you daily so that you don’t forget like the Israelites had a tendency to do.

Week Seven: Real Relationship

Opening – Share about a best friend, how did the two of you become so close? What must continue in order for the relationship to remain close? Think of your favorite celebrity. What factors in the relationship with your friend cause you to know more about your friend than the celebrity?

Worship – Have everyone write down or draw a way that they saw God this week. Have each person praise God through prayer for this specific instance. Help people think of areas they might see God in the coming week; in nature, in other people, in music, in circumstance, etc.

Introduction – *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.*

Read Exodus 19:1-15

1. Describe the relationship between Moses & God thus far. (Think about burning bush, Moses learning to trust God, Moses being used by God, Moses going to God with his sadness and frustration over the people etc).
 - a. What can we learn about the relationship between Moses and God from the first part of verse 3? How does God respond to Moses? How does Moses respond?
2. How does God appeal to the people for them to obey Him fully? Hint: verses 4-6
3. What can we learn about God's character from verses 4-6?
4. Read Genesis 12:1-3. How does the language used here in verses 4-6 compare with God's covenant with Abram? Why the difference/similarity?
5. Read v. 6, 10-15 again - How do the people become a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation?"
6. Why does God bar everyone but Moses from the mountain? (v 12-13) Why are the events about to take place so significant?
7. How does the Israelite's relationship with God differ from Moses relationship with God? (v 7-8). Leaders – tell about the veil that was between God & people during the old testament & how only a few people actually encountered God.
8. Describe the encounter that the Israelites were about to have with God. Why do you think God had the Israelites consecrate themselves?

Read Exodus 19:16-25

9. What do you think God wanted to accomplish by letting the Israelites hear His voice and see Him come down in the sight of all the people?
10. Why did God give strict orders not to touch the mountain? How would the average Israelite feel about meeting God for the first time?
11. What did the Israelite's experience on the third day and how did they react?

Application Section *(Good to keep in mind the answers to the opening questions & you may want to ask all of these but you might want to just write them all out on a handout with space for everyone to answer and simply have reflection time for themselves & then maybe bring it all back to a large group with people sharing some highlights)*

12. As we have followed Moses' journey with God from his burning bush experience until now, how has his relationship with God grown along the way? (perhaps make a timeline)
13. Would you ever want to meet God face to face like Moses?
14. In what ways does your relationship with God resemble Moses' relationship and how does it resemble Israel's relationship? (Note: Is your relationship with God lived through your pastor's or group leaders' relationship with God or do you have your own?) *Great time for a moment of thinking & meditation maybe with background music 😊
15. Moses went up a mountain to approach God. What are some ways you approach God? What have been some of your experiences from initiating contact with God? What do you know to be true about God from your own experiences?
16. How has your relationship with God grown this year? What keeps you from God?
17. We are able to approach God today because Jesus set aside the barrier (the veil is torn!) separating us from the holy God (see Hebrews 10:19-23). Even though we don't need to wash our cloths and go through all the preparation the Israelites went through, why might it be good for us to prepare ourselves before meeting with God? What are some ways you can prepare your self for worship and service?

Closing - In prayer, ask the Lord to help you overcome the things in life that keep you from drawing close to God. Put James 4:7-8 and Hebrew 11:6 to memory.

Week Eight: Guidance From A Loving God

Opening Question: Has your attitude towards your parents changed since you've come to college? How has your attitude toward their past discipline changed?

Overview: 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.

Background:

*We will be reviewing the first four commandments next week in the rewind from the semester's study but for now they serve as the background for the last six commandments that we will cover tonight**

Read Exodus 20:1-11

1. *Why do you think it's important the Lord said verse 2 ?* (Hint: to remind them that they are His and what he has done for them by providing & being in their best interest before He lays out some law).

The first four commandments are set up to show how our relationship with God is supposed to be.

2. Re-read the first commandment. *How & Why might this serve as a foundation?*

Read Exodus 20:12-17

1. The first four commandments are set up to show how our relationship with God is supposed to be. The last six tell us about our relationship with others and what God wants that to look like.

How does the commandment to honor parents (v 12) serve as a transition between the first four and the last six commandments?

2. What do you notice about the order of the final commandments?

3. At this time, human culture was not one that saw everyone as equals. What makes these laws so extraordinary for the time and the culture they were given to?

4. How does God expect us to treat others? Why do you think God would put so much emphasis on how we treat others?

5. In what ways do commandments 6-9 (verses 13-16) ask us to honor others?
6. Read Matthew 5:21-32. What do you think Jesus is teaching about the law in the Sermon on the Mount? *Hint:* Jesus is challenging people to take these commands to a radical level of obedience.
7. Jesus seems to take “honoring others” to be an issue of the heart rather than just action or deed. In what ways have you honored people with your actions, but in your heart not truly meant it?
8. How does murder differ from killing? What did Jesus add to this in Matthew 5?
9. What happens to a married couple when one person commits adultery? What did Jesus add to this?
10. What passes for stealing today? Which examples are worse than others?
11. Is lying okay if no one is hurt? How about little white lies? How would a false witness be damaging?
12. To “covet” means to strongly desire. This strong desire comes from jealousy or envy, and refers to someone who is unhappy because of what someone else has. What is God asking us to pay attention to in our own lives when He says you shall not covet? How can this law be enforced?
13. The Israelites fell back from the manifestation of God’s presence (see Exodus 20:18-19). Moses said not to be afraid, and added that the fear of the Lord will “stay with them” and keep Israel from sinning. How would that happen; What is the fear of God?
14. How is God testing the Israelites? (v 20)

Review and Application

15. Read Matthew 22:34-40. Jesus teaches that all of the law can be summed up in two commands, “To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself.” Why do these two commands sum up the law?
16. Which of the Ten Commandments gives you the most difficulty at this time?
17. How do you sense God calling you to be more obedient this week? How will you obey?

Jesus said that love should be an action and an attitude. How can each of you share the love of Christ in a practical way with those around you on grounds this week? Pray for

one another (in pairs or small groups is great) that each of you will strive to live out the “attitude” of the law, as well as to walk in the “fear of the Lord.” Remember to pray for those you have been reaching out to as a group, too.

Practice what you answered in 16 & 17. Talk about how you will implement this.

Week Nine: Review & Share

Opening Questions

What changes have taken place in your life as a result of this studying Exodus?

Worship

Take a few minutes to reflect on God's provision of time honored and value enriched guidelines for life and health. Thank God for rules that restrict, yet give freedom. Thank Him for words that can prevent miss-steps, and provide protection. Thank Him for establishing who He is and who we are. Read Psalm 111 and rejoice.

Text & Text Questions

Assign each student or leader different weeks of the study to come prepared to recap.

Go back over each truth briefly. Remind the core group of the journey we have taken with Moses, the Israelites and the Lord.

Ask the students to write down each truth & passage (or maybe have a handout for them already made) that they can take home with them over break.

Have the students highlight or star the truths and practical things they still need to work on.

Talk about how break is a good time to go over each passage and truth again so that they can grow over break and be reminded of these truths.

End:

End by having small groups or pairs gather together to talk about the areas they still need to grow in (say to pick 1-3) and have prayer time for that.

Next Week:

Will be affirmations so make appropriate announcements to let the students be prepared for those.

Here is a list of what we've done this semester:

Week 1: Connect With God/Turn away from your busy schedule.

Chapter 3:1-10

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?

Week 2: God Gives Promises to Use Us Despite Our Excuses, He wants a willing vessel.

Chapter 3:1-4:9

God answers Moses' doubts about himself/his God-given mission and God answers them with promises to Moses.

God desires to use you and I; what excuses have we been using?

Week 3: Plagues: Our Biggest Plague Today: Idolatry.

Chapters 7-10

This one needs lots of revisions based on your cg. You can go the route of God as protector or God doesn't mess with idolatry – we can't put anything before him.

Week 4: Do we turn to our old ways when following God demands tough times?

Chapter 14

What kind of signs do we have of God's protection in our lives? Do we ever desire to turn back? What broken cisterns do we turn to: Our old way of life?

Week 5: Chapter 16 Trusting God & Taking Sabbath go together. God leads the Israelites & provides for them through manna but makes them take a day off. This is also a test of their trust of Him.

Week 6: Reflection. Remembering. Reacting because of those first two things. Making something to remind us of what God has done for us in the past. To show people but to also help US remember.

Week 7: Becoming close with God. How to further your relationship with the Lord, Similar to relationships here on earth: it takes time spent and vulnerability.

Week 8: Ten Commandments (#6-10 specifically) these focus on our relationship to people whereas the first focus on our relationship to God.

Week 9: Recap. Tell the journey. This would be a good time for core group members to participate by each preparing a paragraph about the passage and lesson for each week. You could pair them together as well if you have more than 8 members. Have them share and have a time of reflection at the end. Pray a lot. Ask each person to state one of the principles/promises/truths we've learned that they need to still work on right now in their life. Pray for break that over it everyone would be intentional about working on that area of their life!