

Studying Exodus: A guide for small group leaders

Theme: Exodus is essentially a book about the Covenant between God and Israel. The ultimate moment in Exodus is the establishment of the Covenant on Mount Sinai in chapter 19. The Redemption of Israel (chapters 1-18) frees the people to worship at this mountain, the Law is given (chaps. 20-24) as the stipulations for this Covenant, and God's presence dwells with the people in the tabernacle (25-40) as confirmation of the Covenant established at Sinai.

Scriptural Context: Genesis described the origins of this nation and the initial stages of the Covenant that were given to the forefathers of Israel (namely Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). The astounding nature of the Pentateuch was that the God who created the universe was now deciding to enter agreements with mere humans. God's promise from the first was that He would make Israel a numerous nation and give them the land of Canaan. By the end of Genesis, the twelve tribes have been established, but they must move to Egypt to be saved from a famine. At the beginning of Exodus, Israel has become numerous, but is not living in their own land yet. God remembers His Covenant with the forefathers of Israel and does some incredible miracles to bring about their Exodus out of Egypt. But this is only the beginning for God's relationship to His chosen nation. He establishes the Law, Tabernacle, and Passover as expressions of this new Covenant. The rest of the Pentateuch finishes the description of this Covenant by listing laws for the priests and the community and by describing the rest of Israel's journey to the Promised Land.

Many of the events in Exodus prove to be typologicalⁱ, which means that they will serve as a foreshadowing of future events and acts of God. For example, Joshua parted the waters of the Jordan river so that the Israelites could pass on dry land, just as they had at the Red Sea. Isaiah 40-66, when predicting the return of Israelites from the Exile, uses frequent references to the Exodus story. Jesus, when giving the "sermon on the mount", stands on a mountain to give His law as the new "prophet like Moses (Deut. 18)" that the Israelites anticipated. Moses, himself, is a typological figure as the leader, redeemer, law-giver, prophet, and intercessor for God's people; all roles that Christ would eventually playⁱⁱ on behalf of all of God's people. Furthermore, when Christ established Communion, He did so at Passover, thus carrying on and expanding the themes from Exodus. These are just a few of the myriad references in Scripture to the foundational events in Israel's history in Exodus.

Purpose: The over-arching purpose for God's Covenant was to reveal His character to the worldⁱⁱⁱ. Through the Covenants, God proves Himself to be faithful, just, and loving even when His people are not. From the beginning, God declared that all nations would be blessed through the Covenant^{iv}. God chose one people not to leave all others hopeless, but to display His character to the rest of the world through His "kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:4-6)." Exodus follows through with this purpose, containing some of the seminal revelatory passages for all of Scripture. Exodus 3:14 introduces the name "I Am," and throughout the Exodus from Egypt, God says that "You will know that I am the Lord when ..." He saves them. The people of Israel are now able to see and interact with the Presence of God, first on the mountain, and then in the Tabernacle that they carry through the desert. Finally, when Moses asks to see God's glory, God *tells* Him about His own character, being both merciful and just (Ex. 34:4-7).

Summary: Exodus 1-18 is the history of how the Israelite nation was brought out of Egypt. The Israelites had multiplied greatly in Egypt, but had fallen under harsh slavery. God heard their cries for assistance, called Moses to lead them, and performed miraculous signs in order to convince Pharaoh to let His people go. God's arm proved stronger than Pharaoh's, and the Israelites instituted the celebration of the Passover. Finally, God brings them into the desert and shows them that they can trust Him, because He can provide for their every need.

Exodus 19-40 contains the establishment of the Covenant between the Israelite people and God. God had already promised land and plenty to Israel, but now this new level of the Covenant made demands on the people. The elements of this covenant included the Law, the Tabernacle, and the Presence of God among His people.

Outline:

Exodus 1-2	Israel falls into harsh Egyptian oppression
Exodus 3-4	God hears Israel's cry and begins to raise up a leader for them (Moses)
Exodus 5-7:13	Moses stands before Pharaoh
Exodus 7:14-15:21	God frees Israel with many signs and miracles
Exodus 15:22-18:27	Israel learns to trust God for provision in the desert
Exodus 19-24	God establishes His Covenant with His people
Exodus 25-31	Instructions for the Tabernacle
Exodus 32-34	God's Glory is revealed
Exodus 35-40	Israelites build, and God fills, the Tabernacle

Christological Elements:

- Jesus refers to Himself as "I AM" (John 5-11 esp. 8:58) in reference to 3:14
- Jesus institutes Communion during the Passover, which celebrated the Exodus story
- The Blood of the Passover Lamb saved the Israelites from death, as does Jesus' blood for all
- Jesus fed the 5,000 in the desert which led people to ask if He is "the Prophet" (like Moses)
- Jesus gives His law (the Sermon on the Mount) and shows His glory to Moses on the Mount
- Jesus intercedes for us before God, like Moses in chaps. 32-34 keeps Israel in good standing
- John 1:1 says that Jesus "Tabernacled" among us, and thus was God's dwelling with us.
- Jesus saved Christians from the bondage of sin and brought us out to worship Him
- The Cross reveals how God can be both just, in not letting sins go unpunished, and merciful, in forgiving sinners to the thousandth generation; and this is God's ultimate glory

ⁱ Sailhamer, John. *The Pentateuch as Narrative*.

ⁱⁱ See 1 Peter 2 for a description of our exodus from darkness and sin.

ⁱⁱⁱ Walton, John. *Covenant*.

^{iv} See Genesis 12-24 for God's Covenant with Abraham being for the purpose of blessing all nations.