



## **Group Discussion Guide**

*For group meetings from March 21 afternoon through March 28 morning*

Due to the volume of reading, our weekly group guides will not be a detailed commentary of each chapter, but rather an overview that will include some details where needed.

### **Exodus 11**

The Israelites had been in Egypt for total of 430 years, when taking into consideration the period of time from the birth of Isaac to when Moses led the people out of the land. The actual period of slavery is understood to be shorter; from a time after Joseph's death to the exodus (approximately 140 years). God had sent Moses and Aaron to demonstrate His power and convince Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to let the Israelites go free. God sent one plague after another, and yet each time Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to set the people free. Exodus 11 introduces the final plague. It was deadly. In each family, the firstborn son would die, even including Pharaoh's own firstborn son. In addition, the firstborn of some of the livestock would also perish. Moses told Pharaoh this final plague would cause him to demand that God's people leave. Earlier during the plagues, Pharaoh hardened his own heart. This time, it was God who hardened the king's heart.

### **Exodus 12**

God instructed Moses that this time period of the exodus would mark a new beginning for His people, and thus it also would usher in a new calendar. This new calendar began in what we would classify as March or April. God gave specific instructions about what the Israelites were to do in preparation for the night of the final plague. They were to take a lamb (sheep or goat) without blemish, and on the 14th day of the month they were to kill it at sunset and put blood from the lamb on the door posts and lintel of each home. Each family was to do this, and if a family was unable to do this on its own, it could partner with another family to provide for the lamb. The lamb was to be roasted and eaten. They were instructed to stay in their homes, and when God saw the blood on the door of an Israelite family, he would pass over them and not kill their firstborn sons. God also instituted a yearly feast to memorialize what happened on the night of the final plague. They Israelites were to make sure no leaven (yeast) was found in their homes during this time. They were to eat unleavened bread from the 14th day of the month to the 21st day, and do this each year.

As Moses had told Pharaoh, that night God killed all the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, from the family of the king to the family of a prisoner. Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and told them to take the Israelites out of Egypt, along with their livestock. The Egyptians wanted them to leave immediately, so the people had to leave in such haste that took their dough before it was leavened. As they left, the Egyptians even gave them many of their valuables and this provided resources for the Israelites. When they camped, they baked unleavened cakes of

bread. God then gave instructions for the Passover; it was to be observed only by Israelites and any foreigner that had been circumcised. They were to eat all the flesh of lamb, and break none of its bones.

### **Exodus 13**

Moses made sure the people knew that when they entered into the promised land, they were to continue to keep the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread to remember how God delivered them from Egypt. This was to be passed down from generation to generation. When the people entered the promised land, they were to dedicate to God the firstborn sons of each family and the firstborn males of their livestock. The male animals would be sacrificed (except for the donkeys which would be substituted for lambs) and the male children would be redeemed. This would remind the Israelites how the lambs were sacrificed the night of the Passover and how the male children were spared.

God led the people by pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. He took them through the wilderness to the Red Sea, to avoid the Egyptian border that was heavily guarded and that military presence would have caused the Israelites to fear for their lives and desire to return to Egypt. Moses took the bones of Joseph with them because of Joseph's own instructions given in Genesis 50:25.

### **Exodus 14**

The Lord told Moses to have the people camp in such a way that would lead Pharaoh to believe they were already lost in the wilderness, and he would see an opportunity to pursue them. Pharaoh did just that, and led his army to chase after the Israelites. They easily caught up to God's people, who panicked when they saw the Egyptians. They grumbled against Moses, saying they would have been better off still living in slavery as opposed to being killed in the wilderness. Moses called the people to trust in God:

And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent." (Exodus 14:13–14)

An angel that was leading the people and the pillar of cloud moved to the rear of the Israelite encampment to block the Egyptians. Moses stretched out his arms over the Red Sea and a great wind began to miraculously create two walls of water with dry land in between. The wind blew all night as God's people began to cross on foot. The Egyptians pursued but God caused their chariots to have great difficulty moving and they began to panic. After the Israelites crossed safely, Moses again stretched his hand out and the waters returned to normal, engulfing the Egyptians and killing the entire army. This caused the people of Israel to have great faith in God, and in Moses as His servant.

### **Exodus 15**

After the Lord delivered the Israelites from the army of Egypt, Moses led them in a song of praise. The first 12 verses focus specifically on what God had just done in eliminating the

Egyptian army using the waters of the Red Sea. Verses 13-18 declare that other nations will hear of this event, they will fear God and the way He protects His people. The song ends with a declaration of how God will bring His people into the promised land and establish them there. After this song, Moses' sister Miriam led many women in a song about God's victory on their behalf.

Three days after this time of praise, the people once again were grumbling against Moses as they found themselves in a place with no clean drinking water. The water there was bitter, but the Lord led Moses to throw a log into the water and this made the water sweet. God then gave the people the message that if they obeyed Him, He would protect them and provide for them. They then relocated to a place called Elim, which provided ample water and shade for the people.

## Discussion Questions

1. God worked to deliver Israel from being enslaved by the Egyptians. What is your reaction to the final – and very violent – plague that caused the death of the firstborn Egyptian males?
2. Consider how God established the Passover. Place yourself into the Jewish culture. What would this mean to you each time you observed it?
3. As we move towards Holy Week, what parallels do you see between the Passover and the work that Jesus accomplished on the cross?
4. Imagine hearing that after a life of slavery, you were now being immediately released and urged to leave quickly. How would you feel? How does this connect to our standing as being set free from bondage to sin?
5. In Exodus 14:10-14, we read about how God's people responded to the threat of the approaching Egyptian army. How does their reaction speak to your heart? How does Moses' message challenge and encourage you?
6. How do you relate to the song of praise in Exodus 15? How does this song speak to your heart about who God is and why we should give Him praise?