

LEAD SHEET

EXODUS: BEFORE THE SEA WAS PARTED - WK 1
IT'S NOT ABOUT LEAVING EGYPT

JULY 10, 2016

THIS MONTH'S FAITH SKILL:

PERSONALIZE SCRIPTURE

If you want to know God better, memorize and apply His Word!

GETTING STARTED

General Discussion:

- Who is the most present person in your life?
(Sibling, parent, best friend, etc.)

- What is comforting about someone who is always there?
(Allow for discussion.)

Today, we are starting a series on an Old Testament book of the Bible. The book of Exodus is known for something extraordinary, but there is more to this book than you may realize.

DIGGING IN

The book of Exodus, despite its name, is not just about the exodus of God's people from Egypt. The book that we are going to study over the next several weeks is about so much more than a group of people being rescued out of slavery.

What Exodus is really about is God's presence with His people in every circumstance—captivity, rescue, miraculous works, wilderness wandering, and the Promised Land. In the upcoming weeks, we will go through the book and break its message down little by little.

When we have finished, I think you will agree that this is more than just a rescue narrative—this is about God being with His people.

CAPTIVITY

God is present, even when we are in captivity.

Read Exodus 3:7-9

Discussion Questions:

1. Review these verses and list the ways God acknowledges Israel's suffering. (*He has "seen their misery," "heard them crying," is "concerned about their suffering," has "come down to rescue them," their "cry...has reached me," and He has "seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them."*)
2. Do you think God, who sees, hears, and acts, is paying attention? (Yes.)
3. Do you think the Israelites, with all that they endured, always felt as if God were paying attention? Explain your answer. (*Allow for discussion*)
4. Do you ever feel as though God is absent in your life? How so? (*Allow students to share.*)
5. Based on what we just read, do you think God is ever ignorant about your suffering? (*No way.*)

God isn't just present in our captivity though, He moves to rescue us from it.

RESCUE

God is present as He rescues us.

Read Exodus 13:17-22

Discussion Questions:

1. After Pharaoh lets the Israelites go, what does God do? (*He leads them out of Egypt.*)

2. How does God manifest Himself to the people?
(A pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.)

3. Do those pillars ever leave the people?
(No, they are always in front of the people. See verse 22.)

Another way God is present in the lives of His people is through His miraculous works.

MIRACLES

When God performs a miracle, it is easy to feel His presence. There is probably no better-known miracle in the Old Testament than the parting of the Red Sea. As we read the following passage, listen for key words or passages that show God's presence in these scriptures.

Read Exodus 14:21-29

Discussion Questions:

1. What does the Lord do all night according to verse 21?
(He Drives back the sea with a strong wind.)

2. In verse 24, what is God doing during the last watch of the night?
(Looks down on the Egyptian army.)

3. In what active ways does God intervene?
(He confuses the Egyptian army, jams their chariots' wheels, and fights for Israel, eventually sweeping the Egyptians into the sea.)

Sometimes, God is present in huge, miraculous ways. Other times, He is present at our lowest points of life. We see that in the life of Israel, too.

WILDERNESS

Even in the desert of life, God is near enough to hear us and respond. Though it may be difficult, we are called to "come before the Lord," even when we feel completely alone. Rest assured—God is present, always.

Read Exodus 16:1-9

Discussion Questions:

1. Where are the people of God in this passage? (*In the wilderness of the desert.*)
2. What is their emotional state? (*Grouchy, probably fearful, some are regretful about leaving Egypt.*)
3. Do you think it is crazy that they actually missed captivity? Do you ever miss things that were bad for you because they were easier? (*Challenge students to think through this difficult contrast.*)
4. How does God provide for the Israelites during this time? (*He gives them manna and quail.*)
5. Does God hear them during this time? (*Yes.*)
6. In verse 9, Moses instructs Aaron to communicate to the people of Israel. What does Aaron tell them to do and why? (*He tells the people to come before the Lord because He has heard their grumbling.*)

TABERNACLE

The tabernacle (or tent of meeting) is the center of Israel's religious life during this period. The tabernacle is a predecessor to the temple; it is where God's presence lives. The middle portion of Exodus speaks of its construction, rules, and regulations about worship. One thing is obvious—it is where God resided among His people.

Read Exodus 40:34-38

Discussion Questions:

1. What cloud is it that covers the tent of meeting? (*The same cloud that led the Israelites to safety.*)
2. What fills the tent / tabernacle? (*The Glory of the Lord; His presence is so powerful that Moses could not even enter.*)

3. When does the cloud leave? (*Only when it is time to move on from that place.*)

4. Verse 38 states that the presence of God is “in the sight of all the Israelites.” When is God’s presence in their sight? (*During all their travels.*)

There was never a time—before, during, or after the Exodus—that the presence of God was not with Israel.

MAKING IT REAL

God's presence was with His people then, but what does that have to do with us today?

Read John 1:14

According to *Strong's Greek Lexicon*, the word here for “dwelled” is the same as the word for “tabernacle.” It literally means to pitch a tent or to set up a dwelling. In the time of Moses, the tabernacle—a literal meeting tent—was carried around Israel, and they set it up wherever they stopped. God dwelt there.

In the New Testament God does something incredible by coming to “tabernacle” with us in the form of a human as Jesus Christ. Although Jesus dies, rises from the dead, and then returns to the Father, it doesn’t mean that He no longer dwells with us.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:16

Discussion Questions:

1. Where is God’s temple now? (*We are God’s temple.*)

2. Where does the Holy Spirit dwell? In the tabernacle? In the temple? On earth next to us like Jesus did? (No, He dwells inside us, “in our midst.”)

3. How amazing do you think it would be to Moses, who could not enter the tabernacle because the glory of God was there, to know that the glory of God fills us? (*Allow for discussion.*)

Read Revelation 21:1-3

Discussion Questions:

1. In this picture from Heaven, where does God dwell?
("with His people.")
2. How long will He dwell with them? *(Forever.)*
3. What can separate us from God's presence in Heaven?
(Nothing.)

Just as He was present in Israel, God is present with us at all times. However, unlike Israel, He now dwells inside the hearts of His people. We look forward to living with Him forever in Heaven, as well.

The point of the book of Exodus is that God is present with His people. That hasn't changed. He always has been present with His people, and He always will be present with His people. This is His promise to us.

General Discussion:

- What does it mean to you to know that God is present in your life? *(It should be encouraging.)*
- If you are honest, when does it feel like God is not present? How can you change your thinking during these times to be reminded that He is always there for us?
(Remember that in the desert Israel was called to come near to God. If God doesn't feel close, we're usually the ones who have moved.)
- If you are a Christian, having surrendered your life to Jesus, God's Spirit dwells within you. Are you a willing tabernacle/temple in which He can reside, or do you often try to distance yourself from His Holy Spirit? *(This will require some courage on the student's part to answer.)*

CLOSING PRAYER

Spend some time thanking God for His presence in a variety of situations. Ask Him to dwell in you forever. Invite His presence more into your life and the lives of the members of your group.