

Goals

The main theme in the book of Exodus is freedom from bondage and obtaining salvation in God. In these lessons, the students will learn how the Israelites are freed from slavery and begin an extraordinary journey of faith. It is in this long journey that the people of God come to an important realization, that being truly free means the freedom to obey God and do His will. In this world today, freedom is believed to be the power to do as one pleases. Our students will undoubtedly struggle with what society preaches and what they know to be the truth. As is often the case, they know what is godly but to carry it out is a different story. How can they recognize or understand that doing what God wants and not what everyone else is doing is considered freedom? Through these lessons, the students will learn that their bodies are spiritual dwelling places for God and their attitudes and actions do speak volumes for what they stand up for. Ultimately, they will realize that freedom in God is release from the bondage of the sins of the world and the power to obey His will.

unit 2

Teacher Devotional

Obedience to God is not always an easy thing to do. How many times have we tried to bend God's truth just a little to meet our needs and desires and then fool ourselves into thinking that we have obeyed Him? When God tells us that we need to change the way we are living, we balk and convince ourselves that what we are doing isn't so bad. In reality, we are looking for short cuts and loopholes while living as Christians. God's truth is like a lighthouse. It's there to guide us when things look stormy. But it cannot change to meet our needs and wants. Rather, like the vessels, we have to change our direction to conform our lives to what God wants. God is always there for us, but when He tells us to alter our course, we really have no choice but to obey.

Jesus Christ Never Changes

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." (Heb 13:8)

Lesson 5

Exodus: Truly Free

Listed Scriptures

Ex 1:12

Lesson Aim

To understand what it means to be truly free

Memory Verse

"You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men." (1 Cor 7:23)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Exodus 1-12

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



The book of Exodus picks up where Genesis ends. It chronicles the journey of the Israelites as they were freed from slavery (in Greek, exodus means to exit or depart). It is recorded that six hundred thousand men left Egypt (Ex 12:37), but this number excludes all women and children. In fact, some scholars estimate that close to 3 million people went on the journey into the wilderness. Exodus consists of forty chapters, which can be subdivided into 3 parts. The first section (Chapters 1-12) tells of the lives of God's people in Egypt, followed by the actual journey out of Egypt (Chapters 13-18). Then it ends with the teachings on Mount Sinai, where God's laws are given and the ark of the Testimony built (Chapters 19-40). The central theme of Exodus is God's salvation. Spiritually speaking, this book can be said to foreshadow how God delivers all people today from the bondage of sin.



Did you know that slavery still exists today? In some African countries, parents sell their children, often for less than \$20. They believe their children will have a better life working for a wealthier person, when in fact they are no more than slaves, cooking and cleaning from early dawn until late at night. The only way to freedom is to buy it, usually at a hefty price. As a result, many of these children, some as young as 6, stay enslaved for the rest of their lives. If they ever had the opportunity to become free, they would no doubt treasure it. Thousands of years ago, the Israelites were also enslaved and oppressed by the Egyptians. After 400 years, they were finally able to leave and go into a land of their own. What led up to their exodus, and how did they react upon experiencing this freedom? In this lesson, we will take a look at what life was like. We will also look at the circumstances under which they were allowed to leave Egypt. In the following lesson, we will examine their reaction to their newfound freedom.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1
Life in Egypt



A . Ancient Egypt

With an estimated population of over two million people, we might wonder how the Israelites could have been enslaved and forced into hard labor. Why didn't they just rebel against the Egyptians? With that many people, it would not have been too difficult to win their freedom. But the Israelites knew very little about battle at that period in their history (they were nomads who looked after livestock), and they governed themselves within their own clans. In contrast, the Egyptians were powerful, with a vast and impressive military and a good governing system. From that perspective, it was not hard to see why the Israelites were overpowered. What was life in ancient Egypt like? From the many archaeological finds, we have learned that it was an advanced civilization, with a lengthy string of dynasties that ruled.

Ancient Egypt actually belonged to the descendants of Ham (son of Noah). At the height of its power, its territory extended to the Sinai Peninsula and the upper Nile. The Nile River is probably its most famous landmark. It is the longest river in the world with a length of 4,132 miles. However, the riverbanks often experienced drought and lack of rain. The source of the Nile is located near the Tropic of Cancer, which experiences annual rainy seasons between the months of June and August. During this time, the rainwater washes down tremendous amounts of black fertile soil, which overflows both sides of the riverbanks, making them into rich farmlands that extend for several miles inland. Agriculture was therefore an important source of wealth for the Egyptians. In fact, many of them were farmers and undoubtedly, the Israelites worked many long hours in the fields.



B . Idol-Worshippers

The Egyptians were also polytheistic. The average person usually worshiped the gods of nature (i.e. the Nile River, the sun, the moon). For the pharaohs and other royalty, they worshiped specially designated deities. The Egyptians held that souls did not die after death and that they would resurrect to meet their gods. As a result, it was common practice to embalm corpses into mummies and bury them with abundant supplies of food and other necessities. Life among these idol worshippers for 400 years must have affected the Israelites. For example, it did not take much for them to turn against Moses in the wilderness and create a golden calf as their god. Later on, when they conquered the land of Canaan, they were also quick to adopt the idols of the Canaanites.



C . Cities of Interest

Here are some of the ancient and current cities of interest:

Ancient major Egyptian cities:

Memphis: located near Cairo, was Egypt's ancient capital

Thebes: center of Upper Egypt, Egypt's near ancient capital

On: Egyptian capital in the time of Joseph (Gen 41:45; Num 13:22), Joseph's father-in-law lived here

No: Egyptian capital during the last days of the nation of Israel (Jer 46:25; Ez 30:14)

Current major Egyptian cities:

Cairo: present-day capital, located to the south of the Nile delta

Alexandria: located in the northeast, by the Mediterranean Sea

Ishmael Harbor: near the Suez Canal's opening to the Red Sea

Part 2 Moses



God had once prophesied to Abraham that his descendants would be strangers in a foreign land; they would be mistreated and enslaved. But God also reminded Abraham that He would deliver them and they would come out with great possessions (Gen 15:13-14). None of the 70 members of Jacob's family expected any oppression since Joseph was around. But by the time the Israelites grew to over 2 million people, the situation was very different. Even if they had somehow known about God's promise to Abraham, growing up as second-class citizens for over 400 years probably dampened any hope of freedom. Generation after generation, they worked hard but earned nothing. How would God save them? Although it was difficult for the Israelites to see it, God had already handpicked someone to deliver them. From the moment he was born, Moses led a life of adventure. But more importantly, his life was guided by God. Moses probably didn't realize that until he was much older. How did God prepare Moses every step of the way? As you study the events of his life, think about your own life. Is God guiding you daily? Do you feel God working in you to accomplish His will? Have you recently made any excuses about doing God's work?

- a. Moses was born during a time of great danger. Pharaoh wanted all the Hebrew male infants to be killed. Yet Moses' mother had courage and hid him for three months before putting him into a basket and sending him along a river. Although the situation seemed impossible, it was God's will that Moses was picked up by the princess and saved (Ex 2:1-10).
- b. Although it may have seemed unfair to the many Israelites who were suffering and laboring, God planned for Moses to receive a good education so that he would be better equipped to do God's work later on.
- c. God set His plan in motion when Moses killed an Egyptian out of rage and had to flee for his life. While in the wilderness, Moses was humbled and became a good leader (Ex 2:16-25; Num 12:3). To Moses, it may have seemed unfair to trade a life of luxury at the age of forty for the simple life as a shepherd, but it was God's opportunity to train him.
- d. At about 80 years of age, Moses was called by God to save His people. He refused at first, making many excuses as to why he was not up for the job, but eventually, God showed him the way and gave him courage (Ex 3-4).
- e. Moses returned to the palace to see Pharaoh and demanded that he set the Israelites free. When the king refused, Moses obeyed God's com-

mands and was able to be used as an instrument in performing God's miracles (Ex 5-6).

Part 3 The Ten Plagues



When we think about the ten plagues, we often see it as just that, plagues. In fact, they were ten amazing miracles performed by God. Nothing like that had been seen before and never again would it be duplicated. Other than to display His mighty power, the ten plagues also highlighted the stubbornness and selfishness of Pharaoh. Many of the early plagues did not really affect him since he lived in the palace. But when his firstborn was struck down by God, he was left with no other choice but to let the Israelites leave. Are we like Pharaoh? Does God have to knock at our door many times before we hear His calling? As we review the ten plagues, think about how we compare to the Egyptians.

<u>Miracle</u>	<u>Verses</u>	<u>Duration</u>
Plague of Blood	7:14-25	7 days
Plague of Frogs	8:1-15	2 days
Plague of Gnats	8:16-19	1 day
Plague of Flies	8:20-32	2 days
Plague on Livestock	9:1-7	2 days
Plague of Boils	9:8-12	1 day
Plague of Hail	9:13-35	1 day
Plague of Locusts	10:12-20	1 day
Plague of Darkness	10:21-29	3 days
Plague on the Firstborn	12:1-36	1 day

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



- 1 List two things you learned about ancient Egypt.
- 2 Describe how God was involved in Moses' life, guiding and nurturing him. Do you feel that God is an integral part of your life? Why or why not?
- 3 Which of the ten plagues do you feel was hardest to survive? Explain your reasons.

Sometimes God works within us, yet we don't realize it. In hindsight, was there any event that occurred where you feel God guided you, only you didn't know it at the time? Share your thoughts with the rest of the class.

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



Truly Free

The Israelites had not tasted freedom for over four hundred years. It must have been exhilarating to finally be able to do as they pleased.

We may never really understand what they felt because we have grown up in a land of freedom. No one can force us to do anything we don't want to do. But sometimes having too much freedom can also be a burden. There are many things that society says is permissible to do when, in fact, we know they are not. Actually, we allow many things in life to have a lot more control over us than they really should. It could be as simple as logging on to the internet daily, no matter what else is going on in our lives. Or it could be giving in to peer pressure. Think about it in terms of what you crave. The world craves things like what to eat, drink, watch, listen to and do. The world craves fun, video games, sports, competition, movies, etc. Take a look at some of these statistics (not in the students' worksheets). The average teen (12-17 years of age):

- * Watches 23 hours of TV per week. By the time a child finishes high school he will have spent 18,000 hours watching TV and only 12,000 on school.
- * Has listened to 10,500 hours of music by the time he is out of 12th grade,
- * Has seen 18,000 murders on television by the time he reaches high school graduation.
- * Has seen an estimated 14,000 sexual references and innuendoes per year on television.

These are just some of the things that are filling the minds and hearts of teens all over America and around the world. When we let these things creep into our lives and slowly take over us, we are very much like slaves, slaves to the rituals of watching television, listening to music or logging on to the computer. These things are like junk food. Junk food gives us the illusion of being full, but after a while, we feel hungry or empty inside. In the end, these things will destroy, or at the very least distract us from, our relationship with God because we will no longer have time for Him. God said that we should be seeking for righteousness. This means we should be longing for every part of our life to be right with God.

We need to get rid of the trash that has been filling our lives. How do we get the trash out? We need to repent and ask God to forgive us. Reflect on the following questions and see whether you are a slave to anything in your life. If you find that you are, kneel down and pray to God. Ask Him to forgive you. Ask Him to give you the power and strength to resist the things of the world, to draw close to Him again, to be truly free.

1. Besides the daily necessities such as brushing your teeth or eating three square meals, is there anything else that you absolutely must do, or else you would feel funny, like your day was incomplete? If you were suddenly no longer allowed to do that task, how would you react or feel?
2. Besides the daily necessities, is there anything that you are spending more than 5 hours a week doing? What would happen if you were required to cut down the hours?
3. What are the top five priorities in your day? Are all these things beneficial to you and your faith?
4. If you have found that you are a slave to many things in this world, is there something you can do about it? Is there a difference between being free in the world and free with God? What does it mean to be truly free?

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



Today, our lives are so crowded with activities that we often don't think about how much we have become slaves to them. Sometimes we are slaves to the television, or to the computer. Other times, we are slaves to our friends. What is your idea of a "free" life? What do you feel God intended life to be like for you? End with the following poem:

Submit to pressure from peers and you move down to their level.

Speak up for your own beliefs and you invite them up to your level.

If you move with the crowd, you'll get no further than the crowd.

When 40 million people believe in a dumb idea, it's still a dumb idea.

Simply swimming with the tide leaves you nowhere.

So if you believe in something that's good, honest and bright—stand up for it.

Your peers will get smart and drift your way.