



Looking Inwards (15 mins) Caring For Each Other

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) Concern For Others

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



HG158 Moses: The Prince Of Egypt Let My People Go

Exodus 5.1-23; 6.1-8

Home Group Study Notes

11 February 2018 - James Van Cleef



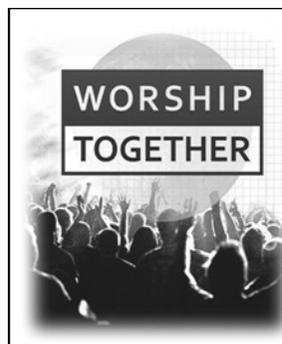
PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful for your discussions.



Welcome (10 mins) Ice Breaker

What



Looking Upwards (10 mins) Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...

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HG158 *Moses: The Prince Of Egypt*
Let My People Go

Exodus 5.1-23; 6.1-8

Home Group Sermon

11 February 2018 - James Van Cleeef

Moses the Gunfighter?

Some of the great stories and films of our time appeal to us because they are about a deliverer standing up for an oppressed people, and fighting against the oppressor. This is the basic script for many Westerns, and we know that in the end—usually—the good guy wins, the people are free, and the enemy is defeated. In the middle of these stories, the people have to often endure greater hardship before they see victory.

Exodus 5 is the beginning of that kind of story, a showdown between God and Pharaoh peppered with injustice, rejection, and friction, and hardship before deliverance.

Does it have relevance for us, however? Absolutely, for as followers of Jesus, we might face oppression, rejection, and friction. And so this story of struggle can help us see how we can grow in trust and confidence in God, how we can endure with hope.

The story begins with God's command to Pharaoh: *'Let my people go.'*

Er ... No!

Pharaoh's quick answer to God is 'no'. *'Who is the LORD that I should heed him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and I will not let Israel go'* (Exodus 5.2).

How can Pharaoh so quickly dismiss God's word? First, in Egyptian thinking, Pharaoh was a mediator between the gods and the world. So, if a god gave a command he would know. He knew of no such command, so no god has spoken. Second, Pharaoh was the preserver of divinely given order, which included slavery. To let Israel go would be to disrupt that order. And third, Pharaoh wants to know who is this God concerned with slaves. Why should he reckon with a god who values slaves?

4. Moses brought his complaint to God - something he did on several occasions. How comfortable are we with being completely honest with God about our frustrations, confusions, and hurts? Will God be offended by our complaints?

5. Have we examples of when following Jesus has brought rejection or resulted in being labelled 'intolerant'? (For example, holding firm to a principle of faith despite it being unpopular in the workplace/school, etc.)

6. Jesus said: 'Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world!' (John 16.33) . What does it mean for us that Jesus has overcome the world? (Note: some translations read, 'I have conquered the world.')



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Upwards (40 mins)
Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1. Pharaoh asked, ‘Who is the Lord that I should heed him?’ What are ways we can know God more deeply so that we can ‘heed him’ more readily?

2. Read Romans 8.31-39. Think about this quote from Ulrich Lehner: ‘Safety in our lives is an illusion.’ How can the church help people keep faith while enduring hardship?

3. How can we keep God’s ‘big picture’ in view when we are suffering? (Suggested reading: Psalm 73)

Moses, of course, sees God differently. In Exodus 3.13, Moses desires to know the reality of God, his nature and character, hence asking God his name. This ‘what is your name’ of Moses reveals a deeper desire than the ‘who is God’ of Pharaoh.

Just Keep Talking

Pharaoh’s refusal confounds Moses. What should he do? As Moses was raised in the house of a previous Pharaoh, he knew the system. For instance, he knew that the people could ignore any command of Pharaoh, although this would lead to divine punishment. So, Moses, using this knowledge, says to Pharaoh, ‘If we are not allowed to obey God’s command, we will be punished.’ In short, you will be without your workforce (Ex 5.3).

But this tactic did not help. It made matters worse. Pharaoh accuses Moses and Aaron of being disturbers of the peace, and believes the request to be a ruse to get out of work. So, he ignores Moses—again—and increases the burden on the Israelites (Ex 5.4-14).

Not surprisingly, the Israelites complain—and not for the last time! They complain to Pharaoh, that he is being unfair. In response, Pharaoh points out that if they have complaints, they should address them to Moses. So they did, and there was no little friction between Moses and the Israelites. All they could see was their hardship. They were losing sight of God because they were focused on their immediate plight. Their solution was to keep in Egypt’s good books, which will be a recurring problem. ‘Better the devil you know...’

But Moses also complains, and he vents his confusion and despair to God: ‘*O LORD, why have you mistreated this people? Why did you ever send me? Since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has mistreated this people, and you have done nothing at all to deliver your people*’ (Ex 5.22-23). In other words, ‘What is going on, God?’

I Hear What You’re Saying ...

God seeks to give Moses reassurance, of his calling and the promises made. But he doesn’t do it by answering Moses’ question in verse 22. Instead, he gives Moses a fresh revelation of his character and nature: I AM THE LORD. In Exodus 6.1-8, God reminds Moses of his name, his covenant, his power to redeem and deliver his people, and that he will fulfil his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He reminds Moses that he revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as *El Shaddai*—the Almighty—and showed his power through might and miracles. But to Moses he revealed his name: YHWH: I AM WHO I AM. I am the Lord. Will you *trust me*?

Trust is always an act of will, and looking beyond ourselves into the heart of God. Trust is not simply mental assent to doctrines or ideas about God. It is about living out of the truth that God IS, that God is here...

Contrast this with the Israelites' response: *'Moses told this to the Israelites; but they would not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and their cruel slavery'* (Ex 6.9).

Following God in Hostile Territory

Through Moses, God commanded Pharaoh to let his people go; let them go from their slavery so they can worship and find their identity in him.

We have been reminded that Moses foreshadowed Jesus, and through his life, death, and resurrection, God says to all the powers and dominant ideologies that rob humans of their worth and keep them enslaved: LET MY PEOPLE GO!

And as Pharaoh's response to Moses created a hostile environment for the Israelites, so does the enemy's response to Jesus. To follow Jesus out of slavery and death will lead us into hostile territory. To embrace the Gospel is to stand against the disorder and chaos of the world.

Jesus said, *'In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world'* (Jn 16.33). To follow Jesus is to walk in life and light, but to do so amidst death and darkness; it is to be salt, to be meek, merciful, and to hunger and thirst for righteousness, and to suffer persecution for doing right (NB Matthew 5-7). It will also include the hard work of being countercultural:

- To 'love our neighbours as ourselves' when the world says, 'Look after Number One.'
- To forgive, and forgive, and forgive, and forgive, when the world says, 'Get even!'
- To be misunderstood because we love and welcome the least, the lost, and the losers, when the world bows before the wealthy, the famous, and the winners.
- To stand for the righteousness of God in a world that is dominated by an insatiable lust for money, sex, and power.
- To let Jesus bring into his light all our hidden secrets we often hold on to, so that he can heal and deliver us so that we can worship in Spirit and truth, and be free!

The easy option is always to return to 'Egypt'. But then we lose sight of God, and our faith/trust atrophies. Exodus is a story that challenges us to trust God and his 'big picture' despite the limited horizon of our immediate circumstances. Let us not be 'blind' to God in our suffering. Let us remember that *'suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope'* (Romans 5.3-4; see also James 1.2-4).

Finally, we not meant to endure alone. Jesus is with us, and we are the Body of Christ. To be light, and salt, and free requires that we do so together in the powerful name and blood of Jesus.

**FOR YOU DID NOT
RECEIVE A SPIRIT THAT
MAKES YOU A SLAVE AGAIN
TO FEAR, BUT YOU RECEIVED THE
SPIRIT OF SONSHIP.
AND BY HIM WE CRY,
"ABBA, FATHER."
ROMANS 8:15**

Emmanuel Church, Billericay Text for 2018

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