

EXODUS DEVOTIONAL

By Pastor Phil Emerson

NAME: _____

OUR DISCIPLESHIP FLOW

At Emmanuel Church, we are passionate about living out the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and make it our goal to see His Kingdom come in our lives and the world in which we live. We recognise that in Biblical times, a disciple was someone who followed a teacher or rabbi, not simply to gain head knowledge to pass an examination, but to be fully immersed in the life of the rabbi, and *learn his ways*, so that they in turn could replicate this to the world around them. As Christians, we are now those who have been invited to ‘follow’ Jesus and all of His ways, and we therefore call ourselves His disciples.

“This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.” 1 John 2:5,6

We therefore want to take seriously the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples and also commit to an ongoing journey of teaching and discipleship together.

We all have differing personalities and learning styles. At Emmanuel, we recognise this diversity within the church body and therefore desire to support and journey together as we relate with God and each other in some of the following environments:

- **Public (20+)**

In the Bible, we see Jesus seeking to make disciples as He engaged with larger numbers of people, e.g., His interaction with the crowds (Matthew 4:25; Luke 14:25), and the 72 (Luke 10:1-24).

At Emmanuel, we want to use each of our **larger gathered environments** as an opportunity to make disciples, e.g., **Sunday services, Friday Youth/Kids’** environments, **men’s/women’s** gatherings.

- **Social (10-15)**

Jesus demonstrated the necessity for **smaller accountable relationships** as an essential part of the life of a disciple. He did this by teaching and doing life with his twelve disciples (e.g., Matthew 10).

At Emmanuel, small accountable relationships are offered through:

Lifegroup 12s

These are **gatherings of 10-15 people** who meet bi-weekly in homes or around specific interests, e.g., crafts, football.

- **Personal (2-5)**

As well as having smaller accountable relationships amongst His twelve friends, Jesus also seemed to go to even deeper levels of trust with three in particular – Peter, James and John (Matthew 17; Mark 9). At Emmanuel, we seek to do this through:

Lifegroup 3s

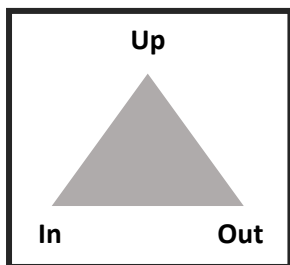
These are smaller **gatherings of 2-5 people** who are committed to transparent and accountable relationships in order to grow together in following Jesus. The aim for these groups is that after 1-2 years, each person in the group would be able to lead a smaller number of people themselves and replicate the process... **disciples making disciples!**

- **Intimate (1-1)**

Jesus regularly withdrew to spend time alone with the Father. This is the ultimate goal of discipleship, that each member of our church family would increasingly spend time alone with the Father and grow in devotion and desire to see the Kingdom come.

A TOOL TO USE

As stated previously, 1 John 2:6 makes it clear that for those of us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus, our goal should be to daily walk in the ways of Jesus, our Rabbi. As we examine the New Testament we see that Jesus lived His life based on three relationships: **Up** – with His Father; **In** – with His chosen followers; **Out** – with the hurting world around Him. This is illustrated in the following triangle:



Jesus taught and modelled out to His disciples how to live into each of these areas in life.

Up

Jesus frequently left the disciples to spend personal time with the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). He taught them the significance of prayer, and how to pray and communicate with the Father (Luke 11:1-13). When comparisons with one another or insecurities presented themselves, He spoke into it in love and challenged them into a greater depth of living (Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-5).

In

Jesus had significant relationships with others in which He intentionally invested (12s and 3s). When He went to engage with the Father He brought the three with Him (Matthew 17:1). He taught them and modelled out the significance of Sabbath and rhythms of rest (Mark 6:31). He demonstrated with His life the significance of generosity and sacrificial love for others (John 13:1-17).

Out

Jesus personally lived a life that engaged with the crowds and the broken world around Him. He healed the sick (Matthew 8:1-4), fed the poor (Mark 6:30-44), and cast out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). But with the people who were closest to Him, He challenged them to do the same (Mark 6:37), and when they took risks themselves He critiqued and gave honest feedback to call out more for them (Luke 10:17-20).

As we spend time alone or together in this devotional, we want to help and encourage you to engage in each of these ways – UP, IN, and OUT.

HOW TO USE THE BOOK

First

If you haven't already done so, please take a second to fill in your name on the inside of the front cover. There'll be a lot of identical books floating around, and we don't want yours to get lost.

Prepare

Get ready for each session by spending some time to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. The Bible is a written word (logos), which becomes a living word (rhema) as the Holy Spirit breathes upon it and speaks directly to our lives through it.

Commit

Commit to the journey. Discipleship is not a commitment to a moment, but to a lifetime journey. As you personally commit to journeying with God daily, commit to others by sharing what you are learning (possibly in Lifegroup 12s or 3s), and in this way encouraging one another in what God is saying.

Reflect & Respond

Each day, as you spend personal time with God, we encourage you to ask the following two questions:

- 1) What is God saying to me?
- 2) What am I going to do about it?

This is how we become doers and not just hearers of what God is saying.

INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS

The book of Exodus is a powerful story, an epic really, of slavery, oppression and freedom that would make any film maker envious. It is an incredible and accurate account of Israel's slavery and exodus from the domain of the great Egyptian empire. Thankfully, there is more to this story than just the exodus itself. God, in His wisdom, has chosen to reveal more than simply an historical event in this book. When the Apostle Paul speaks of these events in 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, he writes...

“For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.”

Notice that Paul says these events are examples for us! The Red Sea gives us a picture of our baptism. Moses striking the rock is a picture of the true rock, the Lord Jesus Christ, being struck for us. The water that the rock gave forth, which quenched Israel's thirst, is a picture of the Holy Spirit that was poured out after Jesus had been crucified. Exodus isn't just a dusty old historical book that we read and stand amazed at the things God used to do 3,500 years ago. It has instruction for us now, today. It is current and relevant.

Get your Bible, journal ... and oh yes, don't forget the coffee. I really do hope you enjoy this book, one of my all-time favourites.

Phil

Live

The beginning of this book is a bit like a preacher's second Sunday in a series, starting with an overview of last week's message. Moses begins by looking back into the Genesis story. You're probably up to speed but here is a quick synopsis. Joseph is betrayed and sold as a slave by his brothers, ending up in Egypt. After a series of trials and hardships, God turns the whole thing around (as He loves to do!) and Joseph ends up on the Egyptian throne with only the Pharaoh ranking above him. Severe famine strikes Israel, forcing Joseph's brothers to come to Egypt in search of food. After a stunning reconciliation, Jacob, his eleven other sons and their families all come down to live in Egypt. I'd love to say they lived there happily ever after! But that is not the case. A new king arises, a new generation is born, and all the acts of Joseph are forgotten. And so the slavery begins. This nation of God's people grew larger under bondage. The plots of the enemy to destroy them failed. We read in this chapter of amazing midwives who feared God more than Pharaoh and spared the lives of Hebrew babies.

So, as we open this huge book, we have seen that God was in control of the hardship Israel went through. Now here is the big question I'm sure we are all asking: *Why?* What did God want to achieve? And for that matter, what does He want to achieve when He allows us to go through similar trials? All we can do is stand back and be amazed at the wisdom and justice of the Almighty God. His ways are perfect and, of course, eternal. He sees the big picture, the finished work! While we live on this earth, we will never understand all that happens or why things occur in our lives. The Apostle Paul said, "*now we see through a glass dimly*". But we can still rest assured that the invisible God is not only at work, but He has a purpose in everything He does, and it is for our good and His glory!

Pray

Father, You are the One who knows the end from the beginning and You have it all worked out in Your amazing God story. Thank You that in eternity past You penned my name into the script; for that I will be eternally glad. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

There is no getting away from it; things were definitely getting worse. God looked after the midwives in the previous chapter, but Pharaoh was getting more and more agitated by the day! Against all odds, the two midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, followed hard after God. And as for Jochebed, what faith! Their names have long since slipped our memories, but it would be good to take a leaf from their books to trust in the invisible God.

With the plan to kill the new born Israelite males failed, now an order was given to drown the Hebrew boys in the River Nile. With the natural eye, all looks lost and Moses' parents, Amram and Jochebed, should have been beside themselves. They lived close to the Nile so they would have seen what had happened to other babies. Yet we read in Hebrews 11:23, *"By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict."* In other words, though everything around them looked terrible, Moses' parents were able to keep their eyes on the invisible God and their faith dispelled the fear that would have been natural in such a situation. Now that's awesome.

I find it interesting that in the hiding of Moses, there is no mention of God. Not one peep! So where is God? Do you think it was just coincidence that Pharaoh's daughter came to the exact place on the Nile where Moses was? She would have had no idea that she was being used in the plan of God, but used she was! It was God who allowed her heart to be filled with pity for Moses. It was God who arranged for Jochebed to nurse her own child. And it was most certainly God who allowed her to be paid for doing it! Though not seen and not heard, this whole passage is packed with the invisible God who works all things out for those who love Him.

Pray

Father, You have not changed, nor has the way You work changed. I remind myself today of the command of the New Testament, like that of the Old, to fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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RESPOND

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Live

After 400 years of silence, God turns up again on planet earth. We would expect Him to reappear somewhere royal and grand, but no, He appears in the back end of a wilderness to a dusty old shepherd who has long forgotten his calling. God appears in a burning bush and captures the attention of this man who carries a call he thought was blown. I love that the very first words from God are, "*Moses, Moses*". God's heart is always for us to co-partner with Him. Here we are presented with the true character of God and His heart for His people. He says that He has seen their misery, heard their crying, and is concerned for their suffering. He is going to do something about it and that something will be through the use of a simple servant, Moses. This is the way God works; it was then, and it is now. When we are available to be used in God's service, there will come a time when God says, "Go." The timing is in God's calendar, not ours, but His call and our obedience are the essential ingredients. That's where we find Moses now. The time is ready for Israel's deliverance and judgement upon Egypt.

Isn't it interesting, God says, "Go!" but Moses says, "No!" This is definitely a different Moses from the one we have previously seen. The worldly confidence that marked Moses 40 years earlier has been knocked out of him. Moses has gone to the opposite extreme now and he makes every excuse under the sun. Objection number one: 'God, I'm a nobody and have nothing to offer! I can't lead Your people or speak to someone as mighty as Pharaoh.' Objection number two: 'God, I don't know enough. As a matter of fact, I barely even know Your name or what You are about.' I love how God says, "*I am Who I am*". Ever notice how God never needs to prove Himself? He never tries to impress or answer questions about His true being. God is God and that is enough. Done and dusted. The same yesterday, today and forever.

Pray

Father, I love this chapter that reveals how You never forget us, even when we slip up, run ahead and act with presumption. You work tenderly, forgivingly to restore and correct. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

We continue on today with objection number 3 from Moses: ‘What will people think of me? They may reject what I say.’ If you are like me, then you will see yourself in Moses’ question here. No one especially enjoys being thought a fool or being rejected. In Moses’ case, the Lord was very kind to him and gave him specific signs which confirmed who had sent him. Objection number four gets really personal. Moses is now clutching at straws, I believe. I can hear the panic in his voice at this point: ‘Lord, but I can’t speak at all well; I’ll have to be excused!’ God loves using the weak things to confound the wise. His promise to Moses is that He will help him speak and will teach him what to say. God still does that.

With all four objections dealt with, Moses pulls out his final card with objection number five: ‘I just can’t do it. Please find someone better.’ Like I said earlier, this was a totally different Moses from the one who was *“educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.”* (Acts 7:22). Forty years earlier he had been supremely confident in his own abilities but in doing so, had not relied on the Lord and had raced ahead of God’s plan. Now, after forty years of reliving his failure, he was very difficult to budge. In D.L. Moody’s analysis of Moses’ life he said, *“Moses spent forty years thinking he was a somebody, forty years learning that he was a nobody, and forty years seeing what God can do with a nobody!”* This is the essence of what God was trying to teach Moses earlier with the burning bush. In the words of Major Ian Thomas, *“Any old bush will do!”* God could use any old bush, or any old person for that matter, because it was not the bush that mattered – what mattered was that God was in the bush, and if God was there, the fire would never go out. Moses had to learn to look far past himself and his abilities to God and His adequacy.

Pray

Father, today I bring to You friends and loved ones who, like the enslaved Hebrews, feel more reason to despair in their circumstances than delight in Your promises. Some don’t even have the energy to cast their cares on You, so please come and lift those cares. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Chapters five to ten of Exodus show us some interesting contrasts between the purpose of God for His people and the resistance put up by Pharaoh to thwart God's plan. Have you ever felt you heard God but instead of things getting better, they got worse? Of course you have, if you've been a believer for any time at all. Well, this chapter should be of great encouragement to you because that's exactly what happened here. From the passage, the objective of God is clear – *"Let My people go."* God wanted His people out of Egypt, but we see in Pharaoh's initial response a picture of Satan's first tactics when someone is looking to be set free by God. *"Who is the Lord?"* Pharaoh says. *"I don't know any Lord!"* The first thing Pharaoh does is cast doubt upon the existence of God. When people are thinking about becoming Christians, Satan will always try to cast doubt and uncertainty in their mind concerning the truth about God. Not only did Pharaoh not listen, he turned up the heat and as a result, the people of Israel that Moses came to supposedly deliver turned against him as well. If Moses was trying to make a good impression on these people, he was not getting off to a great start, and of course it's not his fault, it is God's, and Moses tells Him so in the last verse.

The second response we see from Pharaoh when God's people want to go and sacrifice to the Lord is a trick the enemy has never stopped using. An oldie, but a goodie, we might say! Up the workload! Satan loves to get us, no matter how long we have been Christians, too busy with things in the world to bother about worshipping and following God. I love Moses' honesty as he speaks to God. I think this is why he has always been one of my heroes. A reluctant leader from the beginning, and now he is sort of saying, 'See, God? I told You so!' You have got to love this guy!

Pray

Father, today I pray for my brothers and sisters in places where they are most likely to be singled out for ongoing persecution. May Your perfect love tame their fears, deepen their trust in You, and empower them to love their enemies. I stand with them and cry out in faith, *"How long, O Lord?"* In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

While Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob may not have seen everything fulfilled that God had promised, the time had now come when God was going to reveal Himself in a new way ... as the LORD, Yahweh, the I AM, the delivering God! The time has come for the deliverance of Israel! In this passage we see God appearing to Moses and reassuring him of His character and purpose for Israel. God's mighty hand will bring His people out from their bondage in Egypt and in doing so, the people of Israel and Moses himself are going to learn a whole new aspect of God's character. The name 'God Almighty' is translated from the Hebrew 'El Shaddai' meaning 'strong or powerful God'. This was how God had made Himself known to Israel's fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This name was given in connection with the giving of the covenant and promises that God had made hundreds of years before. But, as Hebrews 11:13 tells us, *"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance."*

Now that the time is right, God is going to reveal Himself to His people in a new way. This He states through the promises of seven 'I will': I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves. I will redeem you. I will take you as My own people. I will be your God. I will bring you into the land. I will give it to you as a possession. These seven promises are also true for us, people who have been saved from the penalty of sin. The Lord delivers us from the power of Egypt (the world) so we may come into the Promised Land (all that He has for us), but we face an obstacle: Pharaoh (Satan). As we close out the chapter, we see Moses again arguing with God around his own natural ability. Poor Moses. I feel sorry for him. God really has him in a corner, and he is having a total identity crisis.

Pray

Father, I'm free and now I belong to You because You liberated me. Help me steward this costly and glorious freedom today in a world of broken people and broken relationships. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

We begin a journey today that will bring us through the ten plagues. Up until now, none of the conversations with Pharaoh have gone very well. Actually, they've had the opposite effect and now it seems even Moses' own people are turning against him for rubbing Pharaoh up the wrong road. It looked like Pharaoh's little display of duplicate power was working ... until Aaron's serpent swallowed up the other serpents, annulling any power from the people who owned them because their rods were no more! Charles Spurgeon preached a wonderful message entitled *The Power of Aaron's Rod*, in which he used this as an example of how God's power is greater than anything else and can 'swallow up' our idols and sins. Pharaoh still refuses to let the people go. We begin to see the scrambling tactics as he tries to keep his smelly mitts on the people of God. Think about your own life. Can you see any of these tactics being used to hold you back from a productive Christian life?

The plagues begin, starting with the waters turning to blood. There are ten plagues but the tenth one stands alone, leaving nine which are grouped in threes. The first two plagues in each group come pre-warned and with a call to repentance; the third in each set comes without warning. The plagues God brought against Egypt had a definite strategy and purpose. Each of them confronts and attacks a prized Egyptian deity. The first was directed against the numerous Egyptian river deities. The Nile itself was virtually worshipped as a god by the Egyptians, and now the Lord God shows that He, not some river god, has complete power over the Nile. The magicians duplicate the sign again. If the magicians really wanted to do a miracle, why didn't they turn the bloody river clean again? This shows that the enemy can bring supernatural destruction, but not goodness. All the magicians did was make more mess. You would think Pharaoh would be starting to get the message, but we are told that he just returned to the palace and put it all out of his mind.

Pray

Father, my great joy is in knowing that You will give me the wisdom I need, and You will do so generously. You're a great God, Friend, and Redeemer who will always be for me. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

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Live

God used a plague of frogs for a specific reason. The Egyptian goddess Heqet was always pictured with the head of a frog. Among the ancient Egyptians, frogs were considered sacred and could not be killed. Now, after more pressure from the Lord, including some nasty use of water to blood, frogs, gnats, and flies, Pharaoh is ready for a compromise! *'Okay,'* Pharaoh says, *'You can go have your sacrifice, but it has got to be within the land.'* Maybe Pharaoh has turned soft and is having a nice moment? While he has relaxed his stand a little, there is still a subtle twist that is really important for us to note. Remember, Pharaoh in this story is a type and shadow of the devil and it is important to look at what we can learn about the character of Satan from this verse. We learn that if Satan cannot stop someone from being a Christian, then the next plan is to make them a weak and worldly one. This is what is meant by *'sacrificing within the land'*. Basically, Pharaoh was saying, *'Have your religion if you want, but have it within Egypt.'* They must stay within his worldly system. So much of what passes itself off as *'Christianity'* today falls into this category. You can go, but you can't go far! Certainly don't go so far that Pharaoh wouldn't be able to reel you back in when he so desires!

The devil never wants you straying too far from the world and as we will see in the next two chapters, he will try to convince you not to shake some stuff that would draw you back. So many people love to have some form of godliness or belief, yet without allowing it to impact or change their life at all; people who look particularly shiny and clean on Sundays but are still within the realms of Egypt for the remainder of the week. This is what Pharaoh was saying here, *'Have a little bit of religion if you like, but it's going to be within Egypt, within my parameters!'* Moses did well in warning Pharaoh not to lie to God or the consequences would be severe.

Pray

Father, I bow before You as the Sovereign One. I ask that by Your grace I would acknowledge Your Lordship willingly and quickly in my life. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The fifth plague again came with a pre-warning. This plague was directed against the Egyptian god Hathor who was thought to be a mother goddess in the form of a cow. To add to that, Egyptian religion considered cattle sacred and the cow was often a symbol of fertility. God shows Pharaoh and all of Egypt that He was mightier than this imagined pagan god. Remember, this did not affect the Hebrew livestock at all. Even so, Pharaoh's heart remained hard. The third plague in this second set of three came without warning and for the first time the lives and bodies of humans were attacked. This plague was probably directed against the Egyptian god Imhotep, who was said to be the god of medicine. All were affected by the boils, even the magicians. Still Pharaoh's heart remained hard. The next plague was hail and Moses got a strange command from God: go and warn them and tell them (verse 19) to bring their animals into shelter. This was perhaps the most frightening plague so far. The Egyptians are bound to have believed that the wrath of God was being poured down from heaven. This plague was directed against several Egyptian gods, among them Nut, the sky goddess.

Hardness of heart is a very powerful thing. The Bible tells us that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. I used to have a little apologetic line for people who had wronged me. I would say, *"Ah well, at least they have a good heart."* Then I was confronted by a friend who reminded me that if wrong is coming out of their mouth, it is coming from a wrong heart. Pharaoh's heart was wrong, which made him all wrong. There is a little part of me that feels sorry for him because in verse 12 we see for the first time that God actually hardened his heart. It's a strange verse, as if his heart wasn't hard enough. God was intervening because He was about to redeem His people and destroy the nation of Egypt. Verses like this show us that God is in total control and the Pharaohs of this world are just His little puppets.

Pray

Father, I praise You that I'm an object of Your constant affection and a subject in Your unshakeable kingdom. I'm a beloved child of Yours and a called servant in Your story. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The eighth plague was locusts, God again showing Himself greater than the Egyptian gods. The god Set was thought to be the protector of crops. We are told there remained nothing green on the trees or on the plants. God did for Pharaoh what He will do in our lives: expose and topple every false god. Then came the ninth plague and, as was the pattern with the previous plagues, the third in this set of three came without warning. It was a darkness that could be felt. This was no normal darkness; it had a supernatural element to it. It would seem that God did not even allow artificial light sources to work. Their attempts to use candles and lamps were in vain. This was a show of greatness over one of their more powerful Egyptian gods – Ra, the sun god.

Pharaoh was angry at the end of the previous plague; now he is livid and has completely lost control. This time he threatens to kill Moses if Moses dares to show his face before him again. Again, Pharaoh overestimates his own power, viewing himself as being in control of all that's going on. Moses agrees that he will not see Pharaoh's face again. In other words, negotiations have ceased, and he would not take the initiative to go to the throne to negotiate or warn Pharaoh again. Right before the tenth and most devastating plague, it was like saying, *'Your chance is over. What happens now is on your own head.'* Moses' conflict with Pharaoh has reached a climax. A final compromise of Pharaoh came through great desperation. He would allow Israel to leave, even the women and children could go, but not their flocks. In other words, Pharaoh wanted to hold on to something close to them that would cause them to keep coming back to Egypt! Is there anything in your life like that? Is there anything Satan could use to keep drawing you away from God? Think! It may be a particular weakness that he loves to exploit. Whatever it is, see it and judge it for what it is – a desperate last ploy of the enemy to maintain some kind of hold on you.

Pray

Father, I'm reminded today that as You brought Pharaoh to nothing, so You have defeated my foes and brought to nought the devil and his hordes. I am victorious through Jesus. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

This is, I think, one of the most brutal yet powerful chapters in all of Scripture. It is a turning point. Life will never be the same, eternity will never be the same after this. The contest between Pharaoh and God has almost ended. A truckload of opportunity had been given to the king to repent of his defiance. Warning after warning and plague after plague had been sent but Egypt's ruler still hardened his heart. One more judgment was appointed, the heaviest of them all, and then Pharaoh would not only let the people go, but he would chuck them out with a violence. We will see a full demonstration of the utter silliness of fighting against God and the uselessness of resisting such a One as Him. We will see man against God is a futile contest. I am reminded of Isaiah 14:27, *"For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? And His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"*

One plague more, the severest of them all was this: a mightier King than Pharaoh would visit the land of Egypt that night. The King would lay His unsparing hand upon the firstborn, and even with all their wisdom and learning, Pharaoh and his people would be helpless. The magicians were useless in such an emergency. There was no withstanding the Angel of Death; none of the Egyptians' great wealth could provide deliverance. Those in the palace were no more secure than the tenants of the smallest shack. The longsuffering God had surely shown Himself, but now His holy anger was to burst forth with irresistible might. Bitter and widespread would be the results. The time had almost arrived when Pharaoh would be glad to be rid of the people whose God had so sorely troubled him and his land. It seems a long way from Exodus 5:2 when Pharaoh declared, *"Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord..."* Pharaoh may not know this Lord, but now he knows He is real and all powerful and nothing with this God of the Hebrews is impossible.

Pray

Father, Pharaoh in all his power and splendour was but a tool in Your hand to display Your might and dominion. Father, would You help me to honour You in all my ways. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

In these verses, we have God's instructions concerning the Passover. The first thing we see God wanted the people to do was change their calendar (it has remained changed to this day). The Jewish calendar starts with the month of Nisan (March/April) and goes to the month of Adar (February/March). Everything begins with the Passover, just as Jesus' death on the Cross is the beginning of the New Covenant of grace. I love the personal aspect of Passover. They each had to take a lamb, they each had to inspect the lamb, and they each had to kill the lamb, reminding us of how personal the Cross is, His great love for each of us individually. Before the Passover lamb could be eaten, its blood had to be applied to the doorway of the home. The only part of this sacrifice given to God was the blood, the rest was eaten by each family or discarded the next morning. As the blood was applied to the top and each side of the doorway, this would form the shape of the Cross. The fact that the blood was on the doorposts meant it would always be visible; every time someone would enter or leave the house, they would see it. This shows that the sacrifice of the Passover lamb was to be remembered in daily life. I find it powerfully interesting that the lamb was not killed in order to be looked at, but to be eaten. Spurgeon puts it this way, *"Our Lord Jesus Christ has not been slain merely that we may hear about Him and talk about Him, and think about Him, but that we may feed upon Him."*

Judgement was to come upon Egypt. The only hope for Israel was to be under the blood. It didn't come down to whether they were worthy of salvation or not; it simply was whether they were sheltering under the blood of the lamb. The rest and peace that we have as Christians doesn't come from our own worthiness; it comes from the simple fact that the blood of Jesus has been shed for our sins. Jesus is our peace.

Pray

Father, after a passage like this, what I'm most earnestly desiring today is that You change my heart by the work of Your indwelling Spirit. Take away the heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

I love how this chapter starts, *“The LORD said to Moses, ‘Consecrate to Me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is Mine.’”* The feast of Unleavened Bread followed the feast of Passover. This illustrates the principle that we can only walk in purity before the Lord after the blood-deliverance at the Cross. The days of Unleavened Bread were not joyless; the time began and ended with a feast, a party, if you don’t mind! A walk of purity in the Lord is a life filled with joy. God wanted the deliverance from Egypt to be constantly at hand and before their eyes. The Jews used this passage to institute the practice of wearing phylacteries – small boxes held to the forehead or hand with leather straps and containing parchment with Scriptures written on them. This law only took effect when in the Promised Land. By then, the need for a reminder of the work of deliverance from Egypt would be all the more necessary.

God leads them out by the wilderness, not by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was nearer. The coastal route (known as the *Via Maris*, the ‘way of the sea’) was the shortest and most common way to go. But it was also the road where Egypt’s military outposts were located. God knew the people of Israel were not ready to face this yet. It was the shortest distance, it had good, easy roads, and it was a trade route so food and water could be bought, but the dangers of the way were too great, even though they could not see them. The same is true of our walk with God; a way that seems right to us may turn out to be full of danger we can’t even think of. As the people journeyed in the wilderness, the Lord went before them. What more can we ask for than this? God showed His presence by giving Israel 24-hours-a-day assurance – a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night.

Pray

Father, when I read chapters like this and see how You set Your love on this people and delivered them, why should I think You can’t deliver me? Help me today to realise that delay is not denial and You are the same God yesterday today and forever. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The big question we all have when we read this chapter is, why does God sometimes lead us into trying situations? He tells Moses the very reason: God will cause Pharaoh and his army to turn on the Israelites and chase them, so that God's name may be exalted. So, we have a choice in each difficulty we meet. How are we going to face it? Are we going to see it as an opportunity for God to display His character? Are we going to reckon on His grace in the situation? Or are we just going to freak out, thinking it's all over? Let's see what Israel's reaction was when Egypt came against them. Israel had seen enough miracles to know that God was on their side. They had seen the mighty plagues and judgements which God had brought against the Egyptians. They had witnessed the death of the firstborn throughout the land of Egypt. They certainly knew enough to stand in faith once again and see this new challenge as another opportunity for God to display His grace. I love how God says, *"Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord"*. You can imagine Israel freaking out with their hearts pounding, starting to run in different directions looking for an escape from the grip of the Egyptians. The command to go forward down into the Red Sea is only given after they have first stood still and looked in faith to the Lord. For us, this act of going down into the Sea symbolises our death with Jesus, and, in the midst of a trial, it also symbolises dying to our own ability to control our lives and the outcome of the circumstances. All is placed in God's hands and we walk by faith.

Once Israel had decided to obey and walk forward, they not only had light in front to guide the way, but thick cloud behind them kept the enemy at bay. Israel was perfectly safe, like every saint who by faith has decided to go forward in the ways of the Lord. Finally, we see everything that gave Israel such great anguish (namely, angry Egyptians) lying dead on the shore.

Pray

Father, You have placed the incredible treasure of Jesus in this jar of clay to prove Your all-surpassing power in making all things new. Let me be humble, grateful and content with my place in that story as I give all into the hands of the Master Potter. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

It is interesting that this is the very first song revealed in Scripture. They are sitting on the banks of a complete miracle and the realisation of the extent of God's salvation was there, plain as day, for all to see. You can't keep praise down for long when the eyes have been opened and are focused upon what God has done. I love how personal the song is. The Lord is not seen as someone far away or uninterested. He is very real, very active, and very much in control. They had seen that He didn't just help, He fully took over! Listen to the language of their song, *"The Lord is my strength ... the Lord is my salvation ... He shattered the enemy ... they sank like lead in the mighty waters ... He hurled them into the sea."* What an awesome picture of what happened to that which stood against the children of the Almighty. Think about this in the context of our sins. The Lord, majestic in holiness and awesome in glory, dealt fully with our past, present and future sins, burying them in the waters of baptism as deep as He buried the Egyptians! And it says that God *"unleashed His burning anger; it consumed them like stubble."*

I don't know about you, but this passage reminds me of what it took to have my sins forgiven. It reminds me of the anger and justice of God that was poured out upon the Cross and consumed the One who unreservedly took our place. Surely this is something to be thankful for! God's work on our behalf never stops at our salvation. The Bible says that if He sent His Son to the Cross when we were His enemies (which He did), then we should have an even greater expectation of His continual work on our behalf now that He has given us His Son (Romans 5:10). I love this! Yet in today's story, even after the miracle of God is displayed, how soon the people grumble. And yet, He still richly provides water for the thirsty soul. I love this incredible God.

Pray

Father, may the aroma of grace be released more consistently through my life. I want Your love to be so compelling that I won't think of people as a project, rather I will just love and serve them. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Today Israel was back doing what Israel did best, moaning and groaning, looking only at the natural, brain washed, it would seem, to the gracious and miraculous provision God had repeatedly made for them. They were even starting to exaggerate how good it really was back in Egypt.

I think it is important to note how they gathered the manna every day before daybreak. I personally think this is powerfully relevant for Christian life. Manna gave strength and nourishment for that day, but not beyond; it was daily nourishment. Have you found that in your Christian life? When you go through hard trials you definitely see the wisdom of this. The strength you received yesterday is not enough for today. Renewing your mind with the truth on a daily basis is essential, especially in the difficult times.

The example of manna also emphasises the need for us to use what God provides. They had to gather in the morning before the manna was melted by the hot sun. For me, it is a no-brainer to renew your mind early with God's Word so you start each new day with how God sees things. I love how the manna was easily accessible; they didn't have to struggle and strive to get it. Just as God brought it straight to the people, so too He has made Jesus accessible for all. The Scriptures encourage us to come boldly to His throne of grace. For forty years, while Israel wandered in the wilderness, they lived on manna; it was a complete food in and of itself, giving them everything their bodies needed. The Psalmist in Psalm 78:25 calls it the *"bread of angels"*. This gives us a picture of how Jesus is totally complete in Himself and He is all we need. Watchman Nee once said, *"It does not matter what your personal deficiency is ... God has always one sufficient answer, His Son Jesus Christ, and He is the answer to every human need."*

Pray

Father, thank You for the manna that was a daily reminder of the things to come. I think I like this the best – that the manna tasted like wafers made with honey. Every day You gave them a small taste of what was to come, a small taste of their final destination, the Promised Land *"flowing with milk and honey"*. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

I love all the pointers to Jesus in this great book; it is full of pictures of Him. We are only two verses in today before the grumbling commences again, this time because they have no water. Imagine if God told you what He told Moses – the water is in a rock! Paul picks up this passage in 1 Corinthians 10:4 where it says that the Israelites “*drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.*” This is the beauty of the Scriptures where we see a type of Christ. The striking of the rock pictured Christ being struck and crucified. Jesus said the result of this Rock being struck would be John 7:37-39 – the water of the Holy Spirit would pour out and refresh all who came and drank.

As soon as the people drank from the living waters that came from the rock, the Amalekites came and attacked them. Amalek descended from Esau who represents the flesh nature in Scripture. Now please note as this is so important, this is the first battle that Israel is called to fight. Up until now, the message had been ‘stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.’ Now the message is ‘choose some of the men and go and fight the Amalekites.’ The work of salvation, just like the water from the rock, is free, provided by God. But I’m sure, like me, you have found that the honeymoon period passes and the old enemy slithers in. Listen carefully now, this battle is never won by strategy and skill alone. While Joshua had to fight, there was a more important battle tactic: it is called intercession, a crying onto God to move on one’s behalf. I call it a grabbing heaven by the lapels and pulling it to earth. I find this in alignment with the Lord’s Prayer, “*on earth as it is in heaven*”. How can that be unless someone actively prays just that? In this chapter, we see Aaron and Hur holding Moses’ hands up for a long time, showing that in this battle we also need each other.

Pray

Father, I thank You for what You have done, what You are doing, and what You will do in my life. Thank You for the living Rock that still gives forth the water of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

It would seem that Moses, at some point, had sent his family back to Midian (some think this was maybe during the plagues of Egypt). Today, we have a big family reunion in the desert of Midian with his father-in-law, Jethro; his wife, Zipporah; and his two sons, Gershon and Eliezer. Moses had a special relationship with Jethro. Even though he was raised in all the wisdom and education of Egypt, Moses no doubt learned more about leadership from the priest and shepherd Jethro whose flocks Moses tended until his call at Sinai. I love the honesty of Moses, describing to Jethro both the hardships and the deliverance. Jethro observes Moses as he settles disputes among the children of Israel and the complexities that go along with that role. Moses was literally the only recognised judge in the nation, so he was flagged out, working dawn till dusk, poor man. Jethro tells Moses that he will never be able to maintain such a task and tells him he must delegate stuff. I love how Paul gave the same counsel to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2 *“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”* It was the very wise D.L. Moody who said, *“It is better to set a hundred men to work than to do the work of a hundred men.”*

In-law jokes are a dime a dozen and very rarely on the positive side, but I love how God places us in extended families to give us added wisdom and to knock off rough edges. Jethro reunited Moses with his wife and sons and made Moses face up to a weak link in his leadership style. Jethro was God's deliverer for Moses and Israel just as much as Joshua and his soldiers were in the previous chapter. Jethro forces us to examine our motives in Christian service. There are three types of people we need around us: Joabs (who get stuff done) Jonathons (who love us enough to cry foul in our life) and Jethros (who give wisdom and counsel). Have you the right people around you?

Pray

Father, I'm quite capable of doubting Your love when life gets complicated and painful, when I have to wait on You and trust You in the dark and silence. Thank You for the Jethros that You have sent to speak into my life. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

After three months of ups and downs, Israel finally arrive at Sinai. They had seen God take them out of Egypt. They saw God's power divide the Red Sea allowing them a dry passage, they saw God provide food and water in astounding ways, and they saw a miraculous victory won over the Amalekites. All that has gone before was to bring them to this moment of encounter. I love this chapter; it is one of my top five in all the Bible. Remember, Sinai was the place where Moses had his burning bush experience with God. The whole nation of Israel would soon experience some of what Moses had experienced before. Read this passage and stand in awe of a God Who demands respect, and read of a people who desperately needed to sort themselves out before an encounter with Him could take place. The lightning, thunder, fire, smoke, blasting of the trumpet all signalled the presence of God. The whole environment must have been totally terrifying to the people. Then, Moses led the people right up to the barrier at the very foot of Mount Sinai, where they could see, smell, hear, and virtually taste the fire which engulfed the mountain, as well as feel the earth shake under their feet when the whole mountain quaked greatly.

Hebrews 12:18-24 tells us loud and clear that under the New Covenant, we come to a different mountain. Our salvation and relationship with God is centred at Mount Zion, not Mount Sinai. Sinai speaks of fear and terror; Zion speaks of love and forgiveness. At Sinai, only Moses could come and meet God; at Zion, there is an innumerable company, a general assembly. At Sinai, Moses is the mediator; at Zion, Jesus is the mediator. Sinai put forth an Old Covenant, ratified by the blood of animals; Zion has a New Covenant, ratified by the blood of God's precious Son. Sinai was all about barriers and exclusion; Zion is all about invitation. Sinai was all about Law; Zion is all about grace.

Pray

Father, I am part of Your own special people, that I may proclaim the praises of You who called me out of darkness into Your marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9). As one of Your people, I must be set apart, thinking and doing differently than others in this world. Help me, Father. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

God speaks in various ways: by providence, by signs and wonders, but here today by His voice. He speaks out what we commonly call ‘the Ten Commandments’. Oh, don’t breeze over the statement too quickly now, let’s peep in and see what He was saying. The first four of the Ten Commandments tell us our duty to God. It is significant that these are first, I think, because man had a Maker to love before he had a neighbour to love. The last six state our duty to ourselves and to one another, and expound the great commandment, “*Thou shalt love your neighbour as yourself*”, as told in Luke 10:27. I think of it this way ... Godliness and Goodness always go together in the economy of God. This law is so extensive that we cannot measure it, so spiritual that we cannot avoid it, and so reasonable that we cannot find fault with it.

Moses goes into the thick darkness where God speaks to him. All that follows from here to the end of chapter 23 is a basic summary of the Ten Commandments. It’s amazing, really. God speaks the most majestic moral commands ever spoken, the clearest rules for humanity's welfare. They are the foundation of personal and national life and stand unparalleled since they were decreed. They also reveal God's character. In this passage, Israel learns that God is much more than the God of food, water, military victories and natural calamities. These are the standards of Godly living that protect us from the temptations that come our way. It would be great if temptation came like junk mail – easy to recognise, ignore, and trash – but at times temptation comes with such alluring and power; it is hard to resist. Remember, Jesus was tempted in all things like us, yet without sin. So, the very fact that He suffered the full fury of temptation gives us hope. May these commandments help you resist the seducing power of temptation in the areas where it rages most powerfully in this season of life.

Pray

Father, when I falter and fail, grant me grace to flee to You for mercy and restoration. Oh, Jesus, what a wonderful and merciful Saviour You are. In Your strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The next three chapters deal with a load of practicalities, and we could ask, *“Why do we need to know this when all of these rules applied only to Israel?”* It’s a perfectly legit question, but I am drawn back to Paul’s words to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:17 *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* Another verse I love which aligns us with the thought that the Old Testament is full of types and shadows revealing things to come is found in Hebrews 10:7 *“Behold, I have come; In the volume of the book it is written of Me.”* Jesus is found on every page of Holy Writ and as I read this book daily, I look for Him. I love this!

In this chapter, we have property rights and principles that still apply. These laws were written to a society that existed 3,500 years ago. They didn’t have paper money. They had no ten pound note with Moses on the front and Mount Sinai on the back, saying “In God we trust”! If you performed a service, you were paid in sheep, cattle, etc. These animals were used for food, clothing, shelter, transportation, ploughing, and so on. This was their means of commerce. Therefore, when you read about stealing a sheep, it was the principle, not the animal itself, that was important, and still is today.

It is important to note where the Israelites are in their journey right now. Crossing the Red Sea was three months ago and God has preserved them through numerous miracles. There are the guts of two million people wandering around in the desert, and knowing human nature, these laws were necessary for fairness, justice, and to be a witness to outsiders. It is amazing that no world system with all its wisdom has been able to better these laws. Yet what I am more grateful for is the redeeming work of Jesus on my behalf. He fulfilled all the demands of the law for us perfectly.

Pray

Father, may I work from a place of rest, not restlessness; not to get anything, but because I’ve received everything; not to build for myself, but to expand Your kingdom in my community; not to get crowns, but to throw crowns at Your feet. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

I love this passage, full of a subject often ignored by modern day preachers. It's called 'restitution', which means to give back or to repay. Under the Law of Moses, someone who stole didn't go to jail, instead, the thief was simply required to restore what he had stolen, plus an additional penalty. In this passage, the penalty could be anywhere from 200% "*he will repay double*" to 500% "*he shall restore five oxen for an ox*". What do you think of that? These principles are often ignored in modern judicial systems.

The owner of an animal was responsible for the grazing of his animals and he was obliged to respect his neighbour's property and grazing land. I must admit I love the major emphasis that is put on what I call 'downright respect', a thing that modern society lacks. The practice of sorcery was almost always associated in the ancient world with the taking of drugs. This was considered a severe enough threat to make sorcery a capital crime. The link between drugs and the occult was rightly seen as deadly.

Another major area in this passage is sexual morality. There is a notion today, 'If it feels good, do it.' But God deemed it fit to put boundary lines in place around this area. Also, a good measure of our moral character is found in how we treat a stranger. It is easy to treat our own flesh and blood right, but God commands us to have a concern for others, including the vulnerable and the stranger. The widow and fatherless child were the weakest and most vulnerable members of society, so God commanded a special care and concern for them, and He promised to protect them.

The tongue was, and still is, the most powerful thing in our lives, for as James reminds us, the tongue is like the kindling sticks that can light a huge forest fire. Let's be careful with our words!

Pray

Father, emotionally, I often live as though the throne of heaven is vacant, or at least on vacation. But when I read passages like this today and see the detail of an incredible God, it causes the truth of You to light up like a sign and to constantly radiate in my heart. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Rumours, now there's an interesting word. It gives me a sickly feeling in my gut, a word that has ruined lives, wrecked marriages, and broken the best of friendships. Rumours are spawned in hell itself, I firmly believe. I find it interesting that this chapter starts off with a direct command from the lips of the eternal God: *"You must not pass along false rumours"*. The Israelites, along with you and I, have a charge from God to walk in Godly integrity when it comes to speaking truth. We have a moral obligation to uphold justice from the basis of truth not falsehoods, innuendoes, speculation or partiality.

The first mention of Sabbath is spoken here in relation to the poor, showing God's equality for all, neither slave nor free in His eyes. We also have three annual feasts instituted. The feast of Passover or "Unleavened Bread" was celebrated to remember the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt. The feast of Pentecost, also called "Feast of Harvest" or "Feast of Weeks", was celebrated fifty days after Passover to commemorate the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. The feast of Tabernacles, or "Feast of the Ingathering", was celebrated on the fifteenth day of the month Tisri (September) to commemorate the Israelites dwelling in tents for forty years during their wanderings in the wilderness. God appointed festivals to aid the memory of those great events and the wonders He had performed for the people. For example, Passover helped them to remember their departure out of Egypt; Pentecost reminded them of the giving of the Law; the feast of Tabernacles helped them to recall the sojourning of their forefathers in the wilderness.

I love all this in the Old Covenant, His mercy in redeeming a nation. I am in awe. But then I turn to the New Covenant and I feel like I'm standing in front of a fire hydrant, or under a waterfall. It's hard to stand up to the rush of such glory and grace, mercy, might, riches and righteousness. Overwhelming.

Pray

Father, under the New Covenant You've guaranteed my inheritance in Christ. You've sealed it by the Holy Spirit. You've given me the down payment, the first fruits, the promise of a future beyond my wildest dreams and beyond my asking. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Remember how God had spoken the Ten Commandments to all of the people back in chapter 20? They had freaked out and told Moses, *"Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, lest we die."* So the last three chapters of laws and ordinances have been spoken by God to Moses alone. God tells Moses to call Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and 70 of the elders to come up and worship the Lord at a distance. Only Moses would be allowed to come near to God. In verse 3, Moses comes down and tells the people about the Laws that God commanded. The people answer together, saying, *"All that the Lord has spoken, we will do!"* (just like they had said back in chapter 19). Of course, it won't be long before the people are in rebellion and idolatry.

Moses knew that you can't trust people to remember, so he writes it all down and then makes an altar with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes. I love this. I really do think it is a stunning read. Seventy-four men saw the God of Israel. The pavement on which their God stood is described as appearing to be sapphire, which is a precious stone having a rich transparent blue colour. It is said to be clear, or pure, as the sky itself. At first, it seemed really strange to me that they could see God (and not be destroyed), and then that they would even think about having a picnic in front of God. You'd think they would have just stood there with their knees knocking! But eating and drinking in God's presence is a significant reminder of the marriage supper of the Lamb where the only qualification necessary is to be sprinkled by the blood. Moses leaves Aaron and Hur in charge, and for the next seven chapters we're going to hang around this mountaintop to find out what God told Moses up there.

Pray

Father, today I have read of Your splendour on this mountain range to seventy-four people. Slow me down in the coming days to savour nature's declaration of Your glory. I've been too busy of late, and I don't want to miss You in all that You are doing. Help me to live at the pace of grace. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The design of the place where God would come to inhabit His people here on earth begins in this chapter. God tells Moses to first raise a contribution to construct the tabernacle. There was to be no mandatory amount demanded from each person. They were to give as they were moved in their hearts. Some things that are Old Covenant remain the same in the New and this is one of them. Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 9:7, *“Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.”* Actually, we will see in Exodus 36 that the people were restrained from bringing any more. Imagine that, standing up and saying, ‘Stop giving! We have more than enough!’

This is the first mention of the Ark of the Covenant in the Bible. The ark was basically a wooden box covered with gold. God gives specific measurements for it. A cubit was the distance from a man's elbow to his fingertip; it's usually deemed to be about 18 inches. The ark was about 3½ feet long by 2½ feet wide by 2½ feet high. The mercy seat was basically the lid of the ark, but it had symbolism and beauty. Being solid gold, it must have been a ton weight, and then there was to be a cherub on either end of it. Cherubs are interesting creatures, the highest angelic beings created. In Revelation 4, they are described as being like a lion, a calf, a man, and an eagle, full of eyes. The prophet Ezekiel gives us even greater and more specific visual descriptions of the cherubim in chapter 1 of his book. Set on the Ark of the Covenant, God would meet with the people from between these two creatures. The ‘Bread of the Presence’ was consecrated bread. A lampstand resembling a vine or a tree had three branches out one side, three out the other side, and one in the middle, a total of seven lights. It was the only source of light in the tabernacle, and used the clear oil of beaten olives as fuel.

Pray

Father, You chose to come and dwell in a tent in the wilderness so that a group of people who would continually break Your heart could enjoy Your presence. You did the same for me in and through Jesus. Thank You. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The detail in the tabernacle is exquisite, to say the least. Even little things are noteworthy. Today we look at the coverings. The first layer was visible only from the inside of the tabernacle. This inner layer was made of ten curtains of fine linen with blue, purple, and scarlet threads. There were images of cherubim embroidered or woven into these curtains. It's good to keep in your mind that God was going to dwell here, so in keeping with heaven, it is easy to picture bunches of angels. The next layer was eleven curtains made of goats' hair. Larger in size, these curtains completely covered the fine linen curtains. There was one door, one way in, and no back door, so no one would be able to see inside the tabernacle unless they came through the one entrance that God designed. Does that sound familiar to you?

The gold-plated boards for the walls of the tabernacle were to sit in silver sockets. Each socket was a full talent of silver, about 250 lbs in weight. Silver in the Scriptures speaks of redemption and also speaks of blood, as the price for Jesus' life was thirty pieces of silver. The silver sockets were what connected the tabernacle to earth. This is full of beautiful imagery. What has connected heaven to earth? What has made it accessible? Jesus' blood, His redemption for us.

The veil was the partition between the two rooms inside the tabernacle. The priests would enter the Holy Place daily to maintain the lamp, and weekly to change the showbread, but they were never allowed behind the veil. Only the High Priest was permitted behind the veil once a year, on the Day of Atonement. Similar to the veil screening the Holy of Holies was the veil that screened the main doorway. Here, there were five pillars instead of four, and sockets of bronze rather than silver, bronze speaking of judgment in the Scriptures. We may enter the Holy Place only once we have stood before the judgment seat of Christ.

Pray

Father, You'll never lead us into hard places where You're not present. You'll never ask us to do anything all by ourselves. You'll never leave us or forsake us. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

As you walked through the gates of the tabernacle, the first thing you would come to was the brazen altar. The very first thing they had to do as they approached the dwelling place of God was sacrifice for their sin. Sound familiar? The altar of sacrifice had horns on its four corners. A sacrifice of blood was put on the horns by the high priest for atonement. Another purpose for the horns was to bind sacrifices to the altar. Horns in the Bible also speak of power and authority.

The rectangular court was surrounded by a large linen fence with pillars every three cubits. At one end was a single gate, the material being the same blue, purple and scarlet as the two veils inside the tabernacle. Just to be inside the tabernacle courts was a blessing.

The lampstand was to have clear oil of beaten and bruised olives as a fuel source. The requirement for beaten oil distinguished it from olive oil that was made by crushing olives in a stone press. This finer oil was made by gently pressing the olives. It was the priests' duty to maintain the oil and keep the light going. The first thing God did in creation was to command, "*Let there be light,*" and it can hardly be an accident that the first thing God did here upon nearing completion of the tabernacle was to issue the commandments of verses 20,21. In the tabernacle, this had exactly the same function, "*Let there be light!*" The priests were to light the lamps and to tend them. It was part of their daily service to cause the lamp to burn always, night and day. I believe so it is the work of the church, by the preaching and expounding of the Scriptures (which are as a lamp) to enlighten the church, God's tabernacle upon the earth. This is our duty to His service. I love how it was a non-negotiable at the tail end of the chapter. From generation to generation, let's continue to pass down the Light of the world!

Pray

Father, right now, You are working in all things for the good of those who love You, and I love You because You first loved me. Right now, You not only have the heart of every person in Your hand, you have my heart in Your hand. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Aaron is put in place as the first high priest and his four sons as the first four priests. The garments were to be made by skilful people whom the Lord endowed with the spirit of wisdom. The ephod was basically an apron made of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet threads. It had two shoulder pieces with onyx stones on which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; thus the high priest bears Israel on his shoulders. The breastpiece was a square pouch measuring a span's width (the distance between the thumb and finger – about 8 inches) with twelve stones on the front, each engraved with the name of a tribe of Israel. It was attached to the ephod by two gold cords. The breastpiece was so that Israel was near the high priest's heart and was called the *"breastpiece of judgment"* because the Urim and the Thummim were carried in it. The Urim and the Thummim, meaning 'lights' and 'reflections', were for determining judgments, but just how, we're not at all sure. What I suggest happened was simply this: it was quite likely that they were stones, maybe a white stone and a black stone. The priest could have prayed about God's will and judgment for something in a 'yes or no' fashion and pulled a stone out of the breastpiece. Whatever stone came out would be the answer. Pretty cool, I think!

The high priest's robe was blue. It was all of one piece, with an opening for the head, never to be torn. Fastened to the turban with a blue cord was a plate of gold engraved with the words *"Holy to the Lord"*. This was a constant reminder that the high priest was to be holy, set apart for God. They also wore linen undergarments that went down to cover their bare flesh. There was always a degree of decency involved as the priests were busy and active (the opposite of pagan religions where the priests often performed their ceremonies naked). The detail is absolutely incredible here.

Pray

Father, I remember I have a great High Priest who calls me to repentance, rest, quietness and trust. This comes to me like a kiss from heaven, like rain in the desert, like a waterfall of grace in a world of broken people and broken places. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Now that the clothing department has all been sorted, the procedure begins for Moses to consecrate the priests to minister to God. It is important to note that they had to lay their hands on the head of the bull and the rams before they were slaughtered. The laying on of hands indicates a transference of something; it was a transference of the guilt of sin. Also listed here are the wave offering and the heave offering. The 'heave' was to lift it up toward heaven; the 'wave' was a repeated horizontal back and forth motion. Next, there was the purification of the altar of sacrifice and a list of the continual sacrifices to be made, namely a lamb in the morning and a lamb at twilight. I find it interesting that they had to put blood on their earlobe, thumb of their right hand, and big toe of their right foot. This might be a silly little observation of mine, but I remember as a boy when I read of these three parts of the body, I thought this: when you hear the word (ear), live it with your actions (hands), and walk it out (feet)!

As we read these chapters, there is no doubt that God wanted His children to approach His presence knowing Him as the Architect and Builder. It makes us want to go deeper and further into God's presence because God has rescued us from labouring in vain. He has rescued us from assuming a burden He never intended us to bear. It is only God who can reveal the glory and grace of His presence to us, and only He can give anyone a new heart. He has called us to love Him as an act of worship not as a way of saving face, making a name for ourselves, or proving our worthiness of His love. How arrogant our pride of thinking that by our good works we can take credit for what God alone graciously does in our lives. On the opposite side, how arrogant the unbelief of assuming that by our bad works we forever limit what God will be able to accomplish in the future.

Pray

Father, convict me quickly and surely when I don't live in line with the truth of the gospel. May I model the reality of grace to my generation and write stories of reconciliation and beauty for Your honour and glory. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

As we move on into the tabernacle, we now reach the curtain or veil that separated us from the Holy Place or 'God's room'. Right at the veil was the altar of incense, about the size of a little sink unit, eighteen inches square and three feet tall. It had horns and poles like the altar of sacrifice. It would be right to assume that the tabernacle interior represented a heavenly counterpart. Sure enough, we see in the book of Revelation the heavenly altar of incense mentioned in five different chapters. I love the mention in Revelation 8:3-5 that the incense is the prayers of the saints. Notice that all adults, rich or poor, were equal before the Lord when it came to the atonement money. So too, each of our need for atonement with God is equal. The atonement money was used for the service of the tabernacle.

We head back out into the outer court where we find a wash bowl called a 'laver'. The priests had to wash in this bronze laver before entering the tabernacle, else they would die. So, imagine this with me ... you enter the gate, come to the place of sacrifice, then you approach the laver for washing. Sound familiar? This is a good picture of how necessary it is for each of us to be washed in the water of the Word when we come to God. The laver was made of polished bronze that one could see their reflection in. It is interesting to me that there are no measurements listed for the dimensions of the bronze laver. It is a type of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, which I believe is why it was not measured. It is not the quantity of water that is important, just the fact that the priests were washed. Paul wrote to the Ephesian churches about being cleansed by the water of the Word. The quantity is not important. You don't need to read ten chapters each morning; ten words of the Word of God can cleanse you just as easily.

Pray

Father, keep me alive to the peace-making You have already accomplished between Yourself and me. While I was Your enemy, You sent Your Son to die for me, destroying the hostility, deconstructing the enmity, and displacing my insanity. You have reconciled me to Yourself. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

I have always loved this guy Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur. This is the Hur who, along with Aaron, held up Moses' arms during the Israelites' battle with the Amalekites. His grandson is called by name, appointed, and more importantly, anointed, to make furniture, engravings, and other artistic necessities requiring great craftsmanship. I love how God gives people natural born abilities to do great things.

'Sabbath' means to rest or to cease. The idea of Sabbath rest first appears in Genesis 2 when God made the world in six days and rested on the seventh. God expounds it further in today's chapter, saying that their observance of Sabbath is a sign that they are God's chosen people; not a sign for others to see, but for themselves to be reminded that the Lord had set them apart.

"The finger of God..." What an amazing phrase. Can you imagine a handwriting analysis being done on God's writing? The finger of God silences His enemies. This holds true for the tablets of the testimony; the Law given there silences the enemies of God, making them guilty before Him. The reason I point this out is to remind us of an incredible illustration of this happening in John 8. A mob brought an adulterous woman before Jesus, and the Law dictated that she must be killed, but Roman law forbade the Jews from inflicting capital punishment. The Pharisees knew that Jesus, no matter which decision He made, could not win. So what did He do? The finger of God once again silenced the enemies of God. I love this and it's a great extra study today if you're up to it! Read John 8 and also look for a mention of the finger of God in Exodus 8 in the plague that the magicians could not replicate!

Pray

Father, forgive me for taking the everyday ordinary things for granted. Thank You for good cooking and Mums who faithfully feed their kids. Thank You for schoolteachers who watch over and teach our little ones. Thank You for bus drivers and bin men, for the girl who works at the local Chinese, the garage man who fixes my car, and the handyman who repairs my fence. How differently and how skilfully You have made us all; unique in our own ways; all of us loved by You and designed to be used by You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Oh the danger of peer pressure and weak leadership. The people assemble around Aaron and say, 'Make us a god.' I'm not surprised that they stray from the Lord so quickly; what really amazes me is that Aaron follows their lead. He was supposed to be a leader, but instead he becomes a follower. Good leaders are to point the way, lead people on the straight and narrow path. They are to make a stand for what is right and oppose what is wrong.

We've spent seven chapters on the mountaintop with God and Moses. However, we are about to experience a hasty jaunt down. Over the last few weeks the people of Israel have seen God deal with the Egyptians, part the Red Sea, lead them by a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, provide water from a rock, make bitter water sweet, send bread from heaven every morning, with a few other biggies in between. Now that Moses has been away for over five weeks, they become impatient and, unbelievably, they lose faith. Before we condemn them though, let's have a peep in the mirror! When we are forced to wait for anything, there are always questions that arise like, 'Did I really hear God right? Is this the way I should be going?' This crew went a bit daft with a big feast, and then it says they "*rose up to play*". God knew this was going on and He told Moses all the details before he even left the mountaintop. God is really mad and wants to destroy them. Moses begins to plead with God and, incredibly, it says that God changed His mind. What a theological debate that has stirred up! Moses' intercession changed the position of the people in relationship to God; he was covering them through prayer. Funny how Moses had just been pleading with God for mercy but now that he sees the people in all their wicked pleasures, he cracks up. He smashes the tablets of the testimony on the ground. Then he stomps down and destroys their golden calf, burns it, grinds it to powder, tosses it in the water, and then makes some of the Israelites drink it.

Pray

Father, today I ask You to keep me from weak leaders and peer pressure to conform to sin. Lead me to the right people and to the training table that will cause my heart to grow stronger in Your grace. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

God tells Moses to lead the people into the land He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob but says He Himself would not be leading them, an angel will go with them. The people will be getting the promise of God, yet without the presence of God. Is it any wonder the people mourned? Remember that the tabernacle has not been constructed yet. The tent is just a place that was set aside for meeting with God, possibly Moses' own tent. Whatever it was before, it is now a place where Moses meets with God and was used for anyone who sought the Lord. This was where the Lord spoke with Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.

Notice how subtly Joshua has been worked into our text. He is described both here and in chapter 24 as Moses' servant, and in Numbers 11:28 as the attendant of Moses from his youth. We've seen Moses delegate the battle with the Amalekites to him. Joshua stayed on the mountain for forty days while Moses was at the top with God, and now he stays at the tent of meeting even after Moses leaves. He's a young guy who desires to minister, yet does not seek the spotlight. He's willing to do the dirty and dangerous jobs. He unconditionally supports his leader and desires to work at least as hard as that leader. Let's keep an eye on this man.

I love this bit. Moses has learned that prayer can influence the hand of God. The Lord told him that He wasn't going to go with them, but now Moses intercedes, saying, 'If You're not going, then don't send us anywhere.' So the Lord agrees, promising, "*My presence shall go with you.*" Moses pleads with God for more. Unable to look fully into God's face, Moses will only be allowed to see the after-parts of His glory dissipating. No one in human flesh could see God the Father's face and live to tell about it. As the Apostle John says in 1:18, "*No one has ever seen God*". Moses came close, though!

Pray

Father, how thankful I am that I can now without hesitation enter the presence of the King of kings. Thank You that there's one part of my life that will never change, and that's You. You are the same yesterday, today, and forever. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

I love how this chapter starts off, almost like a casual remark from God, ‘Oh Moses, chisel a couple more stone tablets like the ones you broke. Tomorrow morning bring them up on the mountaintop, and I'll write on them like I did the last set.’ It doesn't seem like God is angry at all with Moses for breaking the original tablets of the Ten Commandments; maybe because Moses was just acting out physically what the people had already done spiritually – broken God's laws. Or maybe God was thinking of how angry He Himself was over the whole ordeal.

God now fulfils what He promised in the previous chapter – allow Moses to glimpse at His hinder parts. As God passes by Moses, He describes Himself with seven attributes: compassionate; merciful; slow to anger; filled with unfailing love; faithful; keeps loving-kindness for thousands; forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin. Moses threw himself on the ground and began to worship. When we catch even a glimpse of who God is, we become worshippers; we become people who pray.

God warns them against falling into the practices and religions of the people of the Promised Land. They are not to strike friendships or bargains with those people, but rather to destroy their idolatrous items. Then God brings to remembrance all of the covenant agreement that was given back in previous chapters. I love the fact that the glory of the Lord affected Moses physically. He was glowing from God's radiation and when the people saw him shining they were afraid to come near him. Moses obviously needed to tell them all that God had said, so he put a veil over his face. I often wonder, did Moses veil his face to hide the people from the sheer brightness of the glory of God? Or was it to hide the fact that it was disappearing? Read 2 Corinthians 3:7-18 and you will see the comparison between the glory of the Old Covenant that faded and the glory of the New Covenant that gets brighter and brighter.

Pray

Father, thank You for the glory that You allow me to partake of, a new and better covenant. My prayer today is that as I change from glory to glory, I might love and serve You more fully. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

At the end of the last chapter, we left Moses with his face covered, trying to unfold to the people what God had revealed during his stint up the mountain. I find it interesting that before detailing all the work to be done for the Lord, Moses makes sure they understand the rest that is to be had in the Lord – the Sabbath day rest. From sundown Friday to sundown Saturday they are to do no work; it is to be a complete rest; no clothes washed, no lighting a fire, nothing. So far in Exodus, we have seen the incredible importance God places on the Sabbath day for the Israelites. God always encourages us to work out of rest and never out of weariness. Even in the language at creation, God talks about evening and morning making a day; we always say it the other way around.

Moses then spoke to all the congregation about the offering. He told them that the Lord had commanded it, and then left it up to whoever had a willing heart to give. I don't think there are many things as destructive to your relationship with God as begrudgingly giving your monies and your time. The language around giving is simple really; if you don't give cheerfully, then don't give at all, but it will be your loss, I can guarantee that. Remember that giving to God wasn't limited to finances and things. It included hours, sweat, and service. You will remember Bezalel, whose name keeps cropping up, who Moses called to make the parts of the tabernacle. If you want to dedicate yourself to serving God physically as well as financially, ask yourself what you can do. Notice that it was both the men and the women whose hearts were stirred to give and to serve. Some people have hands for anything (my dad was like this); they are what we call naturally gifted. Notice though that the guys naturally gifted by God were also called to teach others to do the same things.

Pray

Father, today I choose to get my eyes off me and fix them on Jesus – the Author and Perfecter of my faith; the Alpha and the Omega of Your story; the Giver of living water and bread from heaven; my righteousness before You and the hope in front of me. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

All that God commanded Moses on the mountain to construct is now going to be made. We looked at how every skilful person has been given skill by God, but whether a person chooses to serve God with that skill is up to them. I love how every skilful person in the camp helped in the construction. All the contributions given by the people had been placed in Moses' care. The key to being able to trust a man with the finances of the church boils down to two things: he must have wisdom, and he must fear God. In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul is talking about himself and Titus having administration over a sizable amount of money destined for the Christian church in Jerusalem; he says it was, *"administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself."*

In today's chapter, the people had willing hearts and were anxious to give. So much so, it got to the point where there was actually too much! Imagine that! I've never heard of a church that said, 'Woah, stop giving, we don't know what to do with it all!' The linen curtains for the tabernacle are made and Bezalel embroiders the cherubim on them. The goats' hair curtains that go over the linen curtains are made. The rams' skins and porpoise skins are made for the exterior. The boards that formed the walls are made, along with the silver sockets that the boards sat in and the bars that connected them. The veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, as well as the screen that covered the front of the tent, are both made.

A little thought for today, let's keep honesty paramount when it comes to finances. Learn to live a life that will reflect truth and integrity in the eyes of others, not so we can claim anything for ourselves, but so we might simply do His will and accomplish what is right. Remember, God is our incredible provider, our Jehovah Jireh, the Lord who provides. He provided for Elijah in the desert using scavengers of ravens. He is the one Who supplies all our needs, not our greeds.

Pray

Father, You have become my Rock in a hard place and for this alone I love You, never mind the countless other things You are to me. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The Ark of the Covenant was made by Bezalel. I have to admit, I love this guy. The lid of the ark, called the mercy seat, was made of pure gold. Cherubim were made to go on the top with their faces toward each other looking down, and their wings extended out and upward. I love the way the ESV puts it: *“the Cherubim spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings”*. It sounds quite poetic. Bezalel also made the table that held the showbread, along with the utensils, dishes, pans, bowls, and jars. Note how many times he is mentioned; this guy Bezalel is some guy! The gold lampstand was made with its seven lamps, snuffers, and trays. The altar of incense was constructed, along with the anointing oil and the incense.

Thank God for all the Bezalels in church; our future depends on these people. They remind me of a great movie I’ve watched several times entitled ‘Far and Away’. It’s a sort of epic, romantic, highly inspiring movie starring Tom Cruise as one of the early pioneers going to claim their new land. In one of the moving scenes, all the people who have risked life and limb to claim their new plot line up. When the gun goes off, they race for their lives for a chance of freedom and the hope of a better life. The problem is, some lose their lives in the race, but the pioneer spirit says, “I’d rather die trying than stay where I am.” God’s people can be pioneers or settlers; the pioneer says, “Let’s go”; the settler says, “Let’s stay”. You can stay put and be like the children of Israel in their wilderness years, forty years round and round in circles. They were settlers; they settled for less than God’s best and died as a result. Thank God for men like Joshua and Caleb who, along with Moses, had that pioneer spirit that says, “Come on, guys, let’s take on the giants, let’s cross over the river, let’s destroy the Jerichos that stand in our way because our God is able.” You know what, sometimes ‘good’ can be the greatest hindrance to the best.

Pray

Father, teach me today about Your intimacies and forgive me for looking for signs instead of listening to Your voice. I long to know You and abide in Your glory. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Today we start with the altar of sacrifice. All the buckets, shovels, basins, flesh hooks, and fire pans were made of bronze, not gold like the items inside the tent. The bronze laver was made from the mirrors that the women had brought from Egypt. Google tells me there are two of these mirrors on display in the 'Ancient Egypt' exhibit at the Denver Art Museum. They are shaped much like hand mirrors are today, except that they were made of solid bronze, polished to enable the woman to see her reflection. They were very valuable, and they were for vanity, yet the women freely donated them for the construction of the tabernacle. May we consider building the house of God with our things?

The linen hangings, pillars, and sockets were made, defining the outskirts of the tabernacle courts. Again, Moses proves himself to be a wise steward over all that he has been entrusted with. He commands that the things for the tabernacle be numbered. By today's rates, the value of these materials have been estimated at well over six million pounds!

Moses just kept going through all adversity. Someone gave me a little card with a picture of a young boy riding a horse with no saddle. Perched behind him is a young girl, her weary head resting on his shoulder and her arms wrapped tightly around his waist. The couple have just crossed a flowing river and ahead of them lies a spooky dark forest. The caption at the bottom of the picture reads, "*The best way out is always through.*" This is so true. When you are tempted to go over, under or around painful circumstances, know that it's always best going through. You'll never have the healing your heart cries for until you've walked through what it's going to take to get you there. If you are in the middle of a storm, can I tell you this? You can find peace, but you will have to keep walking through. Ephesians 6:15 relates peace to your feet because feet always promote movement, action and progress.

Pray

Father, apart from You my life is dry and desolate. Forgive me for trying to do Your will without abiding in Your presence. I desperately need You. I commit my heart to return to my first love – You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Back in chapter 28, we looked at the garments of the high priest in detail. Here we see that the high priest's ephod is made. The breastpiece is also constructed along with the robe with its bells and pomegranates, the high priest's turban, sash, and crown. While we could skim over this, we would miss the importance that these were garments of service. They weren't pyjamas to sleep in, nor a tracksuit to lounge in. Those who wore these garments had a massive expectation put on them to perform the duty of the priesthood. I love the typology of this; when Christ died on the Cross, He put on the garments of redemption, and paid in total the price for you and me. Remember, it says that when He died, He fulfilled the law to the letter, leaving us free from the law of sin and death. Beautiful.

When all of this making was done (a quick calculation shows it took around five months, which is incredible), they brought everything to Moses. Once he examined the items and saw that they had been made according to the commandment of the Lord, he blessed the craftsmen, praised them, and then he prayed for them. Now that's a pretty cool example of leadership right there. I don't read of any salaries given for this work, maybe the presence of Almighty God in their midst was recompense enough.

I read recently that the total weight of all the materials was about seven and a half tonne. Their value today would be around 10 million pounds. Critics have scoffed at the Exodus story at this point, saying that a bunch of ex-slaves would not have possessed this kind of wealth and abundance of materials. We need to remember that in Exodus 12:36 we're told that when the children of Israel prepared to leave Egypt after the tenth plague, they left with riches and wealth as a kind of back-wages for all the years of slavery. Indeed, it says the Hebrews virtually plundered the Egyptians. A good portion of that wealth was used in the construction of the tabernacle.

Pray

Father, I am in awe again at Your eye for detail. Your Word tells me that all things are laid bare before Your eyes, and Your ears attend to my prayers. Your watchfulness is my comfort and my peace. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Two weeks before the celebration of Passover, Moses set up the tabernacle. Notice all the detail he was given for this. When everything was set up, he anointed it with oil. When something or someone was anointed with oil, the Bible calls it 'consecrated'. In pouring oil on an object or a person, they were being set apart for the Lord. This is a beautiful picture of what happens to us. Oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit and when God pours His Holy Spirit onto us, we are consecrated, set apart exclusively for His use.

The priests were washed with water, which of course is a picture of the necessity of being purified by the Word of God. The New Testament calls us kings and priests unto God. As a priest, we must be washed in the water of the Word to be pure in the work of God.

Moses himself sets up the tabernacle, exactly as God had shown him on the mountaintop, with the help of an incredibly detailed set of instructions. I love the idea that when it was all done after the order of God, the glory of the Lord came and filled the tabernacle. You know, it would be a shame to have spent all this money on a temple and not have God show up!

Israel were led by the Lord through the wilderness, journeying when the cloud was taken up. As we conclude Exodus today, may each of us live in such a way as to be guided by the Lord in our journeys, whether mountain or valley. I love the story of God's guidance in the cloud and fire, an evidence of His constant presence and power. As we conclude this amazing story, may we have a fresh assurance of that same presence and power. Remember, we don't need the external evidences because God does not dwell in an earthly structure made with man's hands, but He comes by the Holy Spirit and He lives within our hearts. How incredibly good this should make us feel today!

Pray

Father, I know that, along with the peace I have today, the challenges of life will come. Help me to follow Your guiding Spirit on how I live and where I go, knowing You are always there. You are my Friend, Lord, and Saviour, and I love how You love me. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

