WEEK 4: EXODUS AND LAW

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Big Picture

This is where we're going… the big ideas you want people to understand more deeply during this session.

- God rescues his people from slavery/oppression from sin
- God gives the law to show them how to live with him as their God (the Law was given to the people once they were rescued from slavery, showing them how to live in freedom)
- God gives his chosen people a way to atone for their sins and live close to him
- They were to be a people who display God's glory to the nations
- They rebel again and live in their own ways—doing what was right in their own eyes (determining good and evil for themselves)

Set the Training Tone

You will not need to repeat this list every week, but be aware of these and reestablish the right tone as necessary.

- We are here to learn and change (not just a social time, but we also desire to grow closer and build community)
- Have fun, keep things moving and participatory.
- Welcome a challenge from me or others in the group (let's give each other permission to challenge us—probe, ask questions etc.).
- Strive to be honest and vulnerable and we should honor that by keeping what is shared in confidence.
- We are going to try and answer questions as much as possible from within the Story found in the Bible. Everything we need to learn about God and humans can be found right here in his Story!

Review Last Week's Story

- ***Last Week…*** We saw that God chose a people to be in a special relationship with him—to trust him and not in their own ways. This was an act of grace—they did nothing to earn or deserve it. He chooses to work through messy sinful people (his only choice given the state of humanity).

- We learned that God made a covenant with Abraham to give him innumerable descendants and that his family would be blessed by God to be a blessing to the rest of the world—showing them all what he is like.

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THE STORY & DIALOGUE

Bridge Story

Years later this son Isaac had his own son named Jacob—his name was later changed to Israel—meaning "struggler with God". The Hebrews would then be called the people of Israel after Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons. One of his sons, named Joseph, ended up living in Egypt. (Joseph's story is an interesting one for another time…) Joseph invited his family to join him to escape a horrible famine that covered all the land. While living in Egypt, the people of Israel grew into a large nation. After Joseph died, the King of Egypt named Pharaoh, feared Israel because of their great numbers. He treated them horribly and made Israel his slaves. Their slavery lasted 400 years. But God promised he would bless his people…

Scene 1 ~ Deliverance and the Instructions

Story from Genesis 37-50, Exodus 1-2, 7-12, 19-20

God inspired a man named Moses to rescue the Israelites from slavery. He sent Moses to warn Pharaoh that terrible things would happen to the Egyptians if they didn't release God's people. Pharaoh was arrogant and didn't listen, so God sent a series of horrible plagues to punish the Egyptians, but these plagues did not affect the Israelites.

God turned water to blood, filled the nation with frogs, gnats and flies, killed livestock, covered people in boils, destroyed the land with hail and locusts, and brought great darkness over the land.

In spite of these horrific events, Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go. So God sent one more plague… a plague that would take the life of every firstborn person and animal in Egypt. But God provided a way for the firstborn of Israel to be spared.

He instructed them to take a first-born male lamb without defect, and sacrifice it to him without breaking any of its bones. Then, they were to take the blood from the lamb and put it on the doorposts of their homes. So the people of Israel did what God told them to do.

At midnight God sent the death angel through Egypt taking the life of all the firstborn, but passing over the homes that had blood on their doorposts. The Egyptians wept over this tragedy and begged the Israelites to leave, releasing them from their slavery. And now Israel, a large nation of over two million people, set out to return to the land God promised to Abraham.

But Pharaoh wanted revenge—he sent his armies after Israel to catch them and kill them. When the Israelites approached the Red Sea they thought they were trapped by the waters and would be caught by the Egyptians. But God split the waters so that the Israelites could cross the river on dry ground. When Pharaoh's armies tried to cross behind them, God brought a huge wind that blew the waters back over them. The Egyptian Army was completely wiped out!

Two months after leaving Egypt, the Israelites set up camp at the bottom of Mount Sinai. God descended onto the mountain in fire and a thick cloud of smoke covered the mountain. God called Moses into his presence on the top of the mountain. There, God spoke to him saying, *"Tell my people this, 'You saw how I carried you on eagles wings and rescued you from Egypt. Now if you obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my treasured people—a kingdom of priests—set apart to represent me."*

When Moses came down the mountain he told the people what God said.
They all agreed, *"We will do everything that God asks us to do. No really, we will follow all the commands."* After that God gave Moses instructions on how the people could return to following his ways and live in freedom, a life lived close to God and under his protection. We call these instructions the Ten Commandments, which were God's basic rules for life…

"I am your God who rescued you from slavery in Egypt.
Put me above everything else. Do not worship other things.
Do not misuse or disrespect my name.
Remember to set aside a day each week to rest and worship me.
Honor your parents. Don't murder or steal or lie.
Do not sleep with any one but your husband or wife—be faithful.
Don't lust after what others have—be satisfied with what I give you."

God gave Moses more instructions, called laws, to give to Israel. These laws gave specific details about things like…

How to treat neighbors and enemies, how to handle conflicts, what is fair punishment, when to work and rest, when to celebrate and worship, and what offerings are acceptable to God. But the people did not want to live within God's boundaries and rebelled again, calling these instructions a new kind of slavery. Even those who tried to obey these rules found they could not keep them perfectly.

Because God always does what is good, right and perfect, he could not overlook their sins and the ultimate punishment for sin was death. A life must be given to pay for each person's disobedience. But God loved his people, so he provided a way for them to substitute the life of an innocent animal in place of their own.

People would bring pure animals to God, asking him to transfer their sins to the helpless animal. The animal was killed and its blood was given in place of the guilty person.

This system of sacrifice continued for hundreds of years. Sacrifices for sins had to be given day after day, year after year. And God accepted this, but only as a symbol of what was to come. He was preparing a final sacrifice that would pay for the world's sins once and for all.

Scene 1 Dialogue ~ Deliverance and the Instructions

*Remember **this is a dialog, not a quiz**. The "answers" below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.*

1. **How could the Israelites avoid the death of their firstborn?**
   You may need to guide the discussion toward:
   - *They had to kill a lamb that was firstborn, male, and perfect, and put its blood on the door to their house.*
   - *They had to go inside, and hide behind the blood as the death angel passed through the land.*
   - *God was the provider! Of course they would only do this if the believed God.*

2. **In what other place in the Story have we seen that the life (and blood) of an innocent animal was given for the sake of covering another person's sin?**
   You may need to guide the discussion toward:
   - *In the story of Adam and Eve when God made clothes for them from the skins of animals*

3. **Why are the sacrifices and the blood important?**
   You may need to guide the discussion toward:
   - *God said that sin and rebellion must be paid for. The wages of sin is death.*
   - *Payment for sin is life. Life for life. The covenant with Noah teaches us that the life is in the blood. Blood (a life given) is the only way to pay for sin.*
   - *God holiness requires that sin and rebellion be dealt with or be removed from his presence.*

4. **What is a covenant? What was the covenant that God was talking about? Who was it given to originally?**
   You may need to guide the discussion toward:
   - *Abraham*
   - *The people of Israel*
   - *(review elements of the original covenant promises)*

5. **How do you think the Israelites could keep their side of the covenant?**
   You may need to guide the discussion toward:
   - *Follow God's commands.*
   - *Obey him.*

6. **Do you think God would remove his covenant if they did not obey him?**
   You may need to guide the discussion toward:
   - *Partially—he may not bless them and protect them, but ultimately he chooses to save them to show how great he is, not basing this on how sinless they are.*

7. **What do you think God meant by saying, *"You will be a kingdom of priests"*?**
   - *They were to be his "display people" showing the world what He is like.*

8. **What is the purpose of the Commandments and Laws?**
   You may need to guide the discussion toward:
   - *The Law was given to the people once they were rescued from slavery, showing them how to live in freedom, close to God. So that they could live in covenant with him.*

9. **Which of these commandments do you think is the hardest to keep?**
   - *You may want to guide the people to see that the 1st of the 10 Commandments actually sums up all the rest.*

10. **What do God's Commandments and Laws show us about him?**
    - *They show us that God wants to live in a close and grace-filled relationship with him*

11. **What is the result of following in God's ways?**

Scene 2 ~ The Kings and Prophets

Story from Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 2 Samuel, 2 Kings
Prophecies from 2 Samuel 7; Isaiah 7, 9, 40, 53, 61; Psalm 22; Micah 5; Zachariah 12

After wandering the desert for forty years, God led the people of Israel to recapture the Promised Land from their enemies. God gave them many victories in battle, and completely honored his promises to them—but the people rejected him and worshipped false gods. This false worship led them into many other sins.

Because of their sin and disobedience, God removed his protection and allowed them to be overpowered and punished by foreign nations. When the people suffered they would come back to God and beg for his help and forgiveness. God once again forgave them and sent leaders, called *judges*, to lead them in defeating their enemies. (These are not like judges we have today, but more like generals). Battle after battle, Israel conquered their enemies at every border. In victory the people would worship God, but soon after that the people turned away from God again and lived their own way.

Unfortunately, this became a pattern from generation to generation… the people of Israel would come to God and worship him when they needed help, but when things were going well, they returned to worshipping other things. This was a time where everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

Since kings ruled other nations, the people of Israel complained to God saying, *"We want a human king that we can see to rule over us."* God gave the people what they wanted and allowed them to be ruled by a succession of human kings that ultimately rebelled against God and his authority. Because of their rebellion, God removed his protection from Israel and allowed other nations to come in and conquer them. The Israelites were forced out of the Promised Land and many were taken away to be slaves once again.

During the time of these kings, God sent prophets to be his messengers. God spoke through the prophets, calling people to return to his ways and follow his commandments. The prophets warned Israel of what would happen if they continued to rebel against God. Prophets also foretold of a new covenant God would make with his people. They pointed people to a coming Messiah, an eternal king who would fulfill this covenant, save them and rule forever. God gave the prophets visions of what the Messiah would be like when he came.

Prophets like Isaiah foretold that…
…a virgin would give birth to him in Bethlehem.
…he would be from the line of King David, (their greatest King) who was a descendent of Abraham.
…he would do no wrong, living a life without sin.
…he would be beaten, killed and buried in a rich man's tomb.
…his life would be made an offering for our sin.
…he would establish a kingdom like no other Israel had ever known.
…he would fulfill every promise God had made to Abraham, Isaac and their descendants.
…God will lay the punishment and guilt for all of our sins on him. His life will be made an offering for us.
…because of him, many will be made right with God.

Despite the warnings of the prophets, the people of Israel stopped listening to God, and God did not speak to humans again for 400 hundred years…

Scene 2 Dialogue ~ The Kings and Prophets

*Remember **this is a dialog, not a quiz**. The "answers" below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.*

12. **What, to you, are the most striking characteristics of the history of the Israelites?**

13. **What is the pattern that the Israelites got into?**
    You may need to guide the discussion toward:
    - *They trusted in themselves instead of God, determining good and evil for themselves.*
    - *When it got them into trouble they cried out to God…*
    - *and he saved them.*
    - *Then they went back to doing what was right in their own eyes. They followed other gods after all He had done for them.*

14. **In what ways can you relate to this pattern that the Israelites lived in?**

15. **How quick are you to question or submit to authority in your life? Are you quicker to assume your own authority? Why or why not?**

[Resting Slide]

16. **Overall, how has it worked throughout the Story when humans have not obeyed God's commands and lived for themselves?**

17. **How often does our world or culture justify things for personal comfort?**
    ABORTION AND EUTHANASIA STATS

[Resting Slide]

18. **Who saved them from slavery initially and then over and over again?**
    - *God!*

19. **[PAINTING] From all of the stories so far what have you learned about God?**

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- ***God is holy—God will never allow evil to remain in his presence.***
  - *He always does what is good, right and perfect.*
  - *He never treats man unjustly.*
  - *He judged Lucifer and the fallen angels by casting them out of heaven.*
  - *He cast Adam and Eve out of the garden.*
  - *He cast Cain away from his presence by making him a wanderer.*
  - *He destroyed the earth with a flood.*
  - *He thoroughly judged Egypt.*
  - *He also judged Israel through enslavement and deportation when they followed false gods.*
- ***He has all power.***
  - *He created everything including the angels.*
  - *He created man and fashioned the earth for him to live on.*
  - *He destroyed all men and animals by the flood.*
  - *He caused barren women to become pregnant.*
  - *He destroyed the most powerful nation, Egypt, and the most powerful king, Pharaoh easily.*
  - *He has complete control over his creation: He can turn the Nile to blood, cause storms greater than ever known in history, bring in insects to eat all the crops, cause day to be night, and even divide the waters of the Red Sea. He controls the wind and the waves!*
  - *He controls the nations: When Israel disobeyed He could bring in a foreign power to enslave them.*
- ***He knows all things.***
  - *He knew what Lucifer was thinking in his heart.*
  - *He knew that Adam and Eve had sinned.*
  - *He knew that Cain was about to do evil.*
  - *He knew the thoughts and intentions of every person on the earth.*
  - *He knew that Sarah would have a baby.*
  - *He knew that Joseph would save his family from drought.*

- ***He is the source of all grace.***
  - *He did not destroy Lucifer.*
  - *He did not kill Adam and Eve instantly.*
  - *Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.*
  - *He called Abraham and promised to make him a great nation and to bless all the nations of the world through him.*
  - *He gave Sarah a son in her old age.*
  - *He told Moses how the firstborn could be saved at the Passover.*
  - *He made a way for the Israelite's sins to be forgiven through the blood of sacrifices so they could dwell with Him.*
  - *He sent judges, kings, and prophets to give the people His word.*
  - *He promised a coming king who would establish save the people from all of their sins.*
- ***God declares the "right-use-ness" of his people.***
- ***He always keeps His promises.***
  - *He told Adam & Eve if they ate of the fruit he forbid that they would die.*
  - *He promised to bring a flood and he did.*
  - *He promised a son to Abraham and Sarah and they conceived.*
  - *He promised to make Abraham into a great nation and it came true.*
  - *He promised to deliver His people from Egypt and He did.*
  - *He promised to save the firstborn if the blood of a lamb was applied and He did.*
  - *He promised to give the descendants of Abraham the land of Canaan and He did.*
  - *He promised a coming messiah and savior… Will he come?*

EXTENDING THE DIALOGUE

Using Media

Use of songs or artwork for further discussion…

▣ *Look at Psalm 81 together*

20. **What parts of the Story we looked at today, are you reminded of?**

21. **What questions do you have?**

22. **What image of God do you get from this Psalm (song)? His desires for his people?**

Further Application

23. ▣ **If what we discussed today is true, how does/should it affect your life?**

▣ ***Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.***

24. ▣ **How would it affect us as a community?**

25. ▣ **How would it affect others… our neighborhood, our city?**

▣ WALKING IT OUT

The Walking It Out handout is tool to help us engage the Story individually and with others during the week. This session alone is not nearly enough for someone to be saturated in the Story and begin living out the implications of the Story in everyday life with a community.

As you distribute them…
point out a few key things from the handouts you as a leader have already found meaningful.