

# The Gospel Project® for Adults

## Daily Discipleship Guide CSB, Unit 4, Session 5

© 2018 LifeWay Christian Resources

Permission granted to reproduce and distribute within the license agreement with purchaser.

### God Frees His People

Session in a Sentence: The Lord is the one true God who frees His people by confronting those who oppose Him and providing life for those who trust in Him.

Main Passages: Exodus 7:14-18; 12:3-8,12-13,29-32

When we read the Book of Exodus, we typically identify with the Israelites, and that is good and right. As the people of God in Christ, we should relate to the people of God in the Old Testament. But there is someone else in this account we should identify with, someone who might surprise you—Pharaoh, who asked, “Who is the Lord, and what authority does He have over me?”

What are some ways God’s people question who God is and His authority over them?

### Group Time

#### Point 1: God frees His people by confronting false gods (Ex. 7:14-18).

**14 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is hard: He refuses to let the people go. 15 Go to Pharaoh in the morning. When you see him walking out to the water, stand ready to meet him by the bank of the Nile. Take in your hand the staff that turned into a snake. 16 Tell him: The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to tell you: Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the wilderness, but so far you have not listened. 17 This is what the LORD says: Here is how you will know that I am the LORD. Watch. I am about to strike the water in the Nile with the staff in my hand, and it will turn to blood. 18 The fish in the Nile will die, the river will stink, and the Egyptians will be unable to drink water from it.”**

Through the ten plagues, beginning with turning the water of the Nile into blood, the Lord revealed the false gods of Egypt for what they were and proved their inability to bring about fullness of life. At the same time, God established Himself as the one true God, the only source of life, joy, and peace.

What are some lies and false beliefs present in the culture today?

**God Is One:** In both Old and New Testament times, the advocacy of \_\_\_\_\_ (belief in one God) was contrary to the surrounding culture. The people of God knew, based upon God’s self-revelation, that Yahweh, the Lord, is the only \_\_\_\_\_.

Like He did with the Egyptian gods through the plagues, God will reveal and expose our false gods for what they are. God, in His great love and mercy, reveals to us where we’re chasing after things that are false, things that won’t satisfy us. When that happens, when the Word of God shows us how we’ve put other gods before Jesus, when our brothers and sisters are loving enough to point out the idols in our lives, we have a choice to make: We can repent and turn to Jesus or, like Pharaoh, we can continue in our sin, hardening our hearts toward God and His mercy.

What have you believed would provide you with comfort and contentment only to discover it failed you?

#### Point 2: God frees His people by providing a perfect sacrifice (Ex. 12:3-8,12-13).

**3 Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month they must each select an animal of the flock according to their fathers’ families, one animal per family. 4 If the household is too small for a whole animal, that person and the neighbor nearest his house are to select one based on the combined number of people; you should apportion the animal according to what each will eat. 5 You must have an unblemished animal, a year-old male; you may take it from**

either the sheep or the goats. 6 You are to keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembly of the community of Israel will slaughter the animals at twilight. 7 They must take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses where they eat them. 8 They are to eat the meat that night; they should eat it, roasted over the fire along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

.....  
12 “I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night and strike every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, both people and animals. I am the LORD; I will execute judgments against all the gods of Egypt. 13 The blood on the houses where you are staying will be a distinguishing mark for you; when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No plague will be among you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

At about midnight, the Lord brought judgment on every house in Egypt, both Jew and Egyptian. That night every household either had a dead son or a dead lamb—one or the other. For those who placed their faith in God and took shelter under the blood of the lamb, the lamb got what the son deserved. The lamb was a substitute who paid the debt of judgment instead of the firstborn. Generations of Israelites would continue to celebrate the Passover meal, remembering the salvation the Lord brought in Egypt.

How does the Passover connect faith and works?

**Christ as Sacrifice:** There are several signs, symbols, and pointers in the Old Testament that foreshadowed Christ as being the sacrificial \_\_\_\_\_ who would take away the sins of the world. However, unlike the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Old Testament, whose sacrifices were unable to take away sin (Heb. 10:4), Christ’s sacrifice on the \_\_\_\_\_ was able to permanently, “once and for all,” take away sins.

### Point 3: God frees His people by preserving life in the midst of judgment (Ex. 12:29-32).

29 Now at midnight the LORD struck every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the prisoner who was in the dungeon, and every firstborn of the livestock. 30 During the night Pharaoh got up, he along with all his officials and all the Egyptians, and there was a loud wailing throughout Egypt because there wasn’t a house without someone dead. 31 He summoned Moses and Aaron during the night and said, “Get out immediately from among my people, both you and the Israelites, and go, worship the LORD as you have said. 32 Take even your flocks and your herds as you asked and leave, and also bless me.”

As difficult as it seems to reconcile the final plague with God’s good character, when we think about the whole story of the exodus and put this event in its proper context, we don’t just see divine judgment against sin; we also recognize divine grace. We see that God showed grace upon grace upon grace to Pharaoh in granting him multiple opportunities to repent. But because of Pharaoh’s hardness of heart, with the *tenth* plague, every family across the land suffered the anguish of losing firstborn sons.

As Christians, through what lenses are we to view suffering and death?

God is a gracious Savior, but He is also a just Judge. If we want to experience the salvation He offers, we will not find it through our good works or religion. Instead, like the Israelites during the Passover, the only way we will experience God’s deliverance is through faith—our full surrender to Jesus as our Lord and Savior. That is the choice we must all make. Will we be like Pharaoh and harden our hearts to the Lord despite seeing His grace and goodness, or will we be like the Israelites, trusting God and seeking the Lord’s salvation and finding life through faith in the blood of the spotless Lamb of God?

### Voices from the Church

“The power of sin was broken at the foot of the cross. We couldn’t break it ourselves any more than the children of Israel could negotiate their own liberation pact. The only way they were getting loose from Egypt was for their deliverer to come ... In the Old Testament, Yahweh sent Moses to usher His people into free living. And in the New, He sent His Son Jesus to offer it to us.” 1

–Priscilla Shirer

## My Mission

Because God has spared us from judgment and freed us from sin through His Son, we warn others of the coming judgment and offer the good news of salvation through Jesus, the substitute Lamb, to everyone around us.

- **How will you respond in faith to the good news that God has given His Son as the substitute Lamb for the judgment we rightly deserve?**
- **What false gods are common in your community, and how can your group confront those with the gospel?**
- **This week, how will you help a family member, friend, coworker, or neighbor see that he or she is trusting in false gods?**

## Daily Study

### Day 1: Read Exodus 5:1–6:27

When Moses first addressed Pharaoh and said that God wanted the Egyptian to let His people go, Pharaoh's response was "Who is the LORD that I should obey him?" (5:2). It was a response of open defiance against God, a posture of the mind and heart that Pharaoh would come to regret. When we read this, we are right to pause in disbelief. How foolish of Pharaoh! But then, thanks to the work of the Holy Spirit, we should be quick to recognize that in our sin, we are prone to echo Pharaoh. There are times when we stand before God in defiance and ask Him who He is as we arm-wrestle Him for control of our lives.

When Pharaoh asked who God is, it was not rhetorical. He may have been aware of the God of the Israelites, but he surely was not familiar with Him and He certainly didn't worship Him. So Pharaoh said definitively, "I will not let Israel go." And we need to take this to heart; this second statement of defiance should convict us. We are not like Pharaoh—we know God. And yet, even in our knowing, we continue to defy Him.

Even as we are in Christ, the temptation is always there to resurrect our old, dead, fallen selves and live in rebellion. Sometimes we choose to live as a fraud rather than live out our new, true identity as children of God. But this is why the gospel is such good news to us. This is why God's unending mercy and grace is so critical, not just as the pathway to salvation but for the journey forward from the moment of our salvation. This is why it is so vital that we understand that we are not saved by anything we can do but because Christ has given us His righteousness.

In what ways might you be living in open rebellion against God?

#### Voices from Church History

"O the sweet exchange, O the incomprehensible work of God, O the unexpected blessings, that the sinfulness of many should be hidden in one righteous person, while the righteousness of one should justify many sinners!" 2

—*Letter to Diognetus* (2nd century)

### Day 2: Read Exodus 6:28–8:32

God's hardening Pharaoh's heart (7:3) presents quite a theological conundrum where we see God's sovereignty and humanity's responsibility colliding, at least from our perspective. Pondering how God is sovereign and yet we are still responsible for our actions is worthwhile. We want to know God better. We want to know God's ways better. And these two truths play a significant role in that process.

Imagine if Pharaoh's heart were not hardened. Perhaps he may have let God's people go sooner. But God had a greater purpose in Pharaoh's hardened heart as it resulted in each one of the plagues that followed. Because Pharaoh's heart was hardened, God was able to strike down for all to see the false gods of Egypt, including Pharaoh himself. God did not just beat one Egyptian god or a couple of deities—He defeated all of them and showed that He, the one true God, has all authority and power. This was the wisdom of God, this was the heart of God, in hardening Pharaoh's heart—a heart that was hardened on its own too.

Why is it important that you hold God's sovereignty and your responsibility in balance? Do you tend to lean one way? Why?

### Day 3: Read Exodus 9:1–10:29

The Nile had turned to blood. Frogs, gnats, and flies had invaded the land. Then livestock died, both people and animals suffered from festering boils, God rained down destructive hail, locusts swarmed, and darkness covered the land. God had

revealed His amazing power, and He would continue to do so. But don't miss what He told Moses to pass along to Pharaoh: "By now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague, and you would have been obliterated from the earth" (9:15).

The power the Egyptians and Israelites were seeing was only a sliver of what God is capable of. The same God who created the universe by His mere word could speak the Egyptians out of existence. Egypt was not seeing God's full power for one reason: *grace*. It was God's grace that withheld the rightful judgment the Egyptians, and the Israelites, deserved. This is the message of the gospel. God is holy and powerful and we deserve judgment, yet God is loving and merciful, which is why He withholds His judgment from us and has placed it on His Son instead for those who believe in Him.

What can you do to be more aware of God's grace toward you day-by-day and minute-by-minute?

## **Day 4: Read Exodus 11:1–12:28**

Four days. That is how long the Israelite families were to take in the lamb they had chosen for the Passover. Why four days? Why not choose the lamb right before the Passover? One reason seems to be that this gave time for the families to observe the lamb and notice any defects that would disqualify it from being a worthy sacrifice. But there is another potential reason: attachment.

God may have wanted the families to get to know this lamb. Perhaps even love it. Because in doing so, they would appreciate the sacrifice of this lamb all the more. Saving the life of the firstborn came at a cost, and it wasn't paid by a lamb pulled randomly from the flock—it was by a lamb they had come to know. If this was part of God's intent, then this adds yet another layer of complexity and beauty to the gospel picture painted by the Passover, illustrating that our salvation did not come from a random person but was provided by the spotless Lamb of God whom we know and love.

How does your love for Christ deepen your appreciation of the cross?

## **Day 5: Read Exodus 12:29-51**

As we read through Exodus 12, we might be overwhelmed with the rush of details leading up to Israel's departure from their Egyptian captivity. The details of the Passover observance are rich and theologically weighty. The death and wailing through the land is sobering. The release and plundering are affirming. So it is easy for us to miss a detail that seems small but is actually quite significant: As Pharaoh tells Moses to take his people and leave, he asks Moses to bless him (v. 32). This is important because blessings always move from the superior to the subordinate. So in this moment, by this simple request, Pharaoh is acknowledging what God wanted him to learn all along—that God was greater.

We cannot go too far and see this as a salvific experience for Pharaoh. After this, he will chase after Moses and the Israelites to slaughter them or recapture them. But this request is further evidence of God's wisdom in hardening Pharaoh's heart. Through his hardness of heart, Pharaoh, and no doubt many other Egyptians, finally came to see and acknowledge God's glory.

In what ways might God be using you to reveal His glory to others, even through your suffering and adversity?

## **Encourage One Another**

*Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.*

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- God frees His people by confronting false gods (Ex. 7:14-18).
- God frees His people by providing a perfect sacrifice (Ex. 12:3-8, 12-13).
- God frees His people by preserving life in the midst of judgment (Ex. 12:29-32).

How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?

How can we help people be more self-aware about where they might be trusting in false gods? Why is this necessary in calling people to repentance?

What can we glean from the accounts about the plagues in Egypt in order to point people to God's omnipotence today?

## References

1. Priscilla Shirer, *One in a Million* (Nashville: B&H, 2010) [eBook].
2. *Letter to Diognetus*, quoted in *Introducing Major Theologians*, by Michael Reeves (SPCK, 2015) [eBook].