

WEEK 2 || *EXODUS 3-6*

THE ONE WHO SETS FREE

As we saw last time, the descendants of Abraham are quickly growing into a large nation, just as God promised they would. But there's a problem. They're slaves in Egypt - and it's no fun! God and his promises of blessing feel like a distant memory... maybe their forefathers just imagined that God had a great future planned for them?

As a Christian, what kind of things make you question whether God has a good future in mind for you?



KNOWING GOD FROM EXODUS

Read Exodus 3:1-18

1. Moses, by now living as a foreigner (see what he named his son in 2:22!) has a strange encounter on the mountain. Who speaks to him, what's he going to do, and why? (Exodus 3:6-10)

2. When Moses asks God for his 'name', the answer is strange and unexpected. What sense can you make of Exodus 3:14? (Try to be as wise, philosophical and theological as you can! Your efforts will be just as good as the most famous scholars!)

3. From verse 15 to 17, what is this endlessly existing God going to do, and why?

4. What's your reaction to the way Moses responds to his commissioning? (4:1)

God has already given hints of how things are going to play out in 3:19-20. The process of leading the Israelite slaves to freedom is not going to be easy at first! Moses sets off from Midian to go back to Egypt but is met by an unexpected blockage in 4:24 - the Lord who has sent him is (apparently) now about to kill him! Zipporah his wife seems to know the problem. She immediately takes a flint knife and circumcises their son, who Moses had earlier named "Foreigner". Moses and his family need to be marked out as fully committed Israelites for what lies ahead! There's no turning back... and no more pretending to be Egyptians!

5. How do the Israelites respond to the message of their coming salvation in 4:29-31? (Does it remind you of anything you might have observed in the opening chapters of John's gospel?)

6. How do things get worse in chapter 5? How do the Israelite overseers respond to Moses?

What's God's reply to their complaints? (Read 6:1-8 with emphasis on the words "I" and "my".)

Whether they're ready to hear it or not, the eternal, ever existing "I AM" God has made a covenant with Israel, and he's going to keep it. There's freedom and a promised land up ahead. And without their help, the I AM God is going to bring it about by showing the **mighty hand** of his glory (6:1). The reason for these temporary hard times is so they will get to **know** God's power all the better.

KNOWING GOD IN JESUS

Read John 8:31-37. John's gospel resonates with themes from this section of Exodus.

7. Moses saw a burning bush and heard the voice of God. But he didn't see God. Nobody did. From **John 1:18**, what has changed that?
8. How quickly people forget! What's wrong with the statement the Jews make in **John 8:33**? What slavery is Jesus talking about, and what's his offer (**John 8:32-36**)?

When Jesus says in John 8:58, "Very truly I tell you, before Abraham was born, **I AM!**" he is clearly echoing Exodus 3:14. Jesus IS the "I AM" - the only one who can save his people from their slavery. But they insist that they've never been slaves... and so they don't need saving!

FEEL THE WEIGHT

Here's how it would look to live like a "Reverse-Israelite": a) You'd freely **admit** you're a slave to sin; and b) you **wouldn't lose hope** through the hard times of life because you were trusting the "I AM" God for your ultimate rescue. You'd be a hopeful sinner!

9. How would your life be different if you gave the words of Jesus about the need to be saved from sin a bit more weight?
10. It's easy to lose hope and complain in hard times like the Israelites did. What difference would it make if you didn't take Jesus' power to save so lightly?

When have you found it hardest to trust?

Pray for one another in your group - ask for patience in hard times, and a real reliance in the "I AM" God to bring us to ultimate freedom from slavery to sin and all its consequences.