

LIVING THE WORD—Week 5 (Sun., Feb. 22 - Sat., Feb. 28)

The God of the Mighty Acts: the Great Story of God's Relentless Love

The Exodus (Part 1)—God Delivers His People from Egypt

Exodus 12-15; Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Key Verse:

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." (Exodus 20:2)

That verse is the most repeated statement about God in all the Bible. More than 70 times God is referred to as the one who brought Israel out of Egypt. Of all the mighty acts of God in the Old Testament, none is considered more central to Israel's faith than God delivering his people from slavery in Egypt.

This mighty act is not a single event, but is in fact a whole series of mighty acts that carry his people from Egypt to Canaan: raising up Moses, the ten plagues, parting the Red Sea, destroying Pharaoh's army, leading his people with the pillar of cloud and fire, providing water and manna in the wilderness, giving the law at Mt. Sinai, conquering Sihon and Og and then the Canaanites, and providing his people with the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey.

Every year Israel would remember and celebrate that story in the great festivals of Passover and Tabernacles (or Booths). They would retell the story as they ate the feasts and recite the events in psalms of praise. This event, more than any other, revealed the truth about God that he abounds in merciful love. His steadfast, unfailing love is seen most clearly in his compassion for his people in slavery, in how he delivered them with a mighty hand, in how he provided for them in the wilderness, and in how he fulfilled his oath to give them the Promised Land.

More than any other, this mighty act also revealed the truth about Israel. Israel is God's people who enter into a covenant with him and keep his commands because he brought them out of Egypt. This is how God opens the Ten Commandments: Israel is to have no other gods because Jehovah is their God who delivered them from Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:6-7). Each week they keep the Sabbath and remember God's deliverance (Deut. 5:15). They bring their first fruits to God (Deut. 26:1-11) and redeem their firstborn (Exodus 13:11-16) because of this mighty act. They must treat foreigners with love and be honest in their business dealings because God brought them out of Egypt (Leviticus 19:33-36). They know God and know they are his.

Next Week: The Exodus—Part 2 (Deuteronomy 5-6; 10:12-22; 30:11-20; Psalm 19)

Memory Verse (for Weeks 1-5): Exodus 34:6

On the Mountain ("*Love God*")—set aside 30 minutes this week for quiet time with God)

1. Find a time when you can sit alone and uninterrupted. Read Psalm 136. Spend a few minutes reflecting on what it says about God.
2. Imagine yourself as an Israelite singing that psalm as you stand ready to enter the Promised Land. What emotions do you feel? How do you feel about God?
3. Write down a few lines expressing what God has done for you in Jesus as though you were writing your own Psalm 136.
4. Try to say those lines with the feeling the Israelites had as they sang Psalm 136. Praise God for his merciful love that endures forever.

In the Gathering (“*Love Each Other*”—discuss with your home church or small group)

1. Why do you think this mighty act of God is emphasized more than any other in the Old Testament?
2. The Gospels say that Jesus chose the Passover festival as the occasion for his Last Supper with his disciples and for his sacrificial death. Why do you think he made that choice?
3. What are some things from which we have been freed in Christ?
4. How did the exodus serve as the motivation to keep God’s commandments? What is our motivation to do God’s will?
5. Do you have anything to share from your time with God or with your family last week?
6. If there is time, discuss the “In the World” section below.
7. Pray together, giving thanks for God’s deliverance and asking for help to live as his people in the world this week.

Around the Table (“*Love Your Family*”—sit at home and talk together as a family)

1. Talk about how the Passover festival was something like our Thanksgiving Day and also something like our Independence Day. How do we celebrate those days?
2. Read Exodus 13:3-10. Note what the parents are to tell the children. Talk about what we do on Sunday that is like the Passover. Explain that you do what you do in church “because of what the Lord did for me.”
3. Read Deuteronomy 26:1-11. How is our giving at church like their first fruits offering? What story could we tell that would be for us like the story they told? Talk about the commitment your family has made to give as you have received.

Into the World (“*Love the World*”—prayerfully consider God’s mission for us in his world)

1. Read Leviticus 19:33-36. Consider whether the way you treat foreigners or conduct your business affairs reflects what God has done for you?
2. Israel was supposed to be a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:3-6) and so are we (1 Peter 2:9-12). But Israel neglected their mission to be God’s priests among the nations and focused only their own relationship to God. Ask yourself if you may have done the same. What could you do to change that?
3. Look for an opportunity this week to love people as you love yourself.