

Dead End or God's Plan?

Exodus: The God Who Delivers Series

Exodus 14:1-31

Pastor Jeff Petersen

If God is 100% good. If He is for us, not against us. If we are His children and He truly and deeply loves us. AND if God is 100% powerful. Absolutely without limit. Literally able to speak galaxies into existence. Then it makes complete sense that whenever we face a potential threat – a danger on the path ahead – God will keep us from it, right? Well... if not, why not? What does it say about a God who is all powerful and all knowing who would allow His children to face difficulty and danger? Well, hopefully what we're going to study together this morning will help us to be able to better answer that question.

So, if you have your Bibles, let's turn together to Exodus, Chapter 14. Today, we finally reach the culmination of the dramatic story of the escape from Egypt, and we want to get right into it. Exodus 14, beginning in verse 1:

Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Tell the sons of Israel to turn back and camp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you shall camp in front of Baal-zephon, opposite it, by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the sons of Israel, 'They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.' Thus I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD." And they did so.

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his servants had a change of heart toward the people, and they said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" So he made his chariot ready and took his people with him; and he took six hundred select chariots, and all the *other* chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he chased after the sons of Israel as the sons of Israel were going out boldly. Then the Egyptians chased after them *with* all the horses *and* chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and they overtook them camping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD. Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

(*NASB, Exodus 14:1-12)

So, a reminder of where we are in our context. At the end of chapter 12, the Hebrews plundered the Egyptians, and out of Egypt they went. And then last week, at the end of chapter 13, we're told

that God went with them, and we read of this pillar of cloud and fire, with the Lord leading them out in martial array. It's a powerful scene. So, what happens?

Well, verse 8 tells us they were going out boldly. The author wants us to see this contrast. And then by verse 10, we see that they have seen the Egyptians coming upon them; they became very frightened, and they cry out to the Lord again. And the picture of that scene takes us all the way back to Exodus 3, before any of this began, when they were crying out to God in slavery. And now it's like they're back in that same place again. And then in verse 11, they turn against Moses, and they say, **"Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you've taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us this way, bringing us up out of Egypt?"** And in verse 12, they say, "Is this not what we already told you? We already said, 'Just leave us alone.'"

And this harkens back to what happened in chapter 5. You remember the very first time when Moses goes to Pharaoh? And he says, "Let my people go." And Pharaoh does what? He immediately makes life harder for the Hebrews. He takes away the straw. And what do the Hebrews do? They respond to Moses in 5:21, saying, **"May the Lord look upon you and judge you."** And now here they are again, turning against Moses saying, *"We told you to just leave us alone."* Because in the hearts and the minds of the Hebrews, they have two choices: serve the Egyptians or die in the wilderness. So, the only two choices are the *bad* or the *worst*.

So, what happened? How did we get here? Well, verse 1, **Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Tell the sons of Israel to turn back and camp"** in this specific place. How did they get here? God led them here. And where are they? They are in a trap, which looks like certain death. They are tucked right up against the sea with nowhere to go. And now the entire Egyptian army has closed in behind them. And note the repetition in verses 2 and 9. In verse 2 we're told of this location, exactly where they camp. In verse 9, then the Egyptians are coming upon them, chasing them, and hemming them in where? Right in the exact same location. The author wants us to make no mistake: they are, in fact, trapped!

So again, how did they get there? The Lord led them there. The Lord put them there. This is really important to understand and remember, and it begs the really important follow-up question of, "Why?" Now, before we answer that, we need to just pause and recognize that Scripture, right here, clearly demonstrates that sometimes God purposely leads His people into unbelievably difficult circumstances. Now, if He did that to Israel, don't you think He might also do that in our lives? And it again begs that very important question, "Why?" Well, in this case, we're clearly given the "why" in verses 3 and 4: **"For Pharaoh will say of the sons of Israel, 'They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.' Thus I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD."**

The text makes it clear. God did this for and because of Pharaoh and the army of Egypt. He says they'll think Israel is trapped, and they'll chase after them. So, again we have to ask, "Why?" Why in the world would God possibly want the Egyptian army chasing after His people? They just had 10 strikes against Egypt to move Pharaoh to finally let His people go. Why in the world would God want them now to chase after them? Two reasons—and they're both in verse 4—**"I will be**

honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD."

So, somehow God has a plan here. And somehow that plan will result in His glory and the revelation to the Egyptians that He is God. But Is God acting wrongly toward Pharaoh? After all, once again we will read multiple times in this text, that phrase that, "***God will harden Pharaoh's heart.***" And in our modern-day context, it could be easy to think that God is being capricious and cruel. But actually, we are about to get a great insight into what we've been talking about in regard to this concept of God hardening Pharaoh's heart. And it's right here in verse 5: **When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his servants had a change of heart toward the people, and they said, "What is this that we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?"**

You notice how they respond to this new information that Israel seems to be lost and confused? They have **a change of heart**, and they said, "**What is this that we've done that we have let Israel go from serving us?**" Verse 5 reveals the state of their hearts. They may have let Israel go because they had no choice, but they have not repented of their mistreatment of God's people. And in spite of all of God's mighty acts, revealing His power and His glory to them, they have not bowed their stiff necks; they have not humbled their hearts before the one true and living God. And, at the end of the day, what really matters to them is they have lost their meal tickets. The Hebrews, their slaves, were a means to an end, and they say, "**What is this we have we done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?**" Their economy, their prosperity, their power, and their so-called glory came on and from the beaten backs of God's people, and they had no intention of losing their slaves.

But do you remember what we've said the last two weeks? How did God describe Israel? It was in Exodus 4:22. He said, "**Israel is my first-born.**" These are God's people, and there are two things that we have been learning in this great battle. "Who is God, the true and reigning King?" and, "Whose are the Hebrews: Pharaoh's slaves or God's people?" And we will see once more here in chapter 14, the heart of Pharaoh revealed. In his heart of hearts, he is as committed to keeping God's people as his slaves as he has ever been. And the fact is that he still represents a threat to this newly freed community and nation. For, yes, the land of Egypt has been devastated by the strikes, but do you know what was still intact? It was their military might, their war machine. And Pharaoh's heart reveals he will continue to be a threat to God's people until God deals once and for all with him and his military power. Thus, God sets this situation up. He sets up a scenario in which the true posture of Pharaoh's heart will be provoked, and then it will be clearly seen, and it will be acted upon!

And so in verses 6-9, we read that Pharaoh and the chariots of Egypt all go out and chase after Israel. And as we read in verses 10-12, Israel is absolutely terrified. They are certain of their imminent death. There's no way out; they are trapped. They look one way: they see the water. They look the other way: they see the army. They look here, they look there, and there is nowhere to go. They are trapped! There is no hope! And they become convinced they are dead.

Scholars talk much about this reaction from Israel. How quick they are to fail to trust God... how the lessons of the 10 strikes on Egypt have accomplished nothing...how they are right back to the

same attitude and mindset of Exodus 3—the same perspective they had before this great deliverance from God and...how this was a test and...how they completely failed.

And I get all of that. It makes perfect sense as we read our Bibles in our living rooms, sipping our coffee. But put yourself in their shoes. The sea is trapping you right in front of you, and there is literally an army bearing down upon you. The situation is impossible, and panic quickly turns to despair. Perhaps you've been there. I have...hundreds of times! And not one of those times, for me, was the situation as real of a threat as what they are literally facing—and their terrifying circumstances right now! No matter where you look, there is no answer. Or is there? Is there perhaps even somewhere else to look...maybe for these Hebrews to, even literally, physically, look? Verse 13:

But Moses said to the people, “Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent.”

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward. As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land. As for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. Then the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen.”

The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night. (Vs. 13-20)

Eyes up! Israel was looking in front of them. They were looking behind them, in front of them, looking at their circumstances! And with every look, the fear rose more and more, and it completely overtook them. But what they clearly failed to do, and what we must learn from their failure is to, “Look up! Eyes up, oh people of God!” When we become focused on our circumstances, we can't see what God is doing. And remember, for Israel, in this moment, a visible manifestation of the presence of God is literally right there with Israel. It's leading Israel by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. And then verse 19 speaks of **the angel of God**. Remember last week, in chapter 13, verse 21, we were told that the Lord was going before them in the pillar of fire. So, what we're reading about in verse 19 is similar to what we studied back in chapter 3 when God physically manifested Himself to Moses in the burning bush. All of which is to show us clearly that God is with them. And this manifestation of God is right there the whole time. Right while Israel is freaking out, the visible manifestation of the presence of God is right there with them.

Now, we might not have the same thing with a visible manifestation of the presence of God, but we have the even better indwelling of the Spirit of God, and the completed Word of God. “Eyes

up, oh people of God!” For when we fix our eyes on our circumstances, just as Israel does, it leads to overwhelming fear and even despair because, apart from God, Israel's circumstances here actually are impossible. But they are not apart from God, and neither are we!

And so, in verse 13, Moses tells them, "Do not fear." Then three things: **"Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever."** Never...forever! The repetition is important because the writer wants us to know that these Egyptians will never harass these Hebrews again. God is bringing the story to an end and bringing His people to true freedom and liberation.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon described four voices that spoke to the Hebrews, and which speak to us in the midst of terrifyingly, impossible circumstances. *Despair*, which says, "Give up." *Cowardice*, which says, "Run." *Recklessness*, which says, "Fight. Do something, anything." And *Presumption*, which says, "Name it. Claim it. Dive into the sea and expect a miracle." But God has a very different word for the Hebrews, and for us. Verse 14: **"The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent."** Other translations say, "You need only be silent" or "You need only be still." And it brings to mind the beautiful words of Psalm 46:10: **"Cease striving...Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."**

Israel could not set themselves free from Egypt, and they also could not set themselves free from the Egyptians, even after leaving Egypt. Only God could do that. And that is what God is doing for them. They just don't realize it, for their eyes are on their circumstances, and not fixed on their God, who is present with them. "Eyes up, oh people of God!"

And so, what is Moses' instruction to them? Two things. Verse 13: "Fear not." Verse 14: "Keep silent." According to N.T. Wright, "Fear not" is the most repeated command in the Bible." God said it to Abraham, to Joshua, to Gideon. David taught it to Solomon. God said it through Isaiah to his people, through an angel to Daniel, and through Jesus to all of us. And in Psalm 23, David proclaims, **"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me."** This is the hope that God offers us. It can be the state of our hearts, even in the midst of impossible circumstances in our lives. But how? I think Isaiah 26:3 says it well. **"You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."**

This is God's desire for us and what He was seeking to teach the Hebrews. But how can we learn it? Well, first we must be willing to allow God to lead us, even if God is going to lead us into difficult and impossible situations. We need to let God lead us and then, in those situations, we need to "Look up". We need to have eyes up. Our eyes and our mind must be stayed on Him. We need only keep silent.

I think, as Americans, we really struggle with this. When there's a problem: Man! we want to take action. If we're in trouble, we want to save ourselves. "For when the going gets tough, the tough get going." And I think, as a culture, we actually struggle with grace, with actually having to depend entirely on God and His work in order to be delivered. But in this text, God is dramatically demonstrating this important principle that they and we might learn—that He delights in delivering us, and in so doing, He is glorified!

Arthur Pink said, *"The great difference between faith and unbelief is that one brings God in, the other shuts Him out."* Pink went on to say about this text, *"Unbelief creates or magnifies difficulties, and then sets about removing them by our own bustling and fruitless actions, which, in reality, do nothing but raise a dust around us which prevents us from our seeing God's salvation. Faith, on the contrary, raises the soul above the difficulty, straight to God Himself, and enables one to 'stand still'. We gain nothing by our restless and anxious efforts. We cannot make one hair white or black, nor add one cubit to our stature. What could Israel do at the Red Sea? Could they dry it up? Could they annihilate the hosts of Egypt? Impossible! There they were, enclosed within an impenetrable wall of difficulties in view of which nature could but tremble and feel its own impotency. But this was just the time for God to act. When unbelief is driven from the scene, then God can enter; and in order to get a proper view of His action, we must 'stand still.' Every movement of nature is, so far as it goes, a hindrance to our perception and enjoyment of Divine interference on our behalf."* *

_____ *Gleanings in Exodus by Arthur Pink, Moody Press, 1962, p. 110.

Isn't that great! Our "...*enjoyment of Divine interference on our behalf.*" And for these Israelites, it was time for God to act.

Verse 15: Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward. I so love the progression of verses 14 and 15 and what they teach. First, "Be still. Eyes up." This is about the posture of your heart. Focus on God. Trust in Him; rest in Him; take your anxiety to Him. Choose, in the impossible and terrifying moment, to look to Him, to believe in Him, to trust Him, and even to rest in Him. Deal with your heart. Bring it before God. Okay, great! Now your heart is at rest. Well, good. Now let's get moving. The posture of faith in verse 14 does not eliminate our part to step forward in faith as God tells Moses in verse 15. It's like God is saying, "Oh, Israel, quit crying and get moving. Trust not in yourselves and your power to deliver and overcome in this impossible situation. But rather, trust and depend entirely on Me, the infinite God who is present with you. At My command, step forward in faith. Don't stand there paralyzed in fear and despair. Look up. Trust in Me. Now, just put your feet in the water and see what I will do."

And in verse 16, God commands Moses to raise his staff. And He promises the Hebrews they will literally walk through the sea on dry land. Incredible! And then as we read in verses 17-18, God reminds us that everyone on that day will fail to look up. Pharaoh will also fail to have eyes up. Israel failed to trust in God. Pharaoh will continue to fail to fear God. And we are still dealing with a Pharaoh who is acting from a heart that was expressed clearly all the way back in Exodus 5:2 when he arrogantly said to Moses, **"Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord. And besides, I will not let Israel go."** For 9 chapters, and through 10 strikes on Egypt, God has been showing Pharaoh the answer to the question, "Who is the Lord?" But still, Pharaoh refuses to listen. And so he will literally, recklessly, and foolishly ignore the visible manifestation of the presence of God right in front of him. He still thinks he is God, and thus he is still unwilling to obey God. Therefore, God will show His glory, and the Egyptians will know that He is LORD, the only LORD. And to Pharaoh's continued rejection of Yahweh, the final answer will come—the question of which of them is king? Who is God is about to be answered, once and for all!

And then we see in verses 19 and 20 that this visible manifestation of the presence of God moves. The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, literally taking up position between Israel and Egypt. And so we see that God not only provides, God not only leads, but God also protects. And so it seems that He brought this pillar behind them and darkness to the Egyptians, while simultaneously allowing light for the Hebrews that they may be prepared to move out into the sea. And so we continue in verse 21:

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD swept the sea *back* by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided. The sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters *were like* a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Then the Egyptians took up the pursuit, and all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen went in after them into the midst of the sea. At the morning watch, the LORD looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion. He caused their chariot wheels to swerve, and He made them drive with difficulty; so the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from Israel, for the LORD is fighting for them against the Egyptians."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at daybreak, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it; then the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh's entire army that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them remained. But the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea, and the waters *were like* a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. (Vs. 21-29)

Incredible! And the scene is so incredible that the writer repeats it twice for emphasis. Verse 22: **"The sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left."** Verse 29: **"But the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left."** Imagine the brainstorming session! If the elders of Israel had tried to come up with a plan for their own deliverance, what would it have been? I have no idea. But I guarantee you, it would not have been this. But God wanted to teach them what He wants to teach us today in Christ.

And it is well said in Ephesians 3:20 and 21, **"Now to Him, who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, far beyond anything we are able to ask or think, in the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, for all generations, forever and ever. Amen."** We can't even think of plans that are as amazing as the plan of God. It was true then; it's still true now. Who could imagine God choosing and delivering and creating a people as His own, showing His glory through the stubborn, prideful heart of a king? God then revealing

Himself as the one true God and King, leading a people to freedom and into a New Covenant relationship with Him as the community of God. And in this amazing plan of God, we find another critical moment foreshadowing the future complete fulfillment of the plan of God. In our study of Passover, Passover showed us how it foreshadowed the Lord's Supper, which in the New Covenant symbolized what God did for us when Jesus died on the cross, as the sinless Lamb of God.

Now, this crossing of the sea comes with resurrection imagery which, in the New Covenant is symbolized by baptism. Here, God's people are delivered by God, and their salvation comes as they pass through the water from what would have been certain death, toward being a community standing in an entirely different place in the presence of God, and with new life. And this was achieved by the grace of God alone, as they simply trusted in God and followed Him and His plan. The apostle Paul invokes this imagery in 1 Corinthians 10:1-2, when he says, **"For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea."** And last week, we celebrated baptism, and that imagery demonstrated that each of those beautiful people are identifying with Christ and His Church.

In Exodus 14, God brings to completion the first phase of the exodus in which he is delivering the Hebrews and forming them into a community whose entire existence will be built upon their identification with Him as the people of God, Yahweh's people. And this brings out what I think is a really important point for us. Sometimes I think we mistakenly view our deliverance as kind of like a jailbreak. It's like we were in bondage to sin and Satan, and we were all pushed up against these gates, and we can't get out. And then Christ comes and pays our debt, and the gates swing wide, and we go running into freedom, going our separate ways, and living our lives of freedom, seeking to be and do whatever we want as free individuals. But the picture in Exodus is a together experience of being set free, not just to go from something—Egypt—but also to go towards something—the land that's been promised by God—and two together become something: a transformed community of the people of God. We will study more on that after the holidays as this book progresses. Verse 30:

Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses. (Vs. 30-31)

Those who in chapter 1 had forced the drowning of the Hebrew babies, have now themselves been drowned. And in verse 31, the people of God respond in worship of God, and they begin to learn to trust in God. Exodus 14 will become a central narrative for the Hebrew people. About 25 times in the rest of the Old Testament, the account of this event will be retold or referenced, and it's one of the most incredible stories in Scripture.

But how do we rightly understand it and apply it today as the people of the New Covenant in Christ? I think there are some lessons that we need to remember from Exodus 14 as followers of Christ today. *First*, God is sovereign. He is never confused, and He always has a plan to accomplish His will. And sometimes that plan includes leading us right into what seems like a dead end. *Second*, God is God! There is no other; there never will be. Every person today faces the same

choice to align with Pharaoh and the Egyptians as people seeking to be their own god, or to align with Moses and the Hebrews as people joyfully following and serving the one true God. *Third*, we are recipients, spectators, and participants in a great work of God's saving grace. This is about what God has done for us. *Fourth*, God is fully able and willing to protect and provide for His people in all circumstances. There is never a moment in your life when the arm of the Lord is too short. Nothing you can face is too difficult for Him. *Fifth*, the revelation of God's power and plan are designed to evoke worship, and develop faith, leading to trusting obedience and followership of the King of kings. And *finally*, if our eyes are fixed on our circumstances, our obstacles, and our threats, we will fail to see, trust, and follow God. But if we will fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith—Eyes Up, oh people of God!—we will be able to run with endurance the race marked out for us, overcoming any obstacle, enjoying the goodness, power, and the love of God, and becoming a people of faith, living with hearts at rest.

So, what does it say about a God who is 100% powerful and 100% loving, who allows His people to face danger, who sometimes leads them right into dead ends? It says: He loves them, and He wants them to see His glory, and to learn to trust in Him. That is what happens in Exodus 14. That's what happened for us in Christ. We have passed from death to life, and we are now and forever His redeemed people. But we'll soon see from Israel, that learning to trust God requires moving beyond the focus on His actions, what He does for us, and toward a focus on His character, who He is, and just how trustworthy He really is with us. And the anchors of the Exodus and Easter remind us to live trusting in Him, not just because He helps us in our hard times, but even more importantly...because of what He's already done to save us...because of what He will do, taking us to the place that He's promised, and most important of all, ...because of who He is. For He truly is a God of infinite power, wisdom, and love!

Jesus, thank You so much for who You are and for what You have done. Oh, God, may we look at what You did in the exodus and look forward to see what you did for us on the cross and at Easter, and may we become a people with eyes up, who are trusting in You, knowing nothing is too difficult for You, trusting in Your sovereignty and Your goodness and following after You every moment, in every situation, for Your glory. In your name we pray, Amen.

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FALL 2023 // WEEK 10

Life Group Questions

Exodus - The God Who Delivers // November 11 – 12, 2023

Dead End or God's Plan? // Exodus 14:1 – 31

Introduction

As we close this Life Group session in Exodus 14, God continues to guide his people on their path away from Egypt. As the heart of Pharaoh is hardened once more, he and his army pursue the Hebrews through the desert, and God shows His divine power yet again to save Moses and his people when they stand trapped between the Egyptians and the unforgiving Red Sea.

To think through the main ideas in the sermon and prepare for your discussion together, we invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group. Due to preferences over a wide range of groups, we do not expect you will cover every question each week.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

- 1) What are you looking forward to the most during the upcoming holiday season?

- 2) Share the story of a time when you found yourself on an unexpected adventure.

Getting Started

Transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
 - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
 - b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
 - c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you

Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) Discuss anything you found interesting from chapter 14 of Exodus, or from Jeff's message.

- 2) Read Exodus 14:10-12. The people following Moses find themselves in what seems to be a no-win scenario. **Has God ever brought you out of a situation that seemed impossible? Share it with your group.**

When facing the impossible, the newly freed Israelites find themselves forgetting what God has done for them and wishing that they could go back to their bondage in Egypt, saying "It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert." When we forget God in our lives, we similarly tend to seek out old patterns that don't bring the true fullness of life that He provides. **What sort of practices, disciplines, or habits help you to remember what God has done in your life?**

- 3) In Exodus 14:14, Moses tells the Israelites "The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still." **Together as a group, take three minutes of silence, and as you do so, think through what it would look like for God to fight for you in your life right now.**

It is God who delivers, we need only rest in Him. At the same time, sometimes God calls us to boldly take action in faith. Now that you've sat in silence and considered how God might fight for you, **what will it look like for you to take the next step forward in your faith in God?**

How do you manage the tension between trusting in God and knowing when to take action in faith?

- 4) A major part of the Exodus story so far has been the relationship between God and the people of Israel. **How would you describe your relationship with God today? Is it where you want it to be? If not, what is one step you could take to move forward?**
- 5) Verse 31 is a fitting conclusion to our time in Exodus so far: the people see what the Lord has done for them, and they put their trust in Him. **What has God been saying to you throughout this series in the book of Exodus? In what ways has your worship of God grown and strengthened your trust in Him?**

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts.

Scripture Focus: Throughout Exodus, we’ve seen God’s will and power executed using water: parting the Red Sea and bringing it down upon the Egyptians, turning the Nile to blood, and even the meaning of Moses’s name alluding to him being drawn out of the water. Read, pray, and meditate through some of the other Biblical instances of God using water to show His power, authority, and instruction. Here are a few examples to get you started:

- Creation (*Genesis 1:1-2*)
- The great flood (*Genesis 7:15-24*)
- Jesus turning water to wine (*John 2:7-11*)
- The baptism of Jesus (*Matthew 3:16-17*)
- The woman at the well (*John 4:7-13*)
- The restoration of Eden (*Revelation 22:1-5*)

Prayer Focus: Continue the practice of silence and stillness that we were reminded of in Exodus 14:14. Just as we did with our groups, take three minutes each day to be silent and pray over that promise: “The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.” And after you’ve taken that time to trust in Him, remember to look for any opportunities He has for you to take bold new steps of faith!

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

A significant part of “coming together” is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say “Amen” aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?