

## Exodus: New and Old

### Week 2 - Freedom to Choose Another Master?

*Theme: This study will look at Biblical freedom and how it points to God as our Master. Please note that we have used a lot of scripture. Please be ready to provide your group with context, where necessary, or to read more than the designated passages.*

#### Intro and Ice Breaker

*Leader's Note: You have two options for this icebreaker...Choose wisely!*

1.) Come prepared to have your small group watch/listen to the following youtube clip from Braveheart: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0r73p95I-eE>

2.) Have two of the small group leaders or two of your members (preferably two familiar with Braveheart) passionately read the following dialogue:

Wallace: I am William Wallace. And I see a whole army of my countrymen here in defiance of tyranny. You have come to fight as free men, and free men you are. What will you do with that freedom? Will you fight?

Veteran soldier: Fight? Against that? No, we will run; and we will live.

Wallace: Aye, fight and you may die. Run and you'll live -- at least a while. And dying in your beds many years from now, would you be willing to trade all the days from this day to that for one chance, just one chance to come back here and tell our enemies that they may take our lives, but they'll never take our freedom!!!

**?** What's this freedom that William Wallace is talking about? Free from what? Free to do what?

*Leader's Note: This is merely to get discussion started concerning freedom. It's not important to go into actual detail about who William Wallace was. It is however, important to start a discussion about freedom, choices, and living under a king (of your choice vs. not of your choice)*

The Israelites? Who are they and how did they become slaves?

The Israelites were the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Around 400 years before this passage Jacob's sons sold their brother, Joseph, to a slave trader who took Joseph to Egypt. God wasn't thwarted though and elevated Joseph to prominence in Egypt. Eventually, a serious famine hit the region. Again, God was not surprised, and, using Joseph, provided food. Joseph forgave his brothers, they reconciled, and the entire family moved to Egypt. Time passes, and in the words of Exodus 1:8-22

**8-14:** Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.

**15-22:** Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, "When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live." But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live. So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and let the male children live?" The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live."

Now, 400 years after Joseph and his brothers moved to Egypt, their descendants are slaves in Egypt, and their sons are being killed.

**Read Aloud:** Exodus 2:23-25 and 3:7

During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.

The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.

**?** Imagine you are an Israelite. You're being worked to the bone and your sons are killed when they're born.

- What are you groaning out to God? What rescue are you asking for?

- How do you make sense of your slavery?
- Do you feel hope as you're crying out?

**Read Aloud:** Exodus 3:13 - 3:17

Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.'"

**?** Do you get the sense that the Israelites knew God or had they forgotten him? Where do you see this in this passage?

**?** Who do you think the Israelites were groaning to?

*Possible Answers: Not to a God they knew well! General grumbling. Maybe, the Egyptian pantheon, maybe the God that their ancestors worshiped?*

**Read Aloud to the Group:** Isn't it amazing that God, who they've largely forgotten, hears their groans?

**?** What's so special about this covenant that God hears a people who've practically forgotten Him?

*Possible Answers: God, in Genesis, made this Covenant with Abraham. He put Abraham to sleep and performed the rites of the Covenant alone. God's Covenant with Abraham and his descendants is based on Him remembering the Israelites, not the Israelites remembering Him... and God never forgets.*

**Read Aloud:** Exodus 4:29-31 and 5:1-9

"Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites,<sup>30</sup> and Aaron told them everything the LORD had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people,<sup>31</sup> and they believed. And when they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped."

5 Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.'" <sup>2</sup> Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go."

<sup>3</sup> Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword."

<sup>4</sup> But the king of Egypt said, “Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!” <sup>5</sup> Then Pharaoh said, “Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working.”

<sup>6</sup> That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and overseers in charge of the people: <sup>7</sup> “You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. <sup>8</sup> But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don’t reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to our God.’ <sup>9</sup> Make the work harder for the people so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies.”

**?** Moses has not yet led the Israelites to freedom. What’s the basis of the Israelites’ worship in Exodus 4:31?

*Possible Answer: God of their ancestors cared for them in their misery. “I can’t believe anyone cares about our slavery. I can’t believe a god, much less, THE GOD, cares and will save us. I can’t believe we’re His people. God’s going to rescue us! Praise be to God” They were used to being under a harsh ruler not one who could be compassionate to their needs.*

**?** What’s the basis of Pharaoh's rejection of Moses’ and Aaron’s request?

*Possible Answer: Who is this God that I should listen to him? I’m in charge. I don’t follow him nor will I, especially if he’s going to take all of my slaves from me. Pharaoh seems to serve only one master, himself.*

**?** Reflect on what the basis is for your worship of God. Does it change?

*Leader’s Note: It may be beneficial to remind the group to reflect on this during prayer time or as a part of their application for the study.*

**?** As God speaks through Moses in Exodus 5:1 He puts a qualifier on His rescue of the Israelites. What implications does the phrase “so that” have in this passage?

*Possible Answers: God is not simply saying let the Israelites go!! He’s not only claiming them as His but He’s also calling them to worship Him in the wilderness. He is stating that their freedom will come, but only with Him as their Master.*

**?** How does God referring to the Israelites as “my people” speak to what it will mean for the Israelites to be free?

*Possible Answers: God is calling them out of slavery to the Egyptians and in to slavery and servanthood to Him. This slavery and servanthood is GOOD! He’s calling them out of Egypt and into the wilderness and a life of sacrifice.*

**?** What does it mean for you to be one of God’s people?

**Read Aloud:**

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

**?** Paul calls God's people to present themselves to Him as "living sacrifices." How might your ideas of freedom as discussed in the beginning of the study be similar or contradictory to this passage?

*Possible Answers: Biblical freedom is not a free for all! You have a Leader, Master, Savior, and are given freedom from all else **so that** you can serve Him. God has a plan for you. This is much like God telling the Israelites that they are not just free from the Egyptians but free to serve and sacrifice to Him!*

*Leaders Note: Returning to Egypt: The Israelites are distraught as Pharaoh has made their work even harder by commanding them to gather their own straw for making bricks. Here we see God repeating the plan to His people through Moses. The Israelites are not encouraged.*

**Read Aloud:** Exodus 6:6-9

Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. <sup>7</sup> I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. <sup>8</sup> I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'"<sup>9</sup> Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery.

**?** Has God's message changed from the first time He revealed Himself to the elders of Israel in Exodus 4 until this passage?

*Possible Answers: No*

**?** What is now the basis of their disbelief?

*Possible Answers: Their circumstances have worsened. They are focusing less on the fact that the God of their ancestors hears them and more on their suffering. They are not fully serving God as their master.*

**?** Do you think the Israelites would have worshiped God originally if they knew of the hard times in store for them?

*Possible Answers: It seems that the Israelites are basing their hope upon circumstances alone. Had they remembered Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and God's plan to have them in slavery in 400 years they may have been more willing to accept God's plan.*

? How can we avoid the discouragement and disbelief that the Israelites encountered?

*Possible Answers: We have the benefit of knowing more of the story. Also, we have been warned that serving God will come with suffering, therefore our expectations should be more in line with reality. 1 Peter 4:12-19*

**Read Aloud:** Romans 6:16-23

<sup>16</sup> Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? <sup>17</sup> But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, <sup>18</sup> and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. <sup>19</sup> I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

<sup>20</sup> For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. <sup>21</sup> But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. <sup>22</sup> But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Read Aloud:** This passage highlights that freedom is defined by choice rather than an absence of a master. Make a pros and cons list regarding the two choices in this passage.

*Possible Answer: God clearly wins!*

? How is the slavery that the Israelites experienced, pre-Moses, similar to the slavery that nonbelievers experience? How are we now free from slavery as followers of Jesus Christ?

*Possible Answers: The Israelites, much like nonbelievers, did not have a choice to leave their slavery before Moses. After Moses they did have a choice but need to embrace and obey all that was part of the plan if they were to be lead out of slavery. We are now given the opportunity to choose Jesus, and be chosen, because of His work on the cross.*

### **For Discussion and Application**

? Now, in the words of William Wallace, “What will you do with that freedom? Will you fight?” in order to serve a Master that is honest, merciful, and worthy? How can you as a small group encourage each other to use your freedom in this way?

? What is our community application question for these passages?