
THE GOSPEL-CENTERED LIFE



EXODUS

FOR
STUDENTS

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— KRISTEN HATTON —

THE GOSPEL-CENTERED LIFE IN EXODUS FOR STUDENTS

Kristen Hatton

Study Guide with Leader's Notes



WWW.NEWGROWTHPRESS.COM

New Growth Press, Greensboro, NC 27404

www.newgrowthpress.com

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Cover Design: Faceout Books, faceoutstudio.com

Interior Typesetting and eBook: Lisa Parnell, lparnell.com

ISBN: 978-1-948130-06-6 (print)

ISBN: 978-1-948130-07-3 (ebook)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data on File

Printed in the United States of America

25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 1 2 3 4 5

Dear David and Jonathan,
May you always remember and rest in the faithful, loyal love
of the LORD, or as Dad would say, God's *hesed*.

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INTRODUCTION

WHY EXODUS?

When my daughter was in middle school I began a girls' Bible study for her and a group of her friends. Our group stayed together through their high school graduation, but I learned early on there were limited resources for students their age. I remember standing, staring at the teen section at my local Christian bookstore and feeling so discouraged and confused about what to teach. The offerings seemed limited to quick fixes for complicated teen issues—studies that missed dealing with the heart and applying the gospel—or feel-good messages for navigating a happy, successful teen life. I wanted something more. Teens needed more.

Teens need to have their eyes lifted off themselves to see the truth about who Jesus is. They need to be deeply rooted in his Word to learn who he is, and in more than a Sunday-school-answer way, why he is the answer to everything. They need to see his Word as the one unfolding story about Jesus. Otherwise the Bible doesn't make much sense, and it can seem more like disjointed bits of advice and rules. If this is it, no wonder it is read more with the goal of checking quiet time off the to-do list. Instead, teens need to see it as the daily "manna" needed for all of life.

I walked out of the bookstore empty-handed that day. I decided instead I would take a sermon series from my pastor-husband and rewrite it into a Bible study. And that's what I did with the books of John, Exodus, and Hebrews. I love all of those books, but my favorite study with my girls was in Exodus.

Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament was eye-opening for most in the group. It was exciting to discover Jesus in such unexpected places as the tenth plague, the wilderness, and the tabernacle. The Bible came alive

in new ways and, I hope, changed the way they will always approach reading their Bibles.

This is my hope for other teens, too. The Bible is not intended to be an instruction manual or self-help guide from which to pluck verses that seem to fit our situations. From Genesis to Revelation, it is again the one story of Jesus. How we view and read our Bibles matters, and the more we read it in context, looking to see him, the more we will get the story straight about Jesus's perfect work and worth for us.

We see this in Exodus! In fact, Exodus lays out the pattern for redemption. The Israelites need a Redeemer. Throughout the book we see them grumble, complain, disobey, worship false gods, and try to be their own Savior. It's pretty easy to see. What's not so apparent to us is how we are just like them. We, too, do all those same things. We, too, need a Redeemer.

But what we also see in Exodus is how God loves to give grace to the guilty. Over and over again he not only comes to the rescue of the Israelites, but he seeks to be in a relationship with them. Their hope and the hope of all humanity, which is enslaved to the rule and reign of sin, rest on the faithfulness of God to fulfill his promises. And that he does. What Exodus points to through the deliverance of God's chosen people is later fulfilled in Christ.

God in his faithfulness sent Jesus to rescue, recreate, and restore. We have this guarantee by his Word—the same Word that revealed himself to Moses in the bush as the great I AM and later showed Moses his glory as he proclaimed to be “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin but who will be no means clear the guilty” (Exodus 34:6–7).

Apart from teens hearing about who this God is in light of our true condition, they won't see their deep need for a Redeemer. Therefore, my hope for this study is to equip them with gospel glasses from which to

view all of God's Word, and specifically to see how the Old Testament book of Exodus is all about God's redemption in Christ. With these lenses for seeing Jesus written across these pages, may they come to understand how the gospel informs and transforms all of life.

HOW THIS STUDY IS ORGANIZED

The Gospel-Centered Life in Exodus for Students contains twelve lessons written in chronological order. With forty chapters in Exodus, expounding on each of them fully was not possible for this book. Instead, some chapters are grouped together, or even skipped, because the big-picture goal is for participants to see Christ in Exodus through the captivity, wandering, and waiting of the Israelites' journey, and ultimately the Promised Land.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This guide allows both leaders and participants to work through each lesson in a small group setting. Additional leader's notes for each lesson are found at the back of the book. The Scripture passages are not written out, so it is necessary for leaders and participants to have their Bible and a pen.

Each lesson includes the following sections:

1. Bible Conversation
2. Article
3. Discussion
4. Exercise
5. Wrap-Up and Prayer

To kick off the lesson, an icebreaker question related to the text may get participants thinking and talking. From there, Scripture is introduced and read. Following this initial Bible Conversation, the article expounds on the passage, or draws out a particular aspect of the passage to help the participants better understand the lesson as a whole. The

discussion time then takes the main ideas of the lesson and brings them to the participants' hearts in more specific ways. The exercise portion varies from week to week, but the goal is to further personalize what has been taught in each lesson. Finally, the lesson concludes with prayer.

A suggested time allotment for each section is given to help the leader keep the group on track to complete the lesson in one hour's time. The lesson book serves as an easy-to-follow script. But leaders should become familiar with the Bible text, lesson, and leader's notes (located in the back of the book) prior to the group meeting.

Each participant should have a lesson book and something to write with. For several of the exercises, participants will be asked to write notes in the book. If some participants end up sharing books, or if they don't use the same book for each lesson, they may wish to write on notepaper instead.

In two cases, additional materials are recommended: Lesson 2 calls for a whiteboard or flip chart. Lesson 12 suggests that each participant hold a coin.

In most cases, no outside reading is given. But prior to lessons 3 and 10, participants are asked to read the Bible text ahead of time. This is simply because there is too much reading to cover within the one-hour time frame.

Lesson

1

FORGETFUL OR FAITHFUL?

BIG IDEA

God never leaves us stranded. We are never left to face our circumstances, situations, or sin alone.

BIBLE CONVERSATION *20 minutes*

Tell about a time you felt forgotten or abandoned by God (maybe due to sickness or death, or troubles at home or school, or hurts in a relationship). What are some of the lies about God you have believed when you have felt forgotten?

Today you will read about the Israelites' enslavement under Pharaoh of Egypt, and the birth and early life of Moses. As we read, put yourself in the shoes of the Israelites and of Moses. **Exodus 1:8–22** is our first passage. Have someone read it out loud.

What differing emotions do you think the Israelites felt as slaves in Egypt, and why?

Let's continue reading with **Exodus 2:1–10**. (Have someone read this out loud.)

What might be some reasons the baby's mom decided to hide him?

Moses was raised as an Egyptian, but when he grew older and saw how the Hebrew slaves were treated, he became angry and murdered an Egyptian for beating one of his people. Then Moses fled to the country to escape Pharaoh's demand that he be killed. Now we pick back up in the reading with the last two verses: **Exodus 2:23–25**. (Have someone read out loud.)

Think about what these verses tell us about God. What do you like best about this description of God, and why is it so good to hear?

Though this is only a beginning glance at Moses, he will be with you for the rest of Exodus. For further insight, read the article "God Hears You." Read it out loud together, taking turns at the paragraph breaks.

Lesson

1

ARTICLE

GOD HEARS YOU

5 minutes

What Tyler has faced in his relatively short sixteen years of life seems unfair. As a young boy he endured a tough battle against cancer that included lengthy hospital stays in a city far away from home. Even though he has been in remission for years, the lingering effects on his body have prevented him from playing the contact sports other boys enjoy. In many ways you could say he was robbed of the carefree childhood it seems he deserves.

Now once again Tyler has been forced into an adult world of responsibility and suffering he wasn't ready for. With the unexpected loss of his dad, Tyler is now the man of the house. His mom is back in the workplace, leaving him often responsible for driving his younger siblings to their activities and handling extra chores at home. It's hard to hear his friends complain about their stress when they have no idea what it's like to juggle everything on his plate.

Has God forgotten Tyler? Do you think Tyler feels like the Israelites did as slaves under Pharaoh's evil regime? We know from their groaning they felt betrayed by God. What happened to God's promise to their forefather Abram? They had expected to live happily in their own land, not as captives in a foreign place. Why was God not making good on his covenant to deliver them?

Have you felt like the Israelites—forgotten by God? Have you struggled to see how something in your life could possibly be “good”? Have you read his promises to be with you and to give you all things but only felt more confused? Has God’s inaction led you to feel abandoned or disillusioned?

You are not alone. At times we all wonder where God is. Believe it or not, he hears you, and he has not left you alone! We know this to be true because of the verbs used at the end of the second chapter: *heard*, *remembered*, *saw*, and *knew*. Each of these verbs in the Bible’s original language is a derivative of the word *yada*, which means “to know intimately or to be concerned about.” In other words, these verses tell us that God took notice of his people’s cries and remembered.

It is not that God had forgotten about his covenant with the Israelites and then, after 400 years, remembered he had left them in a foreign land. No, *remembering his covenant* means he is ready to act. Now is the time to make good on his promise.

Since the day of the very first sin, God had spoken of a Promised One who would rescue his people and make all things right again. The Israelites were captives in Egypt; they needed rescue from life in the wrong place under the wrong rule. But all of us are captives to sin. We, too, need a rescue—an even bigger rescue from sin’s rule over us.

Like the Israelites, our hope comes from a rescuer God provides. Moses is a preview of the Rescuer to come, a picture we now see clearly. God did act by sending his Son—the Promised One—to snatch his people out of the grip of Satan’s tyranny, sin’s slavery, and the fear of death. God is not forgetful, but faithful to all his promises!

But there is another piece of the story for you to know! When Jesus was in the garden before he was crucified, the thought of being separated from his Father was so great that he cried out, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me” (Matthew 26:39). As you know, the cup did not pass from him, and Jesus did go to the cross.

Did the Father not care or hear his cry? By no means! The Father saw Jesus's pain and knew intimately what he was going through. But remembering his promise is *why* the Father turned down his Son's prayer and allowed him to suffer in his life on earth and die horrifically on a cross!

Jesus's prayer was turned down so that God would answer yours! Jesus did everything necessary to permanently redeem all of God's people for all time. By his perfect life and atoning death, we are freed from sin's bondage and the consequence of death. We are fully embraced by the Father and guaranteed he will never leave us.

In Jesus, God hears your cry. He remembers his promise and sees your oppression. He knows your pain, and he *did* something about it by giving you Jesus. He is not forgetful, but faithful!

DISCUSSION *10 minutes*

What circumstances or situations keep you from believing God knows you intimately and is concerned about the details in your life?

When Jesus prayed to escape suffering, God answered no to that prayer for the greater purpose of redeeming his people. How does this speak into your trials, suffering, and unanswered prayers?

Like the Israelites we need rescuing, even though we don't always realize it. When we fail to see sin as more than just bad, outward behavior, we minimize the power and influence sin has over us. In fact, Jesus came so we would no longer have to be slaves to sin, held captive by its power over us. By freeing us from sin, he also frees us to look more deeply at how sin can affect our hearts and motives (cf. Romans 6:17–18).

Lesson

1

EXERCISE

WRONG RULER

15 minutes

In our exercise today, we will further explore our enslavement to sin and why it is so important that we be reoriented back to God's faithfulness. Let's read the exercise out loud and answer the questions together.

One way sin seeks to enslave us is by playing into our emotions and circumstances to convince us life should be better. We think we should be happier, have more, or deserve a different lot than what we've been dealt. Sometimes these thoughts are fueled by how we compare ourselves to other people. But only God can fill the hole in our souls, or emptiness, so whatever else we turn to for peace and happiness will never last. The more we try, the further we follow the wrong ruler deeper into sin, and the more disappointment, frustration, and emptiness will settle in our souls.

For a real-life look at the progression of living under the wrong ruler, read what pop star Madonna once said in a magazine interview. Have someone read it out loud. Then answer some of the questions below.

All of my will has always been to conquer some horrible feeling of inadequacy. I'm always struggling with that fear. I push past one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being and then I get to another stage and think I'm mediocre and uninteresting. And I find a way to get myself out of that. Again and again. My drive in life is from this horrible fear

of being mediocre. And that's always pushing me, pushing me. Because even though I've become Somebody, I still have to prove that Somebody. My struggle has never ended and it probably never will.¹

1. What is enslaving Madonna?
2. What other examples of enslavement can you take from pop culture or the world around you? What things today can be particularly enslaving to teens?
3. In what ways does sin seek to enslave *you*? Think about what consumes your thoughts, what drives your worries, or what gives you fears similar to those the Israelites felt in Egypt. What comes to mind?
4. What about an insatiable hunger for acceptance, approval, and love from others? How is that enslaving? In what ways do you seek these things?
5. Because Madonna felt she was only mediocre, she had to keep trying to prove herself. When do you feel less than or empty from living under the wrong ruler? How do you try to find relief?

WRAP-UP AND PRAYER *5 minutes*

After looking at the exercise, you should be more tuned in to the sneakiness of sin. You don't have to be living in outright rebellion to be under sin's power and control. But the good news is that at the cross Jesus defeated sin and Satan once and for all. So when you are in Jesus, you have been redeemed by grace because you have faith in him. God views you as perfect because of Jesus's faithfulness in living the perfect life.

This does not mean you can go ahead and sin. It means God does not hold your sin against you, and he works in you to help you resist sin. This grace, and the sight of who Jesus is for us, creates a desire in us to live obedient lives, not out of duty but from delight at his awesomeness.

1. Lynn Hirschberg, "The Misfit," *Vanity Fair*, April 1991, 167.

But when we continue to do those things we do not want to do, or we fall back into the same sin patterns, we are never without hope.

As part of your closing prayer time, pray that God would help you to remember his faithfulness always, even when it seems as if he is not acting or when you feel you don't deserve it.