

# EXODUS Bible Reading Schedule

## 4 Weeks

### WEEK 1

We will read Exodus in one month with our pace being two chapters a day. This is a story so it is better to read longer sections to understand the flow of connecting events. I will center in on the more confusing aspects of the story as well as the most memorable. I hope to assist you in this meaningful journey through Exodus.

Exodus is really a book about God keeping his promises. Nothing appeared to match God's promises to Abraham. Yes, Abraham's descendants had grown in great numbers, but they were slaves in Egypt. This sets the stage for God to raise up a deliverer. Moses will be the main character throughout the book. We will appreciate Moses' humanity, his honesty, his courage, and his amazing relationship with God.

The term Exodus derives its meaning from the Greek "the way out." We might think that the Hebrews mostly needed rescue from their bondage but his book actually addresses several equally as important topics. They needed a way out of their sin and a way into fellowship with God. So, the majority of Exodus highlights the importance of knowing God through the covenant that God outlines on Sinai. They would also be directed to an ongoing relationship with Yahweh through the Tabernacle. Likewise, all of us have the same need to be set free, to know God, and to experience fellowship with him. Are you ready for this exciting journey through the Book of Exodus?

#### DAY 1 – Exodus 1 & 2

Reading these first two chapters will be a breeze because they are especially interesting and give us an important introduction to the story and the situation. The first chapter doesn't even mention our main character. We get a pretty clear picture of Pharaoh, however. "Pharaoh" is an Egyptian word meaning "great house." It refers to the royal palace and is also used as a title for the king of Egypt. As king, the pharaoh personified the rule of the gods over Egypt, which gave him absolute authority. Two pharaohs will appear in the book of Exodus. What do you notice about this first pharaoh? Egypt had many gods but Pharaoh sure didn't think they were big enough to take care of his kingdom. Out of fear he orders Hebrew male babies to be murdered. As the intensity is palatable, our future hero is born. Obviously, his story is miraculous as the God of the Hebrews has plans for this baby. That leads us to chapter two. The miracle birth was orchestrated by our God as he used the ritual of bathing which had spiritual undertones for Pharaoh's daughter who most likely thought that the goddess of the Nile brought this baby to her. Her willingness to cooperate with Moses' mother has a combination of sympathy for a beautiful baby and the desire to please the god of the Nile River. So, Moses' mother could nurture and care for her son until it was time to bring him to Pharaoh's daughter. She adopted him as her own which would be completely in the plan of God. Moses probably received the best education and training available as the son of a princess. Chapter 2 verse 10 says a lot without telling us much. (Acts 7:22)

Moses was an Egyptian name and it meant “to give birth” which was how the daughter met Moses. But the Hebrew word that sounds like Moses means “to lift out.” The Lord lifted him out of the water so that he might one day be the deliverer God uses to rescue his people who would be lifted out of Egypt. The next fifteen verses tell us about how Moses was drawn to his own people but also was separated from them as well. You and I know the story well but maybe there’s something that catches your eye this time in a new way. I won’t write any more of my thoughts because it will get too long for people to read it. But there are definitely insights into Moses’ personality in these verses. How do you understand Moses from the second half of this chapter? Are you as excited as I am to read and study Exodus? Why?

#### DAY 2 – Exodus 3 & 4

You might think that reading two of these chapters each day is too much. But I am thinking of these four weeks in Exodus as preparation for our deeper journey in the book on Sunday mornings. You can do it! I know these two chapters were especially full with so many possible points on contemplation and application. I assure you Tyler will slow us down as we go through Exodus beginning on FEB 18<sup>th</sup>. Don’t you love the introduction of Yahweh as he tells Moses his name? This is monumental! That’s how we get the name Yahweh which is really a transliteration. It probably is a form of the Hebrew verb “to be.” It could mean “he causes to be,” or “he who is” or “I am.” God’s name has always been inspiring to me. What does his name mean to you? Verse 22 is also very interesting to me because it happens just this way as the Egyptians are so eager for the Hebrews to leave that they give them anything they want. We won’t read about the specifics until chapter 12. The Lord is very patient with Moses and his insecurities, but finally, in 4:14 it says, “Then the Lord became angry with Moses.” In a sermon I gave about Moses the Elder (an older leader) this past summer, I mentioned that Moses actually became more of a spokesman than Aaron as time went on. It seems that Moses’ speaking problem was perhaps not as serious as he made it out to be, or the problem began to dissipate as his experience increased. What might that teach us? The most difficult part of chapter four to understand is found in verses 24-26. I could give you a half page of notes on what this might have meant but for now, I will tell you that circumcision would be an important part of Moses and his family identifying with the Israelites. This could very well get in the way of the people accepting Moses’ radical leadership. Zipporah, Moses’ wife was a person of action and knew what needed to be done. This was a step of obedience and a mark of identification as people of God. How do you respond to this rich and rather human encounter of Moses with the living God, Yahweh?

#### DAY 3 – Exodus 5 & 6

These two chapters are especially interesting to me because they appear to go nowhere. Moses and Aaron approach Pharaoh with courage being confident that Pharaoh will submit to the demands initiated by Yahweh who is the Sovereign God. But the opposite seems to take place with Pharaoh making things even worse for God’s people. Pharaoh considered this an affront to his own sovereignty and reacted negatively, to say the least. But this is not an isolated situation; it is repeated time and again in life. When God’s kingdom clashes with God’s enemies, there is often conflict and hardship for God’s people. This reminds me of how God often responds to his people. He waits. The tension couldn’t be stronger making God’s intervention even more desperate. The in-between time is so difficult for us to continue to trust. Moses confronts God with his frustration in 5:22-23. The Lord reminds Moses of who he is and what he

has promised. If God promises something, it will be accomplished. I think the verse worth noting expresses what God wants them to experience: “Then you will know that I am the Lord your God who has freed you from your oppression in Egypt.” (6:7) The Lord wants his people to know him. This desire in the heart of God has not changed. We end this chapter with Moses demonstrating a lack of confidence and faith. But God doesn’t give up on him and will not let him weasel out of returning to Pharaoh with a message from God, the one true God. Why is it hard to wait on the Lord when you are going through hardship? What does this part of the story say to you?

#### DAY 4 – Exodus 7 & 8

This is the introduction of our record of the plagues of Egypt. You all understand that God knows the beginning from the end so that the plagues will fall on deaf ears until the Lord kills the firstborn which will not take place until chapter 11. Before Moses even meets with Pharaoh, the Lord says to Moses, “Then you will tell him (after Pharaoh resists God time and again), ‘This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son. I commanded you, “Let my son go, so he can worship me.” But since you have refused, I will now kill your firstborn son!’” (4:22-23) My point is that God had given Moses a “heads up” on the stubbornness of Pharaoh. God had already prepared Moses for the difficult task ahead. These plagues would establish the miracle power of God. For the first few plagues, the story tells us that Pharaoh’s magicians could do the same thing. But when the gnats arrived, the magicians had met their match. “Pharaoh’s magicians tried to do the same thing with their secret arts, but this time they failed.” (8:18) Listen to their response from the NLT, “This is the finger of God!” the magicians exclaimed to Pharaoh. (V19) Chapters 7 through 10 sound very repetitive as Pharaoh remains hardhearted. Another theme associated with the plagues is the confrontation of Egypt’s so-called gods. The Egyptians worshiped the Nile, amphibians, insects, animals, the sun, and life itself. Each of these was powerless compared to God. The Lord clearly demonstrated that he alone is God. I will anticipate addressing the repeated reality of Pharaoh hardening his heart compared to God making Pharaoh’s heart hard. This culminates in chapter 14. By the end of chapter 8, Moses is doing all the talking. Rather surprising since Moses is slow of speech, right? What do you think about that? I mentioned this interesting development earlier. How is God speaking to you through your reading of Exodus?

#### DAY 5 – Exodus 9 & 10

This topic of the plagues is especially interesting to me since Tyler asked me to speak on the topic as a part of our sermon series on Exodus. I understand that the plagues were more than God’s effort to rescue his people. If that were the case, one climatic miracle would have been enough, right? I might also suggest that the plagues were more than a demonstration for Pharaoh, they were meant to teach Israel and Moses who God is. Do you think that the Hebrews might have waned in their understanding and devotion to God after 400 years? In fact, the Israelites didn’t really know who the Lord was. The polytheistic religious world of the Egyptians had surely rubbed off. We will witness this firsthand when the people make a golden calf (Exodus 32). The plagues revealed the Lord’s absolute superiority over everything in creation. As I said yesterday, the plagues were aimed at elements the Egyptians revered and worshiped. You might think of the plagues as “signs,” like the miracles of Jesus were a reflection of his identity. The plagues show how empty it is to worship created things rather than the Creator. The plagues defeated and destroyed the idols of the Egyptians. The final plague before the firstborn was

darkness. This is actually very significant because the chief god of the Egyptians was the sun. He was known as Amon-Re. He was supreme over all the other gods and was considered to be the ultimate source of life. The Lord showed that the sun's light was completely under his control; he could shut it off from Egypt while leaving it to shine in Goshen where God's people resided. How are you understanding the plagues? What does this part of the story mean to you?

## WEEK 2

This week really is the “exodus” as we read the next 10 chapters. I know the reading might take 10 – 15 minutes each day not allowing as much time to think about how these words impact your life but just remember we are reading the most cherished story in Jewish history. That makes the extra time well worth it, right? In fact, the most significant event for the Jews is the Passover. I

### DAY 6 – Exodus 11 & 12

We have reached the predicted plague of death (4:22-23). Every firstborn Egyptian will lose their life as punishment for the devilish treatment of the Hebrews and the hard heart of Pharaoh, the dictator. I’m reminded of my intention to say more about God hardening Pharaoh’s heart. “Moses and Aaron performed these miracles in Pharaoh’s presence, but the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he wouldn’t let the Israelites leave the country.” (11:10) This may sound like Pharaoh didn’t have a choice but the reality is God knew Pharaoh’s empty, hard heart already and allowed him to continue in his stubbornness. In fact, God was especially patient with Pharaoh giving him ample opportunity to submit. When it was completely evident that Pharaoh would not change, God confirmed Pharaoh’s prideful decision and finalized the painful consequences of his actions. God didn’t force Pharaoh to reject him, rather, he had at least 10 chances to change his mind. In Ezekiel 33:11, God says, “I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked.” Chapter 12 highlights the Passover. We know that Jesus is referred to as the Passover Lamb in the New Testament. The connection is easy to see and makes this event even more profound. There’s much to notice in chapter 12 but the blood on the doorframes gets my attention. In killing the lamb, the Israelites shed innocent blood. The lamb was a sacrifice, a substitute for the person who would have to die in the plague. From that point on, the people would clearly understand that for them to be spared from death, an innocent life had to be sacrificed in their place. How do you respond to the introduction of the Passover in chapter 12?

### DAY 7 – Exodus 13 & 14

The Passover plays such a significant role in the history of the Jews that the Lord placed more than one reminder for them. Not only were they to celebrate the Passover year after year but God also had them dedicate the firstborn male to the Lord as a reminder of God sparing the firstborn as the angel of death passed over the houses with blood on their doorframes. Because God saved the lives of the firstborn, he had a rightful claim to them. But I think of how God was preparing his people to understand the importance of sacrifice and buying back life. To me, it definitely pointed to Jesus who would buy us back by paying the price for our sins once and for all. The second topic is a repeated one from yesterday. It definitely says the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart again in 14:4. But it also says Pharaoh decided, “When word reached the king of Egypt that the Israelites had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds. ‘What have we done, letting all those Israelite slaves get away?’” (14:5) Which is it? God hardening his heart or him deciding to go after the Hebrews? I think you know my answer; it is both. That is the mystery of God’s sovereignty and our free will. And finally, don’t you see the growth and increased faith in Moses!? I think verses 13 & 14 are the best: “But Moses told the people, ‘Don’t be afraid. Just stand still and watch the Lord rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be

seen again. The Lord himself will fight for you. Just stay calm.” With all the people grumbling and full of fear, Moses demonstrates strong faith and steady leadership. No wonder Moses is the hero of the Jewish people. Plus, don’t forget the significance of God’s presence with his people as he leads and protects them with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night! The inspiration of this book continues. How do you respond to this amazing event in the life of God’s people?

#### DAY 8 – Exodus 15 & 16

Don’t you just love the fact after God does something amazing the first thing Moses and the people want to do is praise the Lord in song!? “Moses and the people of Israel sang...” (V1). Please choose a verse or a phrase that you appreciate from this song. I love the beginning and the end the most, “The Lord will reign forever and ever!” Some have questioned the actuality of a million people crossing the Red Sea as it was parted. But the way that Moses relays this story has a factual quality to it. He was reporting history as he himself experienced it. This wasn’t secondhand since Moses is the one who wrote the record of Exodus. The details and the tension included make this historical book credible when compared to any other books or accounts of history. Egyptian records and archaeology neither confirm nor contradict the Bible’s record of Exodus; the text however shows an intimate familiarity with Egyptian thought and culture. The strength of the Bible is in its honesty. After the miraculous deliverance through the Red Sea, by verse 3 in our next chapter, the people were complaining. Historical writings from that time in history only reported the good things. Egyptian records don’t say anything about the deliverance of Hebrews because that would look poorly for the Pharaoh and Egypt. On the other hand, Chapter 16 tells us the people were already frustrated with Moses and Aaron. So, God graciously intervenes with Manna and Quail. I so appreciate this part of the story because God the provider is fully in view. How often have I worried about my shortage and doubted God’s supply? How often have I been tempted to keep extra for myself even when God promises to take care of me? This chapter gives me a clear picture of how far God will go to meet legitimate needs in my life and in the lives of those I love. Do you believe Philippians 4:19 (NLT), “And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.” Whether it is praising God for his provision or trusting him to be the God who provides, these two chapters come alive for me. How do you respond to this reading?

#### DAY 9 – Exodus 17 & 18

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is found in chapter 17. Hint: it elevates the significance of prayer. That is what I think verse 8-13 teaches. Of course, Joshua and the soldiers were intensely battling the Amalekites but it didn’t seem to matter without the covering of God and Moses interceding on the hill nearby. This story would shape the mindset of the Jewish people in the future. They would better realize that they desperately needed God’s favor to succeed. Isn’t that still true for us? How does this story speak to you? Along with this unforgettable story, we are introduced to Moses’ father-in-law. Technically, we have met him in Exodus 2. This priest of Midian seems to go by two names, Jethro and Reuel. In my previous readings of Exodus 18, I have appreciated Jethro’s advice to his son-in-law who is trying to take on too much by himself, “You’re going to wear yourself out—and the people, too. This job is too heavy a burden for you to handle all by yourself.” (18:18) Jethro advised him to delegate. Good advice! I remember, as a young pastor, how much this part of the story spoke to me as I felt the stress of doing too much and not asking for help. But the part of the story that really caught my eye this time was how

Jethro responded to Moses' report. Moses testified as a witness of God's power and deliverance. (18:7-9) People cannot argue with our testimony. It is how we experience God in specific ways as Moses did. People may not believe our testimony but it is hard for them to argue against it. Moses' testimony grabbed his father-in-law's heart. Listen to his response – "Praise the Lord," Jethro said, "for he has rescued you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh. Yes, he has rescued Israel from the powerful hand of Egypt! I know now that the Lord is greater than all the other gods (that Jethro believed in), because he rescued his people from the oppression of the proud Egyptians." (18:10-11) Then Jethro worshiped Yahweh with a burnt offering and sacrifices, thereby identifying himself with Israel and placing his faith in Yahweh. What a marvelous outcome! I think there are many touchpoints in these two chapters. What is standing out to you?

#### DAY 10 – Exodus 19 & 20

This reading begins a long section of instruction about connection to God and living in community as his people. The word "covenant" stands out as the Lord desires to renew his close relationship with them. Will the people embrace the covenant with God that makes him their only God and then they would be God's special treasure? The people tell Moses, "We will do everything the Lord has commanded." (19:8) The Israelites' real problem was not primarily their being slaves in Egypt; it was that they did not yet know God in the way that he intended. The covenant of Sinai was designed to teach the Israelites about God's nature and character as they lived out his principles and instructions. The Ten Commandments are at the core of God's instruction. He emphasizes their relationship with him first and then their relationship to each other. Do you see how the list (20:3-17) can be divided in that way? I was interested to notice that the instruction about honoring the Lord gave more detail and explanation. Idolatry had been a part of their experience in Egypt so they were susceptible to the false notion of many gods. The rhythm of the Sabbath had probably been ignored or at least, the Egyptians were insensitive to such a concept. But now honoring God would include the blessing of the Sabbath. I noticed again the comparison of sins handed down for 3 to 4 generations but the unfailing love of God being poured out "for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands." (20:6) God's love prevails in a more powerful way. I choose to make that my focus. The command to not misuse the name of the Lord led the Jews to avoid even saying his name. The name of God points to God's nature, character, and authority. To misuse his name is to make it "empty," also meaning insignificant or worthless. But we have the positive approach of honoring God with his name and relating to him as our Heavenly Father. The names of God can be a rich way to adore him and give him praise. The "thou shalt not" kept people distant from God at times, but our invitation, through Jesus, is to draw close and even call him "Abba." The Ten Commandments are very valuable but have also shown me how much I need God's grace and forgiveness offered through His Son. I have fallen short, and you have too, regarding following the commands of God 100%. I am grateful for the gift of a Savior who is the bridge to God even though I have fallen short of his standard. Amen! How do these commandments speak to you today?

## WEEK 3

Are you ready for a shift in the emphasis of Exodus? After the Ten Commandments, we will read about the implications of these commands. I hope you can notice God's heart to create a healthy, harmonious environment for his people through these principles and commands. We all know the importance of boundaries and there is clear direction on the boundaries that God wants in place for his people. Reading this week might separate the pretenders from the devoted. I say that realizing that reading this week's chapters will take a stronger effort than the previous inspirational story, which was a real page-turner. How might God speak to us through these commands, principles, and religious activities for His people?

### DAY 11 – Exodus 21 & 22

It is interesting to realize that these laws and commands are similar to other Near Eastern law codes. The format is often "if" and "then" statements. But the categories can seem like they are grouped together, but overall, personal, civil, and ceremonial laws are mixed together. For God's people, all of life is in relationship to God, so all kinds of behavior point to the importance of submitting to the Lord as the One they are called to please. Israel's covenant with God pertained to both proper worship and treating people rightly. While many of the laws of Moses were not new to the world at that time, the idea that the behavior they called for is written into the very fabric of the universe by its Creator was radically new. I am sure some of these "laws" are confusing, like slavery. But slavery was a fact of life in the ancient world. For some slavery was welcomed otherwise they would have been destitute. Male slaves would be set free in the seventh year which is quite a gift. If the slave preferred to serve his master, he would become his master's property for life. Unmarried women were not released at 7 years to their own benefit. She would have so few alternatives, that staying in the home of her master would usually be her best option. Some of these laws expand the meaning of stealing, adultery, murder, etc. found in the Ten Commandments. There is an important Hebrew word that has been criticized by many. "Anyone who sacrifices to any god other than the Lord must be destroyed." (22:20, kharam) This word is used in Leviticus 27:28-29. This idea was enacted during the wars of conquest for Canaan. Cities, animals, and people deemed holy to some other god(s) were set apart to be destroyed. But right next to this statement is God reminding the people to be kind to foreigners. Don't you think that is very interesting because it clearly admonishes the Jews to be gracious to foreigners who want to live in harmony with the Jews? (Deuteronomy 10:18-19) I know this section is unique to our previous readings but what did you learn from these words?

### DAY 12 – Exodus 23 & 24

These two chapters cover different topics. Chapter 23 continues with the instructions for the people on obedience to God and the importance of three festivals to be observed each year. After completing the list of many requirements, God shares an incredible promise with the people. Beginning in verse 20, he tells them that if they keep these covenant stipulations, he will protect them from their enemies, and illness, and help them live securely in the land they will possess. Of course, history bears out the fact that they disobeyed the Lord time and again—the promise of 23:23 points to the Promised Land which we know would be slow in coming. But chapter 24 tells us that the people accept the Lord's covenant with a



strong word of affirmation. Twice it says, “We will do everything the Lord has commanded.” (24:3, 7) God is revealing himself (God’s glory, 24:15-17) and they are all in. But by Exodus 32 (next week), the people will grieve the heart of God in a way that seems especially devastating to him; make an idol! I wonder how this verbal commitment sounded to God, knowing that they would disobey Him so blatantly? I think of two aspects of these first four chapters. The list of directives was quite long because they would need it spelled out. Our directives from the Lord (New Testament) are much shorter because as his followers, we have the Holy Spirit to direct us. The people were sure to sin; it was basic to their nature. It would point to their need for a Savior. Secondly, they really did get the full picture of God as he parts the waters (Exodus 14) and now guides them continually by cloud and fire. “And the glory of the Lord settled down on Mount Sinai...” (24:16) His glory is the reflection of his presence. Verse 17 makes it clear that the Israelites viewed the appearance of God’s presence on the Mountain. May the evidence of God’s presence all around us and even in us, give us assurance of eternity and also the motivation to honor him with all of our lives. How do you respond to these two chapters?

#### DAY 13 – Exodus 25 & 26

Aren’t you impressed with the strong emphasis on the tabernacle?! I found this interesting and full of meaning. From the very beginning of creation, God’s plan was to share his life with humanity and allow people the joy of fellowship with him. But the entrance of sin blurred that connection in so many ways. If sinful people were to come into the presence of God, his holiness would destroy them. The Tabernacle provided a temporary means by which the Israelites could experience God’s presence without being destroyed by it. Each aspect of the Tabernacle has purpose and meaning. The altar shows us that sin must be removed through a sacrificial death. The washbasin shows that fellowship with God demands removing uncleanness and being washed. In the Holy Place, the lampstand and the table show us that we must walk in God’s light. The incense altar represents prayer, and the rising incense reminds those who are forgiven and washed, who are walking in the light and relying on God, that they have open access to the Lord through prayer. The curtain between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place reminds us that the Almighty, the Most Holy God who invites us to draw near, cannot be approached casually. Behind the curtain, there is no idol, but only the glorious Ark of the Covenant. The centrality of the Ark reflects God’s central purpose for his people—a covenant relationship with the living God. The altar of incense and the washbasin are highlighted in Exodus 30 but I included them here so as to give you a picture of the Tabernacle as I progressively walk you right into the Holy of Holies. Only the High Priest entered there before Jesus, but now with Jesus, we have access. How does your reading about the Tabernacle help you understand the character and greatness of our God?

#### DAY 14 – Exodus 27 & 28

Chapter 27 continues with detailed instructions for the altar and even the courtyard of the Tabernacle. It is interesting to realize that the walls of the tabernacle are really curtains. A curtain that measured 150 feet was huge. Even the curtain needed special attention and amazing craftsmanship. The next chapter highlights the Priest’s clothing. I grew up in a church where the pastor wore a special robe with different colors for the sash according to the religious calendar. As a boy in the Lutheran Church, I took my turn to be the Pastor’s Assistant and thus had to wear a robe. I am sure some of the reasons for special clothing date back to these instructions. It indicated that Aaron and his sons were chosen by God for this

important role. The clothing set them apart for the Lord's service. The garment coincides with the grandeur of the Tabernacle all meant to display God's holiness and man's privilege to serve God in such an elevated way. But there would come a day when Jesus Christ, the true High Priest, would enter the Most Holy Place once and for all, and the distinction between the priests and the people would fade away (Hebrews 10:11-22). Until that time, human mediators were needed to symbolize the wonder of God's presence and the holiness that made the Lord other than human. Access to the Holy Place was a significant stipulation and required a special signal for the Priest to enter. "Aaron will wear this robe whenever he ministers before the Lord, and the bells (on his robe) will tinkle as he goes in and out of the Lord's presence in the Holy Place. If he wears it, he will not die." (28:35) This reminds me of Zechariah entering the Holy Place in Luke 1 and is visited by the Lord. It must have been an incredible experience. But Hebrews 4 tells us we are invited into the very throne room of God's grace. It is truly the marvel of our faith to have access to God as Abba Father. What might stand out to you in these chapters? Why?

#### DAY 15 – Exodus 29 & 30

Ordination is an interesting concept; we don't refer to this idea for leadership in the church very often. Associated with ordination is consecration and anointing. These two words summarize ordination fairly well with the meaning being, set apart and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The process is rather elaborate, in my thinking, but the idea was for priests to represent God to the people. This is huge since Aaron and his sons are mere human beings. Two ideas surface for me: the first pertains to my own personal experience. I was ordained by representative leaders in the Christian and Missionary Alliance denomination on August 24, 1986. Why I remember the date is because my daughter, Hannah was born on that date in 1990. Ordination was a special ceremony for me and I received it as a lifelong calling. I have never thought of leaving the pastorate even when the situation(s) seemed dire. Secondly, we don't talk about ordination very often in today's evangelical churches because we believe all believers have a "ordination" from God to represent him in this world. 1 Peter 2:9 is our main reference as we believe in the priesthood of all believers. "But you are not like that (those who reject the Lord), for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests (usually translated as 'a royal priesthood'), a holy nation, God's very possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God (anointing), for he called you (ordained) out of darkness into his wonderful light." (NLT) These chapters lift up the role of the priest but I hope you might also feel lifted up because God has a calling and a purpose for you as his ordained priest. What does it mean to you that you are ordained for God's purposes and that all your days are ordained by Him? (Psalm 139:16)

## WEEK 4

Even though the last half of the book is more about instruction and direction for being God's people after 400 years in Egypt, there are points of application woven into these inspired words. For most of this week, we will learn about the importance and construction of the Tabernacle. I am sure God will help us understand how this is also important for us today but my favorite section is the first four chapters this week. However, they represent the inclination of the people to forget God and revert back to their days in Egypt with a Golden Calf as an idol. I can't imagine anything more disappointing to the Lord than that.

### DAY 16 – Exodus 31 & 32

We might be tempted to jump into chapter 32 without taking in the words given about the Sabbath. 31:12-18 elevates the Sabbath which must still be important to God today. The one in seven principle was meant to be a gift from God to us. The focus on the Lord would be primary and would help shape the people into God's character making the Sabbath a day set apart for personal holiness. Resting from their work was also a practical way of demonstrating genuine dependence on God to meet their needs. The Sabbath was clearly declared as important through the Ten Commandments (20:8-11). How do you respect the Sabbath? How might the Sabbath be more of a gift from God to you? Obviously, chapter 32 is the most well-known part of the second half of the Book. All we have to say is the "Golden Calf" and you know the idea of the story. Moses was called by God to be their leader but it seems like some questioned him. Maybe he was still thought of as an outsider. He never had to be a slave. He didn't grow up a Hebrew. The sense of disrespect and disbelief were clearly portrayed in verse 1, "Come on," they said, "make us some gods who can lead us. We don't know what happened to this fellow Moses, who brought us here from the land of Egypt." This is almost a deal breaker for God. Moses was more than gracious and sacrificial. He went to bat for these unfaithful people so that God might again show mercy. It is interesting to note that Moses was more sympathetic on the mountain because when he sees what is going on with his own eyes he is filled with righteous anger. (32:19-20) Are you surprised by Aaron's denial? (32:21-25) I am. The punishment of God was indeed severe. There is so much at stake. The establishment of God's people in the Promised Land was essential to the plan. The Lord through Moses cut out the cancerous rebellion and disbelief among the people and 3,000 lost their lives (32:28). How might God use this story in your life?

### DAY 17 – Exodus 33 & 34

Moses has learned a valuable lesson in his journey with God. "Lord, if you don't go with me (us), I do not want to leave this place (33:15-16)." Even though the people sinned greatly against God, he did not abandon them. My favorite part in these chapters is the words of God that he declares about himself in 34:6-7. He uses his own name and announces again the nature of his character. His unfailing love surpasses his judgments as he is merciful and forgiving. But let us not have a light view of sin. Sin will have its effects because there remains a cause-and-effect dynamic in the world that God has made. The abuser may repent, be forgiven, and lead a new life, but the effects of his previous choices will continue to play out. We should never sin just because we know God will forgive. In fact, according to the Lord's own words, our sins affect future generations. But the Lord even governs that by telling us the natural

effects of those sins are restricted to three or four generations. The renewal of the covenant fills the second half of chapter 34. It seems to me that God's greatest concern is their allegiance to him, "You shall have no other gods before me." The people surrounding the Jews all worshiped many different gods with idols to recognize their existence. This was most grievous to God and his greatest prohibition. Also, Moses had the privilege of an audience with God and it showed, literally, as his countenance radiated with the glow of God's glory. That teaches me about the importance and effect of drawing near to God and communing with him. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most." I think there are several points of application in these two chapters; which ones are you thinking of?

#### DAY 18 – Exodus 35 & 36

I know these readings are not nearly as inspiring as how the Book began. But there are always principles to consider, in my opinion. Like the principle of generosity and giving highlighted in chapter 35. NIV, 35:5 says, "From what you have (the possessions of the people), take an offering for the Lord. Everyone who is willing is to bring to the Lord an offering of gold, silver, and bronze..." and the list goes on to give everyone a chance to participate. No one was asked to give what they did not have. God still operates that way today. Beyond that principle, we find two additional points to consider: an offering is to the Lord. When we give to missions, to the financial needs of the church, to people in need, etc., we give to the Lord. Plus, no one was forced to do it. Those willing gave generously. This is the same in the New Testament with 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7 (NIV) presenting the clearest expression of generous giving, "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." It was the same in Moses' day as it was in the Early Church as it is today. Another principle that lives on in the lives of believers is found in 35:31 and continues into chapter 36: "The Lord filled Bezalel with the Spirit of God, giving him wisdom, ability, and expertise in all kinds of crafts." The truth of God giving his people what they need to serve him also lives on today. We often talk about the Holy Spirit giving us gifts to serve the Lord and his people. For me, that adds some inspiration to this record telling us about the building of the Tabernacle. In what ways might God be speaking to you about generous giving or spiritual gifts? Both topics are supported well in the New Testament.

#### DAY 19 – Exodus 37 & 38

Sometimes people will ask me how my youth group is doing. Or, how many families are benefitting from my Food Bank? As if, it was my youth group or my food bank. Bezalel is said to have made every article and all the furnishings in the Tabernacle but he could not have possibly done it himself. This is like attributing the food bank to me just because I have been the leader in our church family for these things. Bezalel was responsible for the oversight and directed the craftsmen and seamstresses but he did not do all of it directly. I am sure you understand that. I know this is a rather boring account of Bezalel's accomplishments and actually repeats some of what we already read in Exodus 25 to 31. The most interesting section for me pertains to the inventory of all the materials. These were all donated. I often feel very blessed when I see the abundance of donations given through our church for our Food Bank, for Hallman Elementary, for a mission trip, etc. It was incredibly generous of our church to raise \$17,000

for a well in Burkina Faso during December which tends to be an expensive month for many families. People who love God and trust him are the most generous people on the globe. This was true then and it is still true today. Maybe you are a craftsman or a seamstress; don't take that gift for granted. In this passage, such gifts are elevated and attributed to the Holy Spirit. Also, it took many helpers to accomplish the building of the Tabernacle and all its furnishings. The Body of Christ is a community of gifted people each doing their part. What part of the Body do you believe God is equipping you to fulfill?

#### DAY 20 – Exodus 39 & 40

We have arrived at the close of this book and I am especially drawn to the conclusion in 40:34-38. After the obedience of Moses, for he did everything as God directed, the best occurs when God's presence shows up. God's goal from the outset was not merely to deliver his people from their bondage, but to bring them into a relationship with himself. He designed the Tabernacle to help the people draw near to him. When it was completed, his presence was a far better gift than the emasculate construction of the Tabernacle. Then, everything was prepared for him to live among the people and guide the people. His promise to guide the people is one I genuinely appreciate because I need that too. A very familiar verse in Proverbs says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take." (3:5-6) Also, Jesus said we would receive the "Paraclete," the Helper who is the Holy Spirit. He will guide you into all truth. The importance of encountering the Lord and walking in the Spirit cannot be over-emphasized. We believe that our connection to God is relational. "And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth." (John 17:3) Cultivating a personal relationship with the Living God is the greatest adventure in this life. How well do you know the Father? How do you sense him leading and guiding you?