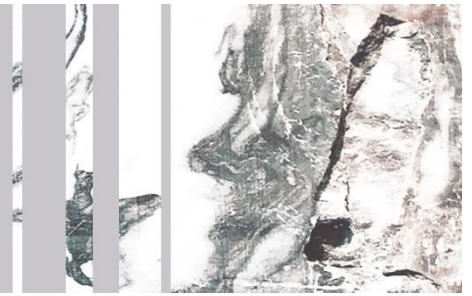


EXODUS

Daily Devotions Week 7



DAY ONE

Can you imagine the shock and awe that would have reverberated throughout the ancient world when the Israelites, who had been slaves for 400 years, were set free? If Moses' world had Twitter trends or breaking news headlines, this sure would've accumulated an inordinate number of tweets and been on the front page of every newspaper!

The Israelites had just been ushered out of Egypt by the Egyptians themselves (see Exodus 12:33). God led them by fire and by cloud (Exodus 13:17-22). God revealed Himself to all. Before the exodus, Pharaoh questioned who the God of the Israelites was, saying, "Who is the LORD that I should listen to Him and let the Israelites go free?" (Exodus 5:2). Now, Pharaoh and all the Egyptians, knew without a doubt who the Lord was.

But just because the Egyptians knew who the Lord was didn't mean they were willing to listen to Him.

Read Exodus 14:1-9.

What we see unfolding in these verses is quite interesting. God tells the Israelites to turn back into Egyptian territory and encamp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea (Exodus 14:2). God knew Pharaoh would think the Israelites were either hopelessly lost or afraid to enter the wilderness (Exodus 14:3). Either way, God was going to use the sea to again display His glory (Exodus 14:4).

Pharaoh changed his mind towards the people and started *pursuing* them. Did you notice the word "pursue" in these verses? It occurs once in Exodus 14:8 and again in verse nine. Despite God's power being displayed through the plagues, the Egyptians wanted the Israelites back. They readied their chariots, armed their soldiers, and hastily *pursued* the Israelites thinking they could overtake them—and get things back to normal.

Similarly, during colonial times in America, slave masters would actually hire "slave catchers" to recover and return runaway slaves. It was very much the nature of slave masters to pursue those they previously had power over.

In our own lives, sin can function in the same way. As followers of Jesus, we have been set free from our bondage to sin, but often, sin pursues us and tries to deceive us as it preys on our disordered desires.

- How have you seen sin continue to "pursue" you? What arenas of your life does this show up in? Why do you think this is?
- In what ways have you experienced freedom as a result of Christ pursuing you?

Read Proverbs 7:1-23.

- How does the woman, or adulteress (representative of sin), attempt to lure the young man in this passage? What is the outcome of the young man giving in to the woman?
- How have you seen the nature of this passage take place in your own life?
- How can you pursue wisdom in your life so as to not be like the young man? See Proverbs 5:1-23. How can your group help you?

DAY TWO

I can recall one particular encounter I had with fear growing up. I was sick at home while my parents were at work, and with a mountain of tissues on one side and a trusty trash bin on the other, I was set to waste the day away watching TV in my parents' upstairs bedroom.

Suddenly, I heard something downstairs. I knew *for sure* someone had just entered our house. I mustered what energy I could and peeked over the edge of the window to see out to the front yard. I couldn't see any cars in the driveway—so it wasn't my parents. That's when the realization hit me that someone had just broken into our home! Scenes from *Home Alone* came flooding to mind... the only problem was that I was nowhere near as resourceful as Kevin McCallister. So, I rushed into my parents' walk-in closet, cell phone in hand, and quickly dialed my dad while hiding behind my mom's blouses.

Luckily, my dad answered his phone after the first ring and I bombarded him with a jumbled, breathless explanation of my current situation: "Dad! Someone just broke into our house! What do I do? Can you come home? Oh, come quickly dad! Please come quick!"

He replied, "Hey, okay... slow down. It's okay. Tell me slowly what's going on."

"Dad," I said between gasps for air, "someone is in our house!"

"I'll be there as soon as I can," he said. "Stay safe!"

My dad quickly came home to check things out. He checked around the yard, inside the house, in the basement, and no one was there. There wasn't any evidence of anyone breaking in. To this day, I'm not sure what I heard. All I know is that I got a lesson in how fear works.

In the flash of a moment, I went from a sick, lethargic pre-teen to a hyper-vigilant hideaway as my flight response kicked into gear.

Read Exodus 14:10-14.

Imagine being the Israelites in this scenario. God had just forced Pharaoh's clenched fists open. Now, Pharaoh was pursuing the Israelites. In doing so, he struck fear into their hearts.

Fear makes people do things they wouldn't normally do in their right frame of mind. If I had thought rationally about the situation I described above, I would have relied on the facts: we had a secure home, watchful neighbors, and a statistically safe neighborhood. And yet, just the glimmer of a potential threat upon my life threw me into a frenzy.

The same was true with the Israelites.

The text says God's people "feared greatly" (verse 10). Their fear quickly led them to forget what God *had just done* in their midst! God delivered them out of Egypt, He sent plague upon plague pronouncing His judgment on the Egyptian gods, and yet, here we see the Israelites saying they'd be better off "to serve the Egyptians" (verse 12).

And then we see Moses' response: "Fear not, stand firm and see the salvation of the LORD."

Moses commands the people to snap out of the haziness that fear brings and to see the salvation of Yahweh.

Our culture doesn't spend much time considering the ways we experience fear outside of the proverbial "monsters under our beds." In his book *Love Over Fear*, Dan White Jr. writes,

"We don't think of ourselves as afraid. That word fear seems too blunt to us, unless we're talking about fear of snakes, spiders, or heights. When fear is not attached to concrete external objects, it's hard to identify. This is the nature of fear, to stay elusive, unable to be dealt with directly." He goes on to say, "Fear is not an abstract concept to be left to the sociologist to dissect intellectually; it is lurking in us all."

But there's a reason why the command "fear not" appears more than any other command in the Bible (360+ times!). It's because, as humans, we encounter fear in subtle ways that hijack our ability to perceive the goodness of the Lord.

We fear the unknown, what is out of our control, not having enough, things that are out of our control, our enemies, being hurt (physically, emotionally, mentally, etc.), "missing out", consequences, and we fear people who don't act like us, talk like us, or vote like us.

Fear is like a preying lion, drawing us in, until it has us in its grips and we're unable to escape. This is why marketing ploys and politicians use the language of fear – because they know we're fearful creatures. They know if they can play to our fears, then they've got us.

- How have you seen the reality of fear at work in your own life?
- Where do you think your fears stem from? What are they rooted in?
- What might you need to unplug from in our culture to help you experience freedom from fear?

What attributes of God do you need to press into to help uproot your fear?

DAY THREE

Many times, when it comes to our devotionals, we want to learn more about the context and situation we find ourselves studying—which is important! But we also want to be a people who are meeting with God in His Word. There are times where we can read the Bible and actually ignore God's voice.

Today, let's engage the Scriptures with the same exercise we used last week. It's called *Lectio Divina*, which simply means "divine reading." It's a practice of praying with Scripture, allowing God to speak through His Word. There are five movements to the reading: *Silencio* (silence), *Lectio* (reading), *Meditatio* (meditation), *Oratio* (speech or response), *Contemplatio* (contemplate). These movements allow us to sit with a passage so it can saturate our minds and hearts.

Let's take a look at Exodus 14:1-14 through the lens of this practice.

Silencio. As you begin, put yourself in the presence of God. Find a quiet space and allow your mind to be still. Offer yourself to God and invite Him to speak through His Word.

Lectio. Read Exodus 14:1-14 out loud, slowly allowing the words to resonate and settle in your heart. Linger on the word or phrase that catches your attention and lights up for you. Sit with the word or phrase and savor it as a word of God for you. Write the word or phrase below:

Meditatio. Read the passage again and listen to where the word connects with your life right now. Enter into the scene in your imagination. Imagination is a God-given gift. Envision the scene. Carefully watch the people. Listen to how they interact. What do you hear and experience as you watch and listen?

Oratio. Read the passage one more time, listening attentively. Has God addressed you in this Word and invited you to respond? Allow the Scripture to lead you to respond in prayer. Do not censor your thoughts or requests. Let them flow out spontaneously and freely before the Lord who loves you. Hold nothing back. Respond to God's invitation to you.

Contemplatio. Deeply receive God's word and rest in His presence and love. Give yourself some time to wait and be still before you reenter life as usual. How can you take this encounter with you throughout this day? Return to it and remember it all day long. Stay with God until you feel prompted to leave.

DAY FOUR

Read Exodus 14:15-31.

In this portion of holy Scripture, God (again) saves the people from the Egyptians. He also pronounces judgment on the Egyptians (again). The Lord instructs Moses to take his staff, stretch out his hand over the sea, and divide it so God's people may walk on dry land (verse 16-17). The Israelites walk through unscathed. The Egyptians are obliterated. And in doing so, God gets the glory.

What's interesting to note in these verses is the phrase, "stretch out your hand." It occurs four times in just 15 verses. And if it's repeated, it's important.

The phrase (or some conglomeration of the phrase) "stretch out your hand" occurs all throughout the Scriptures and indicates either a move of God or a display of God's power. Moses, acting as a representative of God, "stretches" out his hand and in doing so puts the judgement and salvation and power of God on display.

The great Egyptians, with their chariots, horses, armor, and weapons were *nothing* compared to the Lord.

Read the following passages and note how the writer in each passage uses the phrase (or some rendition of) "stretch out your hand":

- Psalm 144:7
- Ezekiel 6:14
- Isaiah 14:27
- Zephaniah 1:4; 2:13
- Mark 3:5
- Acts 4:30

After reflecting on these passages, consider the following questions:

- What do these verses reveal to you about God and His nature?
- How might these passages challenge your preconceived ideas of who He is?
- In what ways have you experienced the outstretched arm of God?

DAY FIVE

Fair warning, today's devotional will look a little different. Instead of simply reading a devotional and reflecting on some questions, use your time today to encounter God and His Word in a different and fresh way.

Read Exodus 15:1-21.

In the passage you just read, Moses is moved to *singing* because of the great work of the Lord. God has brought His people up out of slavery and into freedom! How great is the Lord?! Moses and the people can't help but sing!

As you reflect on Christ's redeeming work for you on the cross, know that this is your invitation to get creative. In the time you have, experiment by writing a song, composing a poem, drawing a picture, forming a sculpture, or painting a picture that you feel accurately describes your feelings towards the salvation you've experienced through Christ's work on the cross.

Have fun with this exercise. Be playful. Move to a child-like mindset. Most importantly, give it a chance!

After doing so, reflect on why you created what you did. Then, when your group meets next, share with them what you created and why you were moved to express yourself that way.