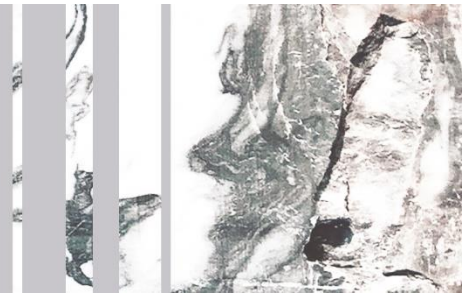


EXODUS

Daily Devotions Week 12



DAY ONE

I remember going to the ocean every summer as a kid. The salty air, the cool of the water, the sand castles – there was nothing quite like it. One of the things that always astonished me was how I would go out into the ocean to swim and in no time at all end up 100 yards away from where I started! Without even realizing it, the ocean can pull you away from where you began.

Having spent 400 years in Egypt functioned in a very similar way for the Israelites. They may not have realized it but being immersed in the Egyptian culture would have ever so slowly pulled them to become more and more like the Egyptians. Think about it. The Israelites would have heard Egyptian songs, listened to Egyptian stories, seen Egyptian arts and images of the Egyptian gods, obeyed Egyptian rules, and followed Egyptian leaders. How could they *not* be shaped through all of that?

That's why when we get to passages like **Exodus 18** and following, it's important to note that God wants his people to be holy – meaning to be different than the Egyptians (or any other people group for that matter). So, in **Exodus 18**, God gives his people shepherds to help them follow His laws. In Exodus 19, God announces his covenant with Israel.

Re-read Exodus 19:3-6 and note below what this covenant consisted of.

Then, in **Exodus 20** God gives his people the 10 commandments. And finally, in **Exodus 21-23**, God gives his people 42 additional commandments. These 42 commandments are practical examples of how to live out God's principles and ideals we find in the 10 commandments.

The shepherds, the covenant, and the specific laws are all given to Israel to help shape and form them into the kinds of people that would both reflect God (like a mirror) *to* the nations and distinguish God's people *from* the nations.

In what ways do you feel Christians are called to be different than the world? What passages in the Bible reflect your answers?

How do you feel you have been formed and shaped to live more like the world instead of like Jesus?

Where in your life specifically have you seen transformation into living, thinking, or behaving more like Jesus?

DAY THREE

As we mentioned in day one, in **Exodus 21-23**, God gives his people 42 additional commandments as practical examples of how to live out in everyday life God's principles and ideals we find in the 10 commandments. The 42 commandments are only a sampling of some of the laws that Israel would put in place. We learn this primarily from the beginning of Exodus 21 from the phrases "now these" or "and these" which, in Hebrew, correspond to the number 42.

As Bible scholar John Sailhamer writes, "The purpose of the selection was to provide a basis for teaching the nature of divine justice. By studying specific cases of the application of God's will in concrete situations, the reader of the Pentateuch could learn the basic principles undergirding the covenant relationship."

So, the Old Testament laws, especially what we see here in Exodus 21-23 are just a few real-life applications of what it looked like for Israel to live out their relationship with God.

For example, part of being in right relationship with God means to love your neighbor. In **Deuteronomy 22:8**, the people of Israel are told, "When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house, if anyone should fall from it." A parapet is a wall of some sort to help make sure people don't fall off of high places. God commands his people to, when they build houses, to make sure that they have these parapets in order to serve their neighbors. This was a way for them to love their neighbors – by putting safety features into their homes!

When it comes to **Exodus 21-23**, we've picked a few commands that the people of Israel were given. Try to figure out what the principle or ideal behind these laws were. And try and see how these laws helped the people either love God, love their neighbor, or made them unique from other nations.

Read Exodus 21:35-36.

Read Exodus 22:16-17.

Read Exodus 23:8.

DAY FOUR

Today let's engage God's law through one of the most well-known Psalms in the Bible. We are going to practice *Lectio Divina* again, 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 today at **Psalm 1** through 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 **Psalm 1** 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 praying this prayer. Why would the psalmist pray this prayer specifically? What do you note about his heart?

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 into a prayer response. 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.¹

¹ This version of the *Lectio Divina* can be found in the following book: Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2015), 189.

DAY FIVE

As Christians, all of God's Word is useful to us (**2 Timothy 3:16**), but many times we get hung up on the laws in the Old Testament and wonder what exactly applies to us and what exactly doesn't.

One thing to note about the Old Testament law is that it came to the people of Israel with a covenant as its foundation. Think about two people on their wedding day. The two make solemn vows before God and their friends and they make promises to live a certain way towards one another from that point on (they promise fidelity in sickness and in health, for rich or for poor... you get the point!).

The laws in the Old Testament were undergirded by Israel covenanting with God. They would be his people; he would be their God. God would provide for them and protect them, and they would follow his statutes.

As Christians, we do not follow the Old Testament law because we are under a different covenant (this is why we can eat shellfish, wear clothing of different materials, etc.) We are not under the same covenant as Israel. Our covenant is founded on better promises and was established by Jesus's death on the cross!

Read Hebrews 8-10 (Warning: It's a little lengthy and dense... but also worth your while!)

What stands out to you about this new covenant?
How is Jesus' covenant better than the old one?

As Jesus followers, our law is *not* what we read in the Old Testament, our law is Christ himself (**see Galatians 6:2**). This means the standard for living in right relationship with God, the standard for loving our neighbors, and the standard for being holy is found in the life of Jesus himself. This also means that *now*, instead of following rules and regulations, we follow Jesus. As his disciples, we look to think as he thought, speak as he spoke, and do what he did.

And because Jesus was the embodiment of divine love, we can rest assured that by following the way of Jesus, that is, the way of love, we fulfill the law (**Romans 13:8**).

What questions do you have concerning the Old Testament laws?
Where have you seen instances in our culture where people mishandle the Old Testament laws?
How does Jesus' fulfillment of the law bring you hope, joy, or solace?

Write a prayer to God expressing your thoughts and feelings regarding the new covenant that we are now under because of Christ's work on the cross.