

Great Themes of the Bible

By

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Lesson 1: Exodus

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LESSON 1: EXODUS

GROWTH GROUP HOMEWORK by Peter Horne

Goal: To discover Exodus moments in my life.

GETTING STARTED

1. **ICEBREAKER:** As we go around the circle and tell our name, please answer this question... **What's your favorite flavor of ice-cream?**

IN THE TEXT

Over the next month our Growth Groups will survey some themes that run throughout the Bible. Today we begin with Exodus. While the origins of the nation of Israel begin with Abraham, the exodus event came to be viewed as the birth of the nation of Israel. More than that, throughout centuries the Exodus has served as a symbol of God's faithfulness (**Hosea 11:1-4**). It continues to be important for us.

2. What first comes to mind when you think about the Exodus story?
3. **READ Exodus 5:22-6:8** List 3 things God says he will do in v6-8:
4. **READ Psalm 135:5-12** Why does this Psalm talk about the Exodus events that happened hundreds of years in the past?
5. **READ Isaiah 43:14-21** What phrases do you see here that contain echoes of Exodus? How does this passage encourage its readers who are in Babylon?

6. **READ 1 Corinthians 5:6-8** Jesus was crucified during the Passover. In this passage Jesus is called the Passover lamb. How is Jesus' death like the Passover lamb? (See **1 Peter 1:18-19**)
7. **READ Revelation 1:5b-6 & Exodus 19:5-6** Gregory Stevenson (109) notes, "*By connecting Christ's action on the cross with the exodus event, John encourages us to interpret one in light of the other, to see the cross as a continuation of God's redemptive activity within creation.*" **Do you see why he says this?**

DIGGING DEEPER

8. List 3 elements of the Exodus story that make it important:
1. . _____
 2. . _____
 3. . _____
9. The Exodus theme has several significant elements that are listed below. Can you match these themes with the life and person of Jesus?
- Oppression / slavery
 - God hears
 - Death
 - God rescues
 - Covenant
 - Mission
10. Which of the above items have you experience in your life most recently?
11. Compare **Exodus 6:6-8** with **Revelation 21:1-5**. What similarities do you see? What does this comparison teach you about God?

LESSON 2: RELATIONAL GOD

GROWTH GROUP HOMEWORK by Peter Horne

Goal: To discuss what it means to be “God’s people”.

GETTING STARTED

1. **ICEBREAKER:** As we go around the circle and tell our name, please answer this question... **Do you have a favorite Thanksgiving food?**

IN THE TEXT

2. We have a song in our hymn books that speaks of an intimate relationship with God in terms of the Garden of Eden, “And He walks with me, and He talks with me, And He tells me I am His own,
And the joy we share as we tarry there, None other has ever known.” Does this describe your picture of Eden? Do you think God walked and talked with Adam and Eve? (see **Genesis 3:8**)
3. **READ Genesis 17:2, 7-8** What does God promise if Abraham and his descendants accept His covenant?
4. **READ Leviticus 26:11-13** After bringing Israel out of Egypt God promises many blessings if they are faithful to Him. As they camp at Sinai, what promises does God make in these verses about the relationship He wants with Israel?
5. **READ Ezekiel 37:24-28** When God rescues Israel from captivity, what kind of covenant will God make with his people?
6. **READ Jeremiah 24:5-7; 31:1; 31:33-34; 32:36-38** what’s the common thread in these verses?

7. **READ 2 Cor. 6:16-7:1** What is the significance of being “people of God” according to these verses? AND compare vs 18 & 16. Are they saying the same thing or something different?

DIGGING DEEPER

8. As we look at all the passages above we see that God longs to have a relationship with His people. Interestingly, when **Hebrews 8:7-13** quotes Jeremiah 31 it emphasizes the concept of a new covenant. In this context it emphasizes the legal aspect of the covenant rather than the personal relationship. However, did you notice in all those passages above how often the phrase “I will be their God...” was connected with making a covenant? What significance might this pairing have?
9. **READ Revelation 21:2-3** Do you notice anything significant about the wording in these verses?
10. God’s goal in Scripture is to restore with humanity the intimate relationship He had with Adam and Eve in Eden. As well as the phrase “I will be their God...”, the image of God dwelling with his people is also important. Where does God dwell in these verses:
- **John 1:14**
 - **Romans 8:11**
 - **Ephesians 2:22**
 - **Revelation 21:3**

How does this make you feel?

11. Usually in the Bible when people see the glory of God they find themselves overwhelmed and fearful (**2 Chronicles 5:14, Luke 2:9**). How is the scene in **Revelation 22:3-4** different?

12. After all these verses... In your own words describe, “What is the significance of the promise, *“They will be my people and I will be their God.”*”

FOR THE LEADER:

Other texts:

2 Cor 6:16

Jer 24:7; 30:22; 31:1; 31:33; 32:38;

Ez 11:20; 14:11; 37:23, 27

Zech 8:7-8; 13:9

Heb 8:10; 10:16

Rev 21:3

2 Sam 7:14

LESSON 3: GOD IS LOVE

GROWTH GROUP HOMEWORK by Peter Horne

Goal: To recognize that God has always been “love”.

GETTING STARTED

1. **ICEBREAKER:** As we go around the circle and tell our name, please answer this question... **If you could only have one of the existing American holidays each year, which one would you choose?**

IN THE TEXT

2. **READ 1 John 4:7-21** Verses 8 & 16 are the only places in the whole Bible that say the phrase, “God is love”. What’s the difference between saying “God is loving” and “God is love”?
3. **READ Genesis 1:27-31** God created humans on the 6th Day. How might this timing be an act of love?
4. **READ Exodus 15:9-13** In the early books of the Bible God doesn’t often say, “I love you” (See Gen 18:19 for an exception.) but in this song, what motivates God’s actions in rescuing the Israelites from Egypt?
5. Not all love is exactly the same. The way we love friends is usually different from the way we love family members. What type of love is described between God and His people in these verses?
 - **Hosea 2:14-20**
 - **Hosea 11:1-4**
 - How would you describe the difference?

6. **READ Jeremiah 30:1-3 & 31:1-4** In these verses, how can you see that God’s love for Israel is “everlasting”?

DIGGING DEEPER

7. People often use words like “justice, law, punishment, strength, and angry” rather than “loving” to describe God in the Old Testament. Why do you think this is?
8. Do you agree that most Christians do not know the Old Testament as well as the New Testament?
If you agree, how might this distort our understanding of God?

In English our word “love” is so deep and complex that it can refer to anything from the taste of food, to our favorite song, to our great aunt Mildred, and to the act of sex. Biblical Hebrew has a wonderfully rich word that we should all know: *hesed* (sometimes spelled *chesed*) that often describes God. Essentially, *hesed* refers to a tender and loyal love. And the wonderful news is that God abounds with *hesed*. *Hesed* occurs about 250 times in the Old Testament with about half of those occurrences in the Psalms.

9. **READ Psalm 136:1-10** In this psalm God is repeatedly praised for his *hesed*, his faithful love. Based on this psalm, how does Israel know that God loves them?

LEADER NOTE: Choose ONE of these questions to close the discussion.

10. (a) **READ 1 John 4:19-5:5** When God talks about love He often talks about demonstrating that love through action. Which actions in these verses demonstrate love?
If love is an action, is it *just* an action? Should God’s children also feel loved? When do you most feel loved by God?
11. (b) On a separate piece of paper choose a period of time in your life (not longer than 10 years) and write your own version of Psalm 136: A short description of God’s work in your life, followed by the line, “*His love endures forever*”.

LESSON 4: LAST IS FIRST

GROWTH GROUP HOMEWORK by Peter Horne

Goal: To discuss why God elevates the lowly.

GETTING STARTED

12. ICEBREAKER: As we go around the circle and tell our name, please answer this question...
Share a time when you've felt small?

IN THE TEXT

13. READ Genesis 4:1-8, 16 Do you think it's significant that the "bad brother" is the first born?

14. READ Genesis 46:1-7, 26-27 Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph are significant names to us today. Would the arrival of Joseph's family have seemed important to Pharaoh?

15. READ Numbers 13:26-29 Why were the 10 spies negative about Israel's chances of victory?

16. READ 1 Samuel 9:21, 10:20-24 What factors described in these verses make Saul an unlikely candidate to be Israel's first king?

17. READ 1 Samuel 16:6-13 What strikes you about this selection process?

18. **READ Matthew 2:1-6** Why did the Magi go to Jerusalem? What is significant about Jesus not being born in Herod's palace?

DIG DEEPER

19. Why do you think God seems to regularly select the underdog to accomplish His purposes?

20. **READ Deuteronomy 7:6-9** According to these verses, why did God choose to rescue Israel from Egypt? What does this reveal to us about God?

21. **READ 1 Corinthians 1:18-25** Do you think people you know look at the death of Jesus as foolishness? Why do those being saved have such a different view and see it as power?

- What has the message of the cross meant in your life?
- Have you experienced a time when God's perspective has helped you make a decision that seemed unwise to others?

22. **READ 1 Corinthians 12:20-26** This passage describes the church. How is the church to reflect God's affinity for the underdog?

23. **America is a powerful nation. The church in America is still a huge presence in society. Many Christians have successful careers.** What implications does the principle of lifting up the weak have for our lives?

24. **READ 2 Corinthians 12:7-10** What does God mean when he says, "*My strength is made perfect in weakness*"?

- Does Paul sound crazy when he says he will "*delight in weaknesses*"? What would you think if you met someone talking like that today? Do you have a weakness you can delight in?