

Week 6

February 5 - February 11

In the wilderness. This week's passage covers the Hebrews "exodus" from Egypt, and their commencement into the wilderness. There are several terrific accounts revealing the power of God, as well as His evident concern for His people. We will observe the numerous "wilderness experiences" of the Israelites. Furthermore, we will see parallels with our "wilderness experiences."

February 5th

Exodus 13-15. "Why Lord?"

The sequence of events we read in this passage will become very familiar as we walk through the next several chapters. The Hebrews had been in slavery for over 400 years, nearly twice as long as the United States has been a nation. As it came to an end, they watched as God displayed His power before Pharaoh, and finally he yielded. And now they're free!

They celebrated their independence, and intentionally set a day aside to remember it annually. They left with the wealth of Egypt and God's leading. Then at the Red Sea they saw Pharaoh's army closing in. Their immediate response was, "Why were we brought out here to die in the wilderness?"—we will see that response appear several more times. Nevertheless, God provides another miracle. God delivered them, and they celebrated with song and dance. In the very next paragraph the people complain to Moses about a lack of good water.

God's answer to their "why's?" is found in 15:25; a "test."

How have you done with your wilderness tests?

February 6th

Exodus 16-19. "The Wilderness"

The Hebrews had just traveled two months, and over 100 miles out into the wilderness. What the wilderness was to them I believe is something we can relate to well. Their physical wilderness was also their spiritual and emotional wilderness. It was the place where God continued to test them (see 16:4 and 17:7).

What is the wilderness? It is a place where things are uncomfortable and unfamiliar. It is a place where we are forced to rely on God. It is a place of testing (faith, obedience, integrity, etc.). It is a place we come out of stronger, and if not, then we may be spending more time in it.

Moses spent his time in the wilderness prior to the exodus of the Hebrews. God was preparing his heart.

We each need to spend our time in the wilderness as God prepares us for whatever task He has in store. In the wilderness God presents us with challenges; changing our will, refining our character, developing our dependence on Him, and much more.

February 7th

Exodus 20-22:15. "Rules and More Rules"

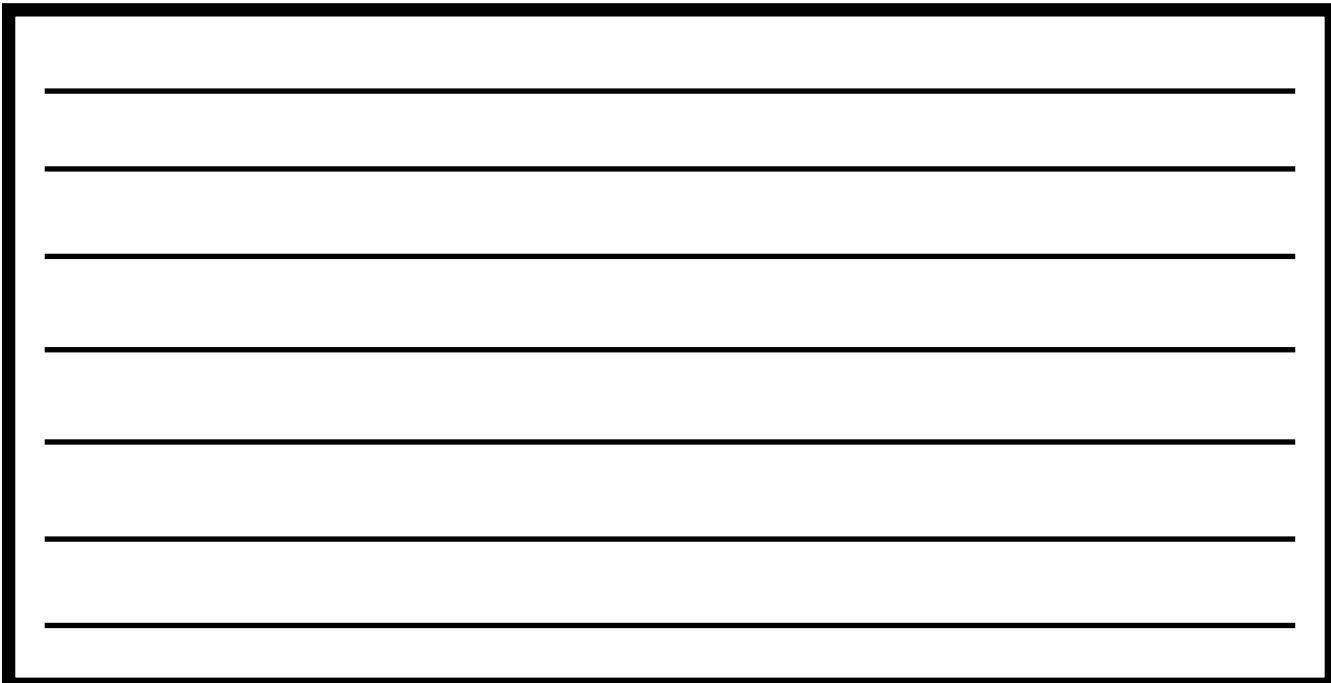
Rules. It's not just the Ten Commandments. We will see that there are literally hundreds of rules as our readings continue.

Furthermore, it is not just the Old Testament, although some people have that idea. In the New Testament Jesus expounded on the commandments. He added statements of generosity to a rule about stealing (Mt. 5:40). He added statements of guilt if a person even thinks immorally (Mt. 5:28).

He changed the course from focusing externally to focusing internally. Although He added to it, He also simplified it. Jesus said the Law is based on Loving the Lord with all our heart and loving others (Mt. 22:40).

I appreciate the insight from the Life Application Bible: The rules God laid out "had several objectives: (1) to protect the nation, (2) to organize the nation, and (3) to focus the nation's attention on God."

The guidelines God gives us today also have our protection and direction in mind. God's instructions are not without purpose.



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February 8th

Exodus 22:16-24:18. "Short Term Dedication"

This is an important passage to remember, because we will reflect on it again in just a few days. Think about what they have just seen. God's angel is before them leading the way (23:20). He will also go before them and destroy their enemies (23:23), but in a manner so organized that the land will not be harmed (23:27-31).

Furthermore, the people profess their allegiance to God, more than once, with the words, "We will do everything the LORD has told us to do" (24:3,7). And to top it all off, the leaders saw God! Over 70 men saw God and even shared a meal with God (24:9-11).

Can you imagine a series of events more life changing? Or was it? The very next time Moses sees these people they will be worshiping an idol (chapter 32). Their intimate encounters with God lasted forty days.

How long do your "mountain top" experiences last? May our dedication not be so short-lived.

February 9th

Exodus 25-28. "Symbolic Significance"

"The old system in the law of Moses was only a shadow of the things to come", evident in how "we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:1,19).

The detailed instructions for the tabernacle had purpose even beyond the immediate usable purpose for the Israelites. There was great symbolic purpose as God looked ahead to the One who would tabernacle among us (John 1:14).

There is symbolic purpose in some of the other items mentioned as well. The priest's clothing was to remind him of his place before God and his position as an intercessor for the people.

However, I was considering what it would do for us to wear some of the items Aaron was to be clothed with. What if you had the names of people written on a chest-piece you wore over your heart? (28:29). What if you wore a medallion across your forehead that read, "Set apart as Holy to the Lord"? (28:36). Would you live, act, react, or respond differently?

February 10th

Exodus 29-31. "Conviction"

Eric Liddell was the "flying Scotsman." He set an Olympic record in the 400-meter run at the 1924 Olympic Games. Although favored at 100 meters, he had withdrawn from that race because the qualifying heats were to be run on a Sunday, a day he had firmly set aside for worship and rest. Instead, he spent the next several months training for the 400. Incidentally, he also won a bronze in the 200.

Liddell lived out his convictions even when the whole world encouraged him otherwise. His actions would also fall under the category of integrity. Moreover, he was willing to follow his heart regardless of the outcome. We may not be rewarded this side of Heaven for abiding by our convictions. In fact, it could be a bit painful.

Yet, that is where the rubber meets the road. Take a minute to think through your convictions. What are they? How much pressure would it take to change them?

"Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it"
(James 4:17).

February 11th

Exodus 32-34. "A Man of Great Character"

Moses was an amazing individual. He was the instrument God used to change the heart of Pharaoh. He was the man who led God's people out of Egypt. He held his staff over the water and the Red Sea opened up. He talked with God and met Him on the mountain. Through the LORD, he provided water and food. Moses counseled, and judged, and led.

Moses was gone from their presence for forty days. During that time, they rebelled against the Lord's instructions and refused to worship Him, but instead chose to worship a golden calf.

God told Moses that He would destroy them for their terrible sin and instead make "Moses into a great nation" (32:10). Moses pleaded with God to not do that. Instead, Moses asked God to forgive them (32:32).

I believe God was testing Moses' character, and Moses passed the test. The Israelites could not have had a better person leading them through the wilderness. May each of us be that for others.

General Questions for each day:

Summarize the day's Bible passage in your own words.

What thoughts, actions, attitudes or beliefs are addressed in the passage?

How is the Holy Spirit leading you to apply this passage to your life today?

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Exodus 13-34

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Bible Discussion Guide:

Discuss the importance and symbolism in the Passover meal.

The day after the Passover meal begins the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Why would God ask the Hebrews to celebrate this feast? What are the benefits of an annual celebration?

If you were to sing a "song of deliverance" as the Israelites did, what kind of events would you include?

List some of God's miracles and signs of His power from this week's passage.

Is it possible to see that many miracles and still not believe? How is that possible?

To the February 6 devotional, add more descriptions to further clarify a "wilderness experience".

I read an article recently about the need for rules in sports events, and the writer said that, "Rules provide freedom for people to play together". How is there freedom in rules?

As you reflect on the clothing for the priest, would you live differently if you wore a medallion across your forehead that read, "Set apart as Holy to the Lord"?

Personal application: Moses, tried and tested, was a man of great character. How would someone describe your character?