

LIFEGROUPS

MOSES part 2

Review: From last time, we saw how Moses' parent's had faith in God and saved him from the Egyptians. Moses grew up as the prince of Egypt, but later murdered an Egyptian and went into exile. He was 40 years old when he left Egypt, and he was 80 years old when he had an encounter with God through the burning bush. Eventually, despite a lot of excuses of inadequacy, Moses agreed and returned back to Egypt to save the oppressed Israelites (with Aaron as a side-kick!)

Read Exodus 6:1-13; 7:1-13 God Promises Deliverance

1. How many times does God declare that he is God/Lord? What is the purpose of this repeated declaration?
2. Despite all this, why did the Israelites not listen to all that Moses said?
3. Why does Moses and Aaron still have to go through with these motions even though God stated Pharaoh will not listen, and that God will harden Pharaoh? Is this not a waste of time? (7:3-4)

Read Exodus 7:14 - 10:28 The First Nine Plagues

4. Which of the first nine plagues stands out to you the most? Which would you fear the most and why?
5. What significance do these plagues present? Why did God allow these plagues to happen affecting some innocent Egyptians too? Why plagues? Note anything in scripture that you find interesting. (Also see extra notes on the plagues).
6. What did the magicians try to do? Why were their acts made redundant? What does this prove?

Read Exodus 11:1 - 12:32 The Final Plague and the Passover.

7. If a non-christian asked you to explain this plague, God also condoned infanticide, what would you say? Why do you think God sent this plague as the final and most terrible one?
8. We will stop before looking at the passover (that will be next week!) But how do you think the Passover parallels with Jesus?

Applying the word to our lives:

9. Have you ever experienced inexplicable natural disasters / events? Why do you think God lets such things happen?
10. How does ones heart get hardened through events in one's life? Have you ever felt your heart become hardened in past events of your life? Or been subject to others with hardened hearts?
11. In the event of having hardened hearts, how do we let our hearts get softened? What are some practical ways to achieve a softened heart?
12. How **is** your heart?

Please spend some time praying for one another about any serious events or storms or even plagues that you are confronted with. Please pray for one another's hearts. Answering the question: **"How is your heart?"**

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Leaders Notes

These notes are here as guidelines or commentary notes to help the leader. Let the Word of God lead you and your Lifegroup to HEAR God's prophetic message this week as you explore His Word together.

A little context on Moses, Egypt and the 10 Plagues

Moses returns to Egypt and the people accept him when he shows them the signs of God's power (4:39-31). Things have grown tougher than ever, Pharaoh, however, responds by making the Israelites work harder and harder, making bricks, while vital supplies are denied them. He insists that they should make bricks without straw (5:6). Straw was used to bind the clay together, so that the bricks kept their shape while drying. Without it, producing usable bricks was virtually impossible.

The Israelites react to hardship in the way that they were to react to it throughout the exodus: they blame Moses for making things worse.

Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh and demonstrate God's power to him. Just as in the desert during his first encounter with God, Moses' staff turns into a snake. What is interesting here is that Pharaoh's magicians can do the same thing: only all their snakes get eaten by Moses' snake. When Pharaoh takes no notice of this, God responds by visiting a series of plagues on Egypt - the famous ten plagues. Each time, Moses and Aaron challenge Pharaoh to let the Israelites go, and each time he refuses. Only after the last and most terrible plague does Pharaoh finally come to his senses.

Some interpret these plagues as a series of natural disasters, intensified by God and occurring with a supernatural frequency. In this interpretation, Moses scattering the soot (9:8) and turning the dust into gnats (8:16) are symbolic, indicative of the disasters. Equally, it might be that the dust really did turn into swarms of gnats - just as the staff turned into a snake. Either way, the point is that these occurrences were brought on by God as a demonstration of power and punishment on the Egyptians. They occur, roughly, in three groups of three and one final, terrible disaster. Each group is introduced when Moses confronts Pharaoh early in the morning (7:14, 8:20, 9:13)

Does God harden Pharaoh's heart?

Nine times in Exodus we are told that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh - as if it were God who was causing Pharaoh to remain stubborn against the Israelites. So, is God manipulating Pharaoh? Is God changing Pharaoh's mind just to make the Egyptians suffer?

Some argue that this is simply shorthand for saying "it happened", or "it will happen". God, after all, knows the future, and nothing happens unless he permits it, so in that sense he doesn't need to be directly involved. Pharaoh has the freedom to let the Israelites go or make them stay. His heart is hardened, because God allows it to be hardened.

We must also remember that all this started with Pharaoh. If we are told nine times that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, we are also told nine times that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. For the first five plagues it was Pharaoh's decision alone. God merely confirmed it what he had already decided. This suggests God knew what Pharaoh's answer was going to be.

We have to remember that all pharaohs considered themselves to be gods. They wielded enormous power, which they used to oppress people and make them suffer. So there is a sense in this story in which God is saying: he thinks he's pulling the strings, but I will show him who is in charge. The plagues are not mere punishments, but defeats the Egyptian gods. For example, the darkness is a defeat for the sun god Ra. Pharaoh usually wore a head-dress in the shape of a cobra - but his snakes were eaten by the one made by Moses. This is God demonstrating that he is the one, true, powerful God.

It is quiet clear that at every point, Pharaoh had a genuine change to let the Israelites go. But at every point he decided against it. He challenged God. He lost.

(Both excerpts taken from "The Bible Book" by Nick Page, p53-54. Harper Collins)

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Extra information of the 10 plagues

	Type of Plague	Reference	Warning?	Time of warning?	Pharaoh promises to let the people go?	Pharaoh's heart hardened?	God demonstrating power over Egyptian god
1st Cycle	1. Nile to blood	7:14-25	Yes	In the morning	-	Yes	Hapi - Egyptian god of the Nile
	2. Frogs from the Nile	8:1-15	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	Heket - Egyptian god of fertility, water, renewal
	3. Dust to gnats	8:16-19	-	-	-	Yes	Geb - Egyptian god of the earth
2nd Cycle	4. Flies	8:20-32	Yes	Early in the morning	Yes	Yes	Khepri - Egyptian god of creation, movement of the sun, rebirth
	5. Egyptian livestock to die	9:1-7	Yes	-	-	Yes	Hathor - Egyptian goddess of love and protection
	6. Boils	9:8-12	-	-	-	Yes	Isis - Egyptian goddess of medicine and peace
3rd Cycle	7. Hail	9:13-35	Yes	Early in the morning	Yes	Yes	Nut - - Egyptian goddess of the sky
	8. Locusts	10:1-20	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	Seth - - Egyptian god of storms and disorder
	9. Darkness	10:21-29	-	-	Yes	Yes	Ra - the sun god
	10. Death of firstborn	11:1-10; 12:29-32	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	Pharaoh - the ultimate power of Egypt

(taken and adapted from the ESV study bible and <http://hubpages.com/hub/Ten-Plagues-For-Ten-Gods>)