



Fall Bible Study: Exodus, Who will we serve?

October 11- November 22

Over the last seven weeks, we've been telling the stories of God's people. We've remembered the promises God made to Abraham and Sarah, promises to create a nation of people and make them a blessing. We've told the stories of quarreling brothers and the surprising possibilities for reconciliation. Our series ended with Joseph's brother's journeying to Egypt. On October 11, we will pick up where those stories left off and begin our own seven week journey out of Egypt with the book of Exodus.

While the Shine curriculum suggests reading these stories with the theme "Journey to Freedom," Waldemar Janzen in his commentary on Exodus suggests that the freedom that God offers the Israelites is not freedom "in the modern sense: the achievement of freedom from someone else's rule to be able to follow one's own will and direction. Israel is subject to a ruler at the beginning of the book as well as at the end. At issue is the question of Israel's legitimate ruler. Not service versus freedom, but service to a usurping tyrant versus service to the legitimate sovereign is the theme. The book assumes that service of God is in itself a form of freedom." Perhaps Bob Dylan said it best when he said, "you gotta serve somebody. It may be the Devil or it may be the Lord, but you gotta serve somebody." Who will the Israelites serve? Pharaoh? Yahweh? The golden calf?

Exodus raises similar questions for us today: Where does our allegiance lie? And what false gods do we need to be freed from? If God sides with the oppressed and is invested in their freedom from oppression, what does it mean to worship God as people with immense privilege? Dorothy Sanders Wells writes, "Today, as our world is facing a wave of not only sickness and death but also economic upheaval, are we all the ancient Egyptians—placing profits over people, demanding more and more of our poor essential workers to satiate our collective greed? And in this pandemic, are we now all suffering the consequences of our own sins against God, neighbor, and creation? We might interpret COVID-19 as a plague that is being visited on all of us, revealing to us our collective sins in abandoning the neighbors upon whose backs our communities have been built. If so, can we face this moment not by hardening our hearts but by seeing it as a salvific moment?"

Particularly in this election cycle, we likely need to be reminded that our allegiance is not to any one political candidate or party but to a God who is both intimately invested in the lives of God's people and ultimately unknowable and mysterious. May our study of this rich text soften our hearts, embolden our commitment to justice, and inspire our worship to the one true God.

Worship: What to expect

Worship will be **live on Zoom on Sundays at 10 a.m.** There will be some prerecorded elements, but this is different than what we have done consistently before. We will send out the order of worship ahead of time. Worship will be followed by a 15-minute coffee break and two elective options.

We will end the series with an **in-person parking lot service on November 22** (bundle up) and a life-size Tabernacle! Keep your ears open for a family-oriented event planned by the Christian Ed committee to explore/experience the tabernacle.

| Date | Preacher | Location | Theme | Text |
|--------|----------------------|--|--|-------------------------|
| Oct 4 | No Preacher | Zoom (moved online because of rain) | World Communion Sunday | |
| Oct 11 | Anna Yoder Schlabach | Parking Lot (moved outside because of sun) | Fearing God in the midst of empire | Exodus 1:8-2:10 |
| Oct 18 | Karl Shelly | Zoom | Encountering God in unexpected places | Exodus 3:1-15 |
| Oct 25 | Kristen Swartley | Zoom | Looking to God when we can't see a way forward | Exodus 7:8-15:20 |
| Nov 1 | Scott Coulter | Zoom | Trusting God to meet our needs | Exodus 16:2-35 |
| Nov 8 | Paul Keim | Zoom | Honoring God with our lives | Exodus 20 |
| Nov 15 | Safwat Marzouk | Zoom | Looking for God in the wrong places | Exodus 32:1-14 |
| Nov 22 | Lora Nafziger | Parking Lot | Preparing a space for God | Exodus 40 |

Ways to engage with Exodus right now:

1. Write some poetry, we dare you!

That's right; we're inviting you/daring you to engage the Exodus study through poetry! Wait! Come back! Don't be afraid. It can actually be fun!

Prior to each week, read the scripture (on the grid below). You'll find classic, strange, evocative stories that invite you to wonder and use your imagination. Then write a response using the form of a Haiku (3 lines: syllables 5|7|5) or Limerick (5 lines; rhyme scheme AABBA). Your poem can be serious or it can be humorous. Young people can do it. Old people can do it. It's guaranteed to get you into the text, stir your creative juices, and add to the mix of what we see in these stories. (I am putting a couple at the bottom of this email, just to set the bar low. It's pretty fun once you get started)

Finally, send them to Anna by Thursday each week. We'll select a few to share during worship and the rest we'll share online.

2. Watch some clips. There are number of really good online resources to start orienting you to the book of Exodus. I'm highlighting a couple here and listing them all below. I'll be posting them on the Assembly Facebook page throughout the series. ([The Bible Project: Exodus Part 1 of 2](#); [Who remembers this classic from 1998, Prince of Egypt?](#))

3. Read the book! Exodus is a long book, so start reading it now. You can also just hit the highlights in a story bible, but then you miss some of the exciting and bizarre details. I recommend reading Waldemar Janzen's Exodus commentary and listening to this great podcast by Pete Enns, "[Pete Ruins Exodus](#)."

4. Make a place in your home where you will watch Zoom worship each week. This can be as elaborate as a full Exodus story diorama or as simple as a candle and a few stones. Find a few elements that will orient you to worship each week.



Here are a few more YouTube clips to get you in the mood:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceZHlc55HCg> (Tabernacle)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0GhR-2kPKI> **The Bible Project part 2**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqCTq3EeDcY&list=PLDAF3D3C423008654&index=6> **(The Ten Commandments)**

And if you are still reading, here are my (Anna's) first attempts at Exodus Haikus. Like I said, low bar. (By the way, the poetry was all Karl's idea)

Pharoah tries to kill
Midwives are cunning and brave
Baby Moses floats

Burning bush is strange
Moses wants to get closer
Take off your shoes, man

Pharoah's coming close!
Lift your staff, close those waters!
Watery grave now.

Maybe we'll even give out awards at the end for best Exodus poetry. No promises. But why not?

Bob Dylan, "Gotta serve somebody" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wC10VWDTzmU>