

# Exodus

## Week 2



Monday: Exodus 15-19

Tuesday: Exodus 20-23

Wednesday: Exodus 24-27

Thursday: Exodus 28-30

Friday: Exodus 31-34

# Introduction

## About the Law

This week's reading actually launches us on a three week journey through the Law that God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

Ever since Jesus came, Christians have been debating about how we should understand and apply the Law to our lives. On one end the spectrum, some Christians have said that the Law has absolutely no relevance to being a follower of Jesus. The Law was for the Old Testament and its only purpose was to show Israel how evil they really were. Jesus brought a new order and the Law was completely thrown out. These extremists even tried to cleanse the New Testament of any Jewish-sounding language. (Sorry guys, but Jesus was a Jew...do we need to throw Him out, too?)

Christians have swung to the other extreme of the spectrum as well. In the early days of the church, the Apostle Paul wrestled with a group known as the Judaizers. They said that a person could not become a Christian until they completely submitted themselves to the Law of Moses, were circumcised, and became fully Jewish. After all, Jesus was a Jewish rabbi who said that He did not come to abolish the

Law but to fulfill the Law. (Well guys...you're going to have to explain why the Holy Spirit told Peter to eat "unclean" animals and to not call anything unclean that God has called clean). Even today there are Christian groups who follow the Old Testament Law very strictly and believe that you cannot be in true fellowship with God unless you do so.

So where is the truth? How should we interpret this Law for our own lives?

First, we must set that question aside and make sure that we fully understand what the Law was in its original context. Who wrote it? Why was it written? Was it intended to be followed for eternity, or was it a temporary set-up? How did it impact the lives of its original recipients? As with all good Bible Study, we cannot ask the question, "*How am I supposed to apply it to my life?*," until we have a really good handle on the question, "*What did this mean in its original intention?*" There are many great resources available if you are interested in delving into this fascinating subject on your own. Check out your church library.

This devotional is not the time or the place to launch into an elaborate explanation of the Law (whew! Aren't you relieved?) So here are a couple things to keep in mind when reading Old Testament Law:

1. One major purpose of the Law was to create order out of chaos. The Israelites had never been a nation before. They had known nothing but slavery for 400 years and had never self-governed. The majority of the Law has to do with very practical issues of how people should get along with each other and how people should stay healthy through good sanitation.
2. Remember that this was a real document that

was created for real people. For example, as an American it may be a dry experience to read the text of the U.S. Constitution. In and of itself the Constitution may be dry, but when you read it in the context of the men and women who were forging brave new territory in the arena of human society, who were sacrificing their lives for the ideals of the document, then the reading takes on a whole new dimension. In the same way, the Law of Moses may be a dry text, but it was the foundational document that gave purpose and meaning to this rag-tag group of newly-freed slaves.

3. Even though we may be free from the “letter of the Law” in our current Christian experience, the “Spirit” of the Law is still alive and well. Through the Law God revealed the character of His heart to His people. As you read the Law, ask yourself, “What does this Law tell me about the nature of God?”

## About the Chart

The chart demonstrates what I believe is the heart of the matter when it comes to how we should understand the nature and purpose of the Law. There was a stark contrast between the relationship that Moses had with God and the relationship that the people had with God. On the top of the chart, reading from left to right, you will notice the sequence of events in the book of Exodus. Notice how God initially invited the people to come into His presence, but they rejected Him. While Moses was in the very presence of God the people were constructing an idol to worship. At the end of the story we find that only Moses was able to experience the true presence of God while the rest of the nation had to use the Tabernacle, Priests, and Sacrifices in

order to approach God. And even then, they were never allowed into God's true presence.

On the bottom of the chart you will notice what we call the Funnel of Spiritual Formation. Every believer must pass through this funnel, moving from the left to the right. On the left hand side you see that the follower of God begins the journey as a servant to God. In these early phases of spiritual growth the relationship between man and God is comprised of rules, laws, black and white justice, ritual, and spiritual disciplines. The best analogy to understand this process is that of the parent and child. When a child is very young she is not able to govern her own conscience and is not aware of the parent as a person. The parent's role is to lovingly, yet firmly, establish clear boundaries of right and wrong, enforcing the boundaries through reward and punishment. As the child grows her heart matures and she is able to handle the subtleties of life and the parent can ease off of the strictness, allowing the child to experiment with making her own decisions. As the maturation process progresses the child begins to realize that her parent is actually a person who can be loved as more than "the enforcer". By the time the child is an adult, assuming good parenting took place, the child can move all the way to the right of the chart and become a true friend of the parent.

Notice the right side of the funnel. Moses had a friendship with God. That is the ultimate goal of spiritual formation. God desires for us to know Him. We should not need a law to govern us if our heart is so in tune with our Father that we behave like He does. In friendship there is freedom. That is where we are going with our spiritual growth...freedom in the friendship of God.

Unfortunately, most of us are infants like the Israelites. We are selfish and stubborn. We need rules. We need tangible items to touch, taste, and smell because we cannot handle the abstract, infinite, unpredictable nature of God. So, God gives us laws and disciplines us as any loving Father would do. Yet He desires the day when we will grow up and move beyond the rules and regulations and get into the business of really living in His presence and knowing Him intimately.

Here's the point: Following the rules is not the point of being a Christian! The rules are a vehicle to 1) demonstrate the existence of right and wrong, 2) communicate the holy and just nature of God, and 3) move us through the funnel so that our heart can be transformed and we can move beyond the external rules into an authentic love relationship with our Heavenly Father where we are not focused on ourselves but on bringing glory and honor to Him out of a deep love for Him.

## Monday: What is It?

Exodus 16

What attitude did the people have toward Moses?  
Why?

What did they ask God for?

How did God respond to their request?

What did the people call this provision of God? (v. 15, 31)

What were the instructions for the gathering and eating of this substance?

## Food for thought:

It's Monday morning. What is occupying your mind this morning? If you are like millions of other Americans you are facing another week of the rat-race. You have bills to pay, mouths to feed, bosses and/or clients to please, deadlines to keep, etc. And for what? So you can "survive." We plan out our weeks so that we can earn enough money to have the things we need. After all, isn't it our job to provide for our families?

Is there anything wrong with providing for one's family? No. However, there is something wrong when we are consumed with the notion that it is up to us -- our ingenuity and hard work -- to provide the basic needs of our family. Here is where we can learn a valuable lesson from today's reading. Who provided for the Israelites? How did He provide for them? God gave the people all that they needed to survive in the desert.

God provided a daily portion of bread and meat for His people. The key word to this lesson is DAILY. If the people tried to hoard the bread for the next day it would rot overnight. It was a DAILY provision. That meant that every night they would go to bed with a full stomach, but with nothing on their shelves that would guarantee food for tomorrow. Each morning they would wake up hungry and have to trust that God would have delivered the bread that they needed...FOR THAT DAY.

How do we live? Most of us are living and earning money in order to do what...SAVE IT. What are we saving it for? For a rainy day. We save it for retirement...that won't happen for 40 years! We work extra hard today, taking away precious time with our children, our friends, our church, our ministry, so that

we can have something to eat tomorrow. Hmm....  
Let's turn to see what Jesus said about tomorrow in  
Matthew 6:33-34,

*"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness,  
and all these things will be given to you as well.  
Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for  
tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has  
enough trouble of its own."*

In that same chapter Jesus said, in His model prayer,  
"Give us this day our daily bread."

This is one of the biggest battles that we face. How  
can we live in today, when everything in our culture  
tells us that we need to save up for tomorrow?

The question for you today is this, "Are you more  
focused on worrying about storing up for living  
in this temporary world tomorrow than you are  
focused on what God wants you to do for His eternal  
Kingdom today?"

Meditate on this Proverb throughout your day.

*7 "Two things I ask of you, O LORD;  
do not refuse me before I die:*

*8 Keep falsehood and lies far from me;  
give me neither poverty nor riches,  
but give me only my daily bread.*

*9 Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you  
and say, 'Who is the LORD?'*

*Or I may become poor and steal,  
and so dishonor the name of my God.*

*(Proverbs 30:7-9)*

## Tuesday: Now Fear This

Exodus 20:18-21

How did the people respond to God's grand display on the mountain?

Why did God display himself in this way?

## Food for thought:

In the introduction to this week's devotional we discussed the fact that friendship with God was the goal of spiritual formation. While this is definitely true, our reading today demonstrates for us a necessary precaution involved in this teaching. For some of us, we may have read the introduction regarding the law and thought, "cool! God is my buddy, rules are optional, and I can cruise through life." WRONG ANSWER! Remember the funnel. We must first pass through the narrow end of the funnel before we can truly experience friendship with God.

One of the reasons that we may slip into this distortion of truth is due to the fact that our culture has a distorted view of friendship. Let's be honest with ourselves; why do we have friends? Or, a better question, how do we choose friends? We choose friends based upon whether or not a person will make US feel good, or will meet a particular need in OUR lives. So, in essence, we are selfish, consumerist friendship seekers. If a friend starts getting a little weird or a little "needy" what do we typically do? We back off. We don't want to be dragged down.

This is not the kind of friendship that God desires to have with us. A fair-weather friend, a lukewarm friend, a what-can-I-get-out-of-you friend; these are the things that makes God sick (Rev. 3:16) God doesn't love us that way. God never gives up on us, no matter how much we disappoint Him or are "needy."

Let's reconnect to the analogy of childrearing for a moment. When a parent treats a little child like an equal, giving them unlimited freedom with no consequences, the child becomes distorted and their natural self-centeredness becomes engrained in their

psyche. A child who has been super-indulged has not had the opportunity to learn the concept of right and wrong. Their conscience has not been trained in morality and they can grow up to become a self-indulgent, and ultimately a self-destructive adult.

The same danger lies in the process of Spiritual Formation. If we try to jump too quickly into a “buddy” relationship with God, we may be tempted to devalue His holiness and absolute power. True friendship with God is a self-less love that is completely God-focused and asks, “what can I do for God,” not, “what can God do for me.”

As the infantile children of Israel stood before the mountain of God, Moses reminded them of this important truth. “God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.”

In the beginning of a child’s life it is the fear of reproof that keeps their hand out of the cookie jar. They know that Dad is just and fair and will swat the hand every time. This is a healthy thing. Eventually, as the heart matures, the child can say, “No, I won’t take the cookie because it will spoil my appetite and it will not be healthy.” At that point there is no longer a need for the law or for fear. Now fear is replaced by a love for the truth, and the moral behavior is authentic and natural.

Remember the formula “fear precedes love”. We cannot truly love God until we truly fear Him. He is the Almighty, *El-Shaddai*, the creator and destroyer of all things. He is holy and has every right to snuff out life. Until you fear this awesomeness to the core of your bones, you will not be able to grasp the depth of His love and the immeasurable depth of grace. When we realize the lengths to which God has made it possible for us to know Him and become His friend,

then we will be willing to go through the fire of the spiritual disciplines, be stripped of self, and step into the full friendship of God.

Let us fear God today!

# Wednesday: The Architecture of Glory

Exodus 25:1-27:19

As you read these two chapters, draw a simple floor plan of the tabernacle and indicate where each piece of furniture is placed.

What is placed on the table? What is it called?

What two sections does the curtain divide?

What is placed behind the curtain? What is placed in front of the curtain?

What is the area called just outside the tabernacle?  
What is placed in this space?

## Food for thought:

You may be thinking, “why in the world did we devote an entire day to studying some verbal blueprints for a tent that was used to worship God in an outdated, Old Testament system? Aren’t we Christians who are free from the Law and free to worship God in Spirit and Truth, no longer bound by the physical space of a place?” True, we are. Jesus said so in John 4. However, as we will see throughout the study of Exodus and Leviticus, if we will pay attention to the tabernacle we can learn some important lessons that may have direct impact on our experience of God today.

First, we need to understand that God has given the Christian reader of the Old Testament a “decoder ring” to help us make sense out of the intricate details of the tabernacle. This decoder ring is the letter to the Hebrews. Hebrews 9-10 especially explain that God intentionally had Moses construct this physical space called the Tabernacle in order to give a concrete analogy to the cosmic work that Jesus would ultimately do for us in the Spiritual realm. The writer of Hebrews says,

*“When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, He went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; He entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence.” (Hebrews 9:11, 24)*

For our purposes today, we need to focus in on the fact that, in some way, the tabernacle represented a certain reality about 1) the presence of God, and 2) how a human being could come into the presence of God.

There were three basic sections to the temple: the outer court where the altar of burnt sacrifice and the basin of washing was placed, the Holy Place where the lampstand and the table were placed, and the Most Holy Place (aka Holy of Holies) where the ark of the covenant was placed behind the thick curtain.

**The outer court.** The people were allowed into this area. Here they brought their sacrifices to be slaughtered and burnt on the altar to pay for their sins. (We'll talk more about that bloodbath in Leviticus).

**The Holy Place.** Only the priests were allowed into this rectangular room. After having cleansed themselves in the basin of water just outside the door, the priests were allowed in the Holy Place where they could keep the flames of the lampstand burning and make sure the Bread of Presence was nice and fresh.

**The Most Holy Place.** Behind a very thick embroidered curtain was the ark of the covenant -- the place that represented the very presence of God Himself. No one was allowed in this room except one man, the High Priest. He was only allowed in this room one day a year, on the Day of Atonement. On that fearsome day, the High Priest would stick his arm in behind the curtain, wave a censor of incense around until the chamber was filled with a thick smoke so that he wouldn't be able to really see the place of God, then he would step in and sprinkle the room with the blood of a perfect lamb to pay for the sins of the entire nation that year. If he touched the ark, he would die.

As New Testament Christians we know that Jesus is our High Priest and that when He died the curtain to the Holy of Holies was torn in two, allowing all people access into the presence of God. And yet, I think we need to be aware that coming into the

presence of God is not as flippant or as easy as we sometimes make it out to be. Perhaps if we look at the three sections of the tabernacle as three phases that we need to go through in order to fully come into God's presence it would enhance our experience of worship. These three phases can be applied both to your personal Quiet Worship of God and to a worship gathering.

### **Phase One: Care and Share OR A Messy Mash of Blood and Guts**

When we begin to come into God's presence we need to be aware of the fact that we are carrying tons of baggage with us that we have acquired during the battle of living in this dark world. We have sins that we have committed that are weighing down our conscience and causing interference in our relationship with God and with others. We have wounds that have been inflicted on us and wounds we have inflicted on others. We have fears, and worries, and pride, envy, arrogance, etc, etc. When we gather together we need to dump all the baggage. In this phase of a worship gathering it is good to spend time talking to one another and sharing prayer requests, confessing sins, and repairing damaged relationships. We need to take our baggage and our own human pride and slit its throat, strike a match of surrender, and watch it all get consumed in the fires of selfless sacrifice. Then we can be cleansed in the basin of God's grace and forgiveness and walk into the next room.

### **Phase Two: Prayer and Prepare OR The Spirit and the Word**

In the Holy Place there were two things: the lampstand with seven lamps and the table on which was set the bread of Presence. In our worship experience these two things must be present

before the full presence of God can be entered and experienced. On the one hand we have the 7-flamed lampstand. Throughout scripture (especially in Revelation) the Holy Spirit is described as a fire and as the sevenfold Spirit. In our worship we must be open and aware of the fact that it is only in the supra-rational power of the Holy Spirit that we can even be standing in God's Presence. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives that allows us to love each other, to understand God's Word, and to love God. The Spirit is like a flame. He flickers and dances and gives off energy, but He can't be touched. He is Spirit. He is the power, the energy, and the breath of God for our lives.

The second thing in the room is the Bread of Presence. Jesus said that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Jesus also said that He was the bread of life. John said that Jesus was the Word that became flesh. So, this Bread of Presence in our worship experience is the concrete, objective Word of God that was revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. We have access to this objective revelation of God's Word through the study of the Bible. More simply put, the study of the Bible is a vital part of the worship experience.

There is a wonderful balancing act going on in this room. On the one hand you have the pure energy of the free flowing Spirit. On the other hand you have the objective revelation of the physical Word of God. To truly experience God's presence in Worship we need to keep these two elements in balance. We are energized by the Spirit and we are instructed by the Word. We can't have one without the other. In our worship gatherings we need to study the Bible intensely and let the Spirit do with that in us what He will.

### **Phase Three: Stare OR Stand In Awe and Focus completely on God**

Now that we have dumped our baggage so that we aren't focused on ourselves, and have been further focused by the objective Word and the illuminating Spirit, we can humbly, selflessly, come into the presence of God. In this place it is all about Him. Here is where we give praise and adoration as we sing out, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come." In this third phase of worship we give to God and tell Him how much we love Him. It's all about Him; the focus should never be on us. And then, just like Moses, when he would meet with God on the mountain or in the Tent, the radiance of God will ignite our radiance and we will shine before men.

**A Worship Challenge.** Many times we distort the worship experience and get stuck in either phase one or phase two. Some of us come to worship and make it all about us. "This is my pain today, pray for me." That's great in phase one. Bring your pain; share your burdens with your brothers and sisters in the church, prayer for one another. But then, dump it! Yet we often carry this self-focus into the next two phases and continue to have a spirit that says, "This is what I think the Bible means. This is what MY experience of God is. This is how I have given my life to God and how God has worked in MY life." While it is God talk, it is not God focused. It still brings all eyes in the room back to the person. In phase three our language and our behavior should be God focused. We are talking to Him about Him. We are offering up praise and glory to Him and Him alone. This is a supra-rational, experiential place where all eyes are focused on the glory and majesty of God and God alone. So, the next time you enter into a worship circle, see if following this progression enhances your true experience of the presence of God.

# Thursday: Broad Shoulders Required

Exodus 28: 36-43

Who was Aaron? (you might have to do some scanning in previous chapters to answer this one)

What was the purpose of the gold plate on Aaron's forehead?

What role did the priests have in Israel's worship of God in the tabernacle?

Why did the priests have to wear the undergarments?

## Food for thought:

The role of the priest was intense. These men were chosen by God to represent the people of Israel. They were God's go-betweens to the people because the people were not holy enough to approach the holiness of God. The priests spent their entire life making sure that they were clean enough to go into the Holy Place. If they were not clean, they would taint the whole place, disrupting the worship of God, and possibly even getting themselves struck dead by God's wrath. The run-of-the-mill priest had to stay squeaky clean just so he could keep the lamp burning and refresh the show bread. Even with that level of holiness, they were still not clean enough to enter the Most Holy Place. As we learned yesterday, only the High Priest could go into that awesome chamber, and then only once a year.

Why did God make it so difficult to enter His presence? Why did He demand so much from His people? For crying out loud, the people weren't even allowed to come to God; they had to go through a priest. Why is that? There are a couple of reasons: 1) the people had rejected God's presence on the mountain and were so spiritually immature that they needed this physical system to be able to conceive of God, 2) God was demonstrating to the people (and to us) how seriously He takes holiness.

God is a holy God. He is absolute perfection and cannot tolerate anything less than perfection. It's not that He doesn't want it around, it's that imperfection can't withstand the presence of the absolute; it gets blown away! In a sense, God was, out of compassion, protecting His people because He knew they weren't ready to handle absolute truth.

So what does this have to do with us? There are two important points for Christians to understand when it comes to the role of the priest.

1. We have a perfect High Priest. Hebrews tells us that Jesus is the perfect High Priest who entered into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled His own blood in that awesome chamber. Since he is the Son of God, the perfect Lamb, and the perfect priest, His sacrifice was a once for all sacrifice that atoned for the sins of the world, once and for all. He tore down the curtain of separation between God and man, and being the bread of Presence and the giver of the Spirit, He is our mediator between man and God.

2. We are all priests. 1 Peter 2:9 says, *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”* No longer are we the common man standing outside in the courtyard, hoping that the priest is clean enough to get our sins forgiven. We are the priests. We can enter into the Holy Place and interact with the Spirit and the Word, and, in the ultimate act of grace, the High Priest throws back the curtain for us, revealing the Presence of the Almighty.

Now that you know that you are a priest, what does that mean? Does that mean that God no longer cares about holiness, or has somehow become sin-tolerant? Not at all. God still expects absolute holiness from His priests (from you). There are two kinds of holiness at work here:

**Positional Holiness:** Because of the blood of Jesus, your sins are paid for and you are considered clean and worthy to stand in the presence of God. That is grace, it was a gift, you didn't do anything to get to that place, nor could you have had you tried.

**Relational Holiness:** For you to be able to stand in

the presence of God and look Him in the face and receive His full glory, you need to be clean on the inside. Imperfection still cannot withstand absolute perfection. It is like a small child who has just lied to his parents or secretly disobeyed. That child cannot look her parent in the eye. Why? Because she knows she has violated the relationship. Not until the sin is confessed and the relationship restored can there be real communication between parent and child. The same is true with our relationship with God. If we are cherishing sin in our heart, we will not be able to stand before our Holy God. Not because He is pointing the finger and condemning, but because we want to hide our sin from His holiness.

What is keeping you from standing fully in the presence of God, naked and unashamed? Remember that God invites you to come to Him. The blood of Jesus is eternally sprinkled all over the Most Holy Place while the Spirit and the Son stand, holding open the curtain inviting you to come. Dump the sin and the shame that is holding you back and come bask in the presence of holiness.

# Friday: The Power of Presence

Exodus 33-34

What was God's threat in 33:3? Why (see the previous chapters)?

What kind of relationship did Moses have with God? (33:11)

What was Moses' request in 33:13?

In 33:12-23 Moses and God have a very interesting conversation. Try to paraphrase this conversation in your own words?

How does God describe Himself in 34:6-7?

What effect did being with God have on Moses? (34:29-35)

## Food for thought:

There are two observations from today's reading:

1. It was possible for the people to have gone on with God's plan without God present. In the beginning of chapter 33 God was so displeased with the people's unfaithfulness to Him that He threatened to withdraw His presence. Yet, He told Moses to take the people into the Promised Land.

Think about the implications of this for our lives. How many times have we forged ahead with plans that seemed to be from God, yet did it in a way that was empowered by our own flesh and desire? This is an easy trap to fall into, especially for churches and Christian organizations. We are so comfortable worshipping at the golden calf of human ingenuity and corporate success strategies that we forget that the only thing that truly matters is whether or not we are standing in the Presence of God. It would do us good to stop and make sure that we have soaked in God's presence, asked for HIS guidance, and patiently waited for HIM to move the cloud before we move out and do something for His Kingdom.

2. The true presence of God affects radical change in the person beholding it. When Moses came down from the presence of God, his face was shining. He had been altered by the Glory of God in a way that was noticeable to everyone around him. The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians, *"But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."* (2 Cor. 3:16-18) If we want to be changed, it does not happen by trying harder to be a better

person. We do not conform our external behavior to be more like Jesus. No, these things cannot work because they are externally focused and based on human will power. It would be like trying to clean out a dirty milk jug by scrubbing the outside of it only. The only power for transformation is the Presence of God.

We need to create space in our lives each day to humbly come before God and, through prayer, Bible study, and meditation, open ourselves to His presence and ask Him to fill us and clean us from the inside out. When we leave that “tent of meeting” our faces will shine with the joy and the hope of the Lord and will be a beacon of hope to the world around us.

Tap into the power of God’s transforming presence today.