



FALL 2023 // WEEK 6

Life Group Questions

Exodus - The God Who Delivers // October 14 – 15, 2023

Don't Mess with the LORD // Exodus 7:1 – 8:32

Introduction

In Exodus chapters 7 & 8 God sends Moses and Aaron to confront Pharaoh several more times. In these two chapters we see Moses & Aaron perform signs before Pharaoh and because Pharaoh's heart is stubborn, they enact the first 4 strikes upon Egypt. Through these strikes God shows his power and Pharaoh resists the obvious conclusion that he is no match for YAHWEH. He should concede victory to YAHWEH. But he does not, which will yield disastrous circumstances.

To think through the main ideas in the sermon and prepare for your discussion together, we invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group. Due to preferences over a wide range of groups, we do not expect you will cover every question each week.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

- 1) What's the story behind a time when a car you were in broke down?

- 2) What outside influences have had the biggest impact on you or your family?

Getting Started

Transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
 - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
 - b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
 - c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
- 2) Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group.

Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) **What was particularly challenging or confusing for you from this week's passage or Pastor Bryan's message?**

- 2) In *Exodus 7:1-7* we are told that Moses is 80 years old when he officially enters into his calling. **As a review, what has God done over the 80 years to prepare Moses for this moment?**

- 3) In the text, Pharaoh's magicians were able to replicate some of the "signs", but that didn't mean their signs were from God. **What do we learn from this? How should we think about signs and wonders as evidence of God?** (See *2 Timothy 3:1-5*)

- 4) A prominent theme in the working out of this battle between God & Pharaoh is the "hardening of Pharaoh's heart." In the scriptures the heart suggests thinking, taking up attitudes or making up your mind – resoluteness.

In chapter 4 we were given a preview that God would harden Pharaoh's heart. Most scholars do not believe that in doing this God is overriding Pharaoh's will to choose. Resolve gets strengthened or weakened by argument (discussion/debate). It might be more like Pharaoh hearing a voice saying, "No, don't be soft; it would be stupid to let them go," but it is Pharaoh who decides whether to listen to this voice.

This theme is mentioned as happening in almost every strike narrative, but it is mentioned in three different ways. The three ways of speaking are all significant.

- Saying, "Pharaoh's resolve (heart) was strong or firm (hard)," simply reports the phenomenon.
- Saying, "Pharaoh strengthened or stiffened his resolve (hardened his heart)," makes clear that Pharaoh's will is involved; this is not a decision imposed on him from outside.
- Saying, "God strengthened or stiffened Pharaoh's resolve, (God hardened Pharaoh's heart)" makes clear that God is also at work.

Referring to God's intention first (*Exodus 4:21*) affirms that God's sovereignty is involved. In describing how things actually work out, Exodus refers first to Pharaoh's resolve being strong or firm (*Exodus 7:13, 14, 22*) and to Pharaoh's stiffening his own resolve (*Exodus 8:15, 32*) before speaking of God's strengthening Pharaoh's resolve (*Exodus 9:12*) (next week's passage). **That order again makes clear how significant is Pharaoh's human involvement. He is not just a puppet in God's hands.***

*Excerpted from John Goldingay, *Exodus and Leviticus for Everyone*, Old Testament for Everyone Series

From this explanation, how do you see the idea of hardening your heart in your own life?

Pharaoh refuses to listen, then asks for prayer in his misery. Then refuses to listen once relief comes. **How might this pattern play out in our lives today?**

- 5) Pastor Bryan referred to the idea that we see Moses grow through these events. **What is the evidence in the text that Moses is growing in his courage and faith before Pharaoh? What do we learn from this for our own lives about growing in courage and stepping out in faith?**

- 6) Exodus 8 ends with the ominous feeling that things are only going to get worse. What does God need to do to get Pharaoh's attention? **What does God need to do to get our attention?**

Is there something in your life you know needs to be addressed but you keep avoiding it? What will it take for you to get serious about this issue? How can your group pray for you and hold you accountable in this area?

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts. **Next week in Life Group, take a few moments to share how the Lord may have used this exercise in your life.**

Scripture Focus: The idea of a hardened heart is found in other places in scripture. As a way of guarding against hardening your heart, take time to read Psalm 95 slowly and prayerfully several times this week. Listen to what the Holy Spirit might be saying to you through this passage. Ask Jesus, “Is there any area of my life that You want to speak to me about?”

Prayer Focus: Hebrews 4 tells us that we can be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Take specific time this week to confess and name your sins before God. Agree with Him that you were wrong. You might also find it helpful to use this prayer for confession of sin.

Most merciful God,
I confess that I have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed,
by what I have done, and by what I have left undone.
I have not loved You with my whole heart;
I have not loved my neighbor as myself.
I am truly sorry and I humbly repent,
For the sake of Your son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on me and forgive me,
that I may delight in Your will,
and walk in Your ways, to the glory of Your name. Amen

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

A significant part of “coming together” is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say “Amen” aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?