

Monday
Exodus 1–4

Jacob's family of seventy people moved to Egypt at the invitation of Joseph and Pharaoh. As time and generations passed, the family grew in number. They became known as the Israelites, because Jacob was known as Israel. They grew to many thousands in population. A new Pharaoh made them slaves in Egypt. This Pharaoh was intimidated by the great number of Israelites and did not want to ever be overtaken by them if they rebelled. To weaken the strength of the Israelites, he ordered that all the Israelite baby boys be thrown into the Nile River and drowned.

But one Israelite mother took her baby to the Nile River and placed him in a basket. She set the basket in the river among some reeds where it would not float away. She prayed to God to protect her baby, and she had her daughter stay to watch what happened. Then things went according to plan, better actually. Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe at that spot in the river. Her servant girls came to attend to her while she was there. (This was all part of the baby's mother's plan. She was probably hoping that one of the servant girls would rescue her baby.) When Pharaoh's daughter discovered the baby in the basket, she decided to raise him as her own son! She named him Moses.

When Moses had grown up, he saw an Egyptian soldier mistreating an Israelite slave. Moses knew that, even though he was raised in Pharaoh's palace, he was an Israelite. He did not like seeing the Israelites mistreated by the Egyptians. He killed the Egyptian soldier and then ran away into the wilderness to escape Pharaoh's anger.

Years later, as Moses was herding some sheep for his father-in-law on a mountainside, God spoke to him from a burning bush. The bush was on fire, but didn't burn up. God told Moses he had planned new things – an exciting future – for Moses and the Israelites. God did not want Moses to continue caring for sheep. Instead, God wanted Moses to care for his people. God wanted Moses to lead his people to freedom in the Promised Land of Canaan, which God had promised to Jacob's grandpa Abraham.

Moses told God that he couldn't do what he was asking. But God promised Moses that he would be with him and help him. God gave Moses the power to turn his shepherd's rod (like a walking stick) into a snake as a sign of God's presence and proof of his promise. When Moses argued that he was unable to speak well, God told him that his older brother Aaron would help. Moses finally gave in and did as God told him. This was all part of God's plan to bring his people to the land in which Jesus, the Savior, would one day be born. Jesus would fulfill God's greatest promise and greatest plan – the plan for our eternal salvation.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the many promises and plans you have made for us. Help us always to trust in your promise of salvation. Thank you for guiding us and for the blessings you give us each new day. Amen.

Tuesday

Numbers 13:1–14:35

Finally the Israelites reach Canaan, the Promised Land. (God had promised to give it to them since the time of Abraham about a thousand years earlier.) When they finally got there, God told Moses to choose 12 men, leaders, one from each of the 12 tribes of Israel, who would go into the Promised Land first to spy out the land and its inhabitants. Moses told the men to find out if the people living there were strong or weak, many or few. They were to see if the land was good for growing crops, and what the cities were like.

For 40 days the 12 spies walked through valleys, hills, and deserts in the Promised Land. They spied on the people in their cities. They saw what crops grew in the hills and valleys. On their way back, they picked grapes, pomegranates, and figs. The grape cluster they picked was so large, it took two men to carry it!

The spies returned and gave their report. They said the Promised Land “flows with milk and honey,” and they showed the people the enormous fruit they had found. Then the spies told about the cities and the people they had seen. The cities were large, with strong walls all around them – and many of the people were like giants!

Caleb, one of the spies, said they should go in at once and take the land. But ten of the other spies gave a bad report, saying that they would not be able to, because the people who lived in the land were too strong. The Israelites agreed with the spies who gave the bad report and they began to grumble against Moses. They thought he would get them all killed. They wanted to choose a leader to take them back to Egypt.

Joshua and Caleb assured the people that God would give them the land. “The Lord is with us,” they said, “do not fear them.” But the people only became angrier – so much so that they wanted to stone Joshua and Caleb.

Then the Lord appeared at the tent of meeting. God was angry at the people. “How long,” he said, “will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?” Moses prayed for the people, asking God to forgive them. Still, God said that the 10 spies and all the people who grumbled could never go into the Promised Land. Instead, they would have to live in the desert 40 years. Only after all those who had not trusted God had died were Caleb, Joshua, and the other people's children allowed to enter Canaan.

The people of Israel did not trust God or his promises. But God forgave their sin and took care of them throughout all the 40 years they lived in the desert. At the end of the 40 years, God let Caleb and Joshua and the people's children go to the Promised Land, just as he had promised.

Even though we sometimes doubt God's goodness to us, God is always faithful. He gave his only Son, Jesus, to be our Savior. God forgives our sins if we trust in Jesus, and he gives us life eternal in the promised land of heaven.

- **What were the 10 spies and the rest of the people so afraid of?**
- **Why were Caleb and Joshua not afraid?**
- **Have you had times in your life when it was hard to trust God's promises?**

Close with prayer

Wednesday
Joshua 2

After Moses died, Joshua became the leader of God's people. When it was time, he sent two men to spy on the Promised Land. Joshua told them to go look at the land, especially the city of Jericho. The two spies went to Jericho and hid in the house of a woman named Rahab.

But the king of Jericho found out they were there. He sent Rahab a message: "Bring out the men who have come to you."

Rather than obey, Rahab took the spies up to the roof of her house, where she had laid out large plants to dry. She hid the men under these plants. When the king's messengers arrived at her house, she told them the spies had left. But if the king's messengers hurried, she said, maybe they could catch the spies before they got too far away.

After the king's messengers had gone, Rahab went to the spies, who were still on the roof hidden under the plants. She said, "I know that the Lord has given you the land, for we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt."

Rahab and the people of Jericho had heard how God had helped the Israelites defeat all their enemies on their way to the Promised Land. "The Lord your God," Rahab said, "he is God in the heavens above and on the earth below."

Then Rahab asked the spies to promise her something. Since she had been kind to the spies, Rahab asked the spies to be kind to her and to her family when the people of Israel came back to defeat the city of Jericho. So the men promised Rahab they would protect her and her family.

The spies did not want anyone to see them leaving Rahab's house, so she took a rope and let them down through the window. She told them to hide in the hills for three days, until the people had stopped looking for them. Then they could go back to the Israelite camp.

The men said, "When we come into the land, you shall tie this red cord in the window through which you let us down." This would be the signal to all the Israelites that they must not harm the people in this house. The men told Rahab to be sure to have all her family there in the house with her, and they would all be safe from the Israelites.

Rahab sent the men away and tied the red cord in the window as a sign that her home was not to be attacked.

After holding for three days, the two men returned to Joshua. They said, "Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands." They told Joshua what Rahab had said – that the people of Jericho were afraid because of all that God had done for the Israelites.

Rahab was not afraid, though, because she trusted in the one true God. Even though Rahab was not an Israelite, she put her trust in the Lord, and God welcomed her as one of his own people. Rahab became a great-great-grandmother of King David. And, much, much later, the Lord Jesus himself was born in their family line!

- **Why were the people of Jericho so afraid of the people of Israel?**
- **What does Rahab teach us about who God is willing to have in his family?**

Thursday
Joshua 6

God led the Israelites safely across the Jordan River into the land he had promised to give them. They were camped near the city of Jericho, where the two Israelite spies had searched and Rahab had hidden them. The people who lived in Jericho did not love or serve God, and God wanted to give the city of Jericho to Joshua and the Israelites.

All around the city of Jericho were high walls to keep the Israelites and other foreigners out and the people of Jericho safely inside. Even though the walls were strong and tall, they could not keep God out. God told Joshua how to defeat the people of Jericho, and Joshua followed God's plan.

Joshua told the people to march around the city for seven days. First in line were soldiers. Next came priests, carrying the ark of the covenant and blowing trumpets made from ram's horns. Last came more soldiers.

Each day they all marched around the city one time. The soldiers kept quiet, but the priests blew their trumpets. Then, on the seventh day, God told the people to walk around the wall seven times. After the seventh time, when the priests blew their trumpets, Joshua called out, "Shout, for the Lord has given you the city!" As soon as the people shouted, the great walls of Jericho came crashing down to the ground!

The soldiers rushed in, taking the city. They burned the city and everything in it, just as God had told them to do. Everyone in the city was destroyed, except for Rahab and her family. Joshua saved her life because she had helped the spies of Israel.

God gave the Israelites faith to trust his plan and to do exactly what he said. God gave them a mighty victory over the evil people of Jericho. God gives us faith to trust in Jesus. Through faith in Jesus, God gives us his mighty victory over sin, death, and the devil – so we can shout for joy!

- **What really made the walls come crashing down – the trumpets and shouting, or sometime else?**

Close with prayer

Friday

Joshua 24:1–24

God had rescued them from slavery in Egypt. They rebelled and, just like the Egyptians, they worshipped a statue of a calf that they made. God led them through the wilderness and granted them military defeat over their enemies. God gave them the beautiful Promised Land. Still some Israelites wanted to worship other things than the Lord God who had saved them and blessed them.

Serving God was not their only option, just as we can choose to serve other, lesser things too. But for Joshua, their leader, serving the Lord was the only thing he was willing to consider. While some Israelites adopted the religious beliefs and practices of their heritage in the pagan land of Egypt, some accepted the idolatrous religions of their neighbors in the region where he now lived. These options probably seemed easier than serving the Lord God.

But Joshua had witnessed God's faithfulness. He was convinced that his Lord was the only true God and that serving him was the only fitting way to live. Joshua wanted to serve God alone, because of all that God had done for him. Joshua was determined to teach his entire household to honor his Lord as well. He had trusted God for victory on the battlefield, and he knew that God could also give him spiritual victory in his home.

Joshua knew that the Israelites were easily distracted. They were impatient. They made demands. They wanted God to do what they wanted God to do. So, before leaving them, Joshua encourages them to do what is right. He reminded them of all that God had done for them and then he made it clear what he thought is best when he said, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

We, too, choose what to worship and whom to serve every day. What would Joshua's challenge sound like to us today? If serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves whom you will serve: whether career, where you sacrifice your time; or money, in which you place your trust; whether the praise of men, which fuels your ego; or possessions, through which you view your worth; whether relationships or social media or fantasy football or politics. If not the Lord, whom will you serve?

We, just like the Israelites in Joshua's time, face an endless list of things we could put in front of God. These distractions come between us and God, and they compete with the Creator for our love and devotion. As a result, just like our ancient ancestors, we're easily distracted. We're impatient. We make demands. We want God to do what we want God to do.

Oh God, give us the strength and commitment to answer along with Joshua, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."