

CHAPTER 4
Deliverance

TIMELESS TRUTH: God is the Ultimate Deliverer.

CHAPTER SUMMARY: (Have someone in your group read the summary section.)

The Hebrew people knew the stories of Joseph and Jacob and how they'd settled in Egypt four centuries ago on Pharaoh's dime. But that was then and this is now – and now, they were slaves. Some might have thought it was 430 years too late, yet God's plan for deliverance was right on schedule. His servant Moses was born during the rule of a tyrannical Pharaoh whose infanticide program was aimed at annihilating the nation of Israel. Ironically, baby Moses was delivered from danger when Pharaoh's daughter rescued him from the Nile, hired his mother to nurse him, and raised him as a royal son.

Moses grew up in the palace but knew he'd been born a slave. Feeling sympathetic to the plight of his people, he killed an Egyptian task master and was forced to flee. Moses became a refugee in the far off land of Midian where he married and began tending his father-in-law's flocks. Moses spent the next 40 years hiding from Pharaoh and like the Hebrew people, assumed this would be the way he'd spend the rest of his days.

Then he met up with a burning bush. God spoke from the bush and commissioned Moses as Israel's deliverer. Not a bad promotion for an 80 year old man with only "ex-prince" and "shepherd" listed on his resume. God revealed Himself to Moses as I AM, the covenant-keeping Redeemer of His people. Moses doubted his own qualifications and abilities, but God responded with the guarantee of His presence.

Moses returned to Egypt with the promise of God and the support of his brother Aaron. As expected, Moses' demands of freeing the Hebrews were met with Pharaoh's stubborn refusal. So God sent a series of plagues and a cycle of challenge began: the plague strikes, Pharaoh relents; the plague stops, Pharaoh recants.

Then God presented a shadow of what would be the "ultimate deliverance" with the final plague. All the firstborn in the land would die in a single night and there was only one means of rescue. Every household in Israel was to select a perfect Passover lamb, slaughter it, and cover the doorposts of their homes with its blood. That night the angel of death would come and "pass over" the blood stained houses, preserving the lives of all who were inside.

The Hebrews left Egypt that same night, and later, an enraged Pharaoh took off in pursuit. Trapped between his powerful army on one side and the Red Sea on the other, Egypt's victory appeared certain. But God split the sea in two and the people walked to safety on dry land. They celebrated when Pharaoh's army drowned in the same sea...but only for a moment. Their jubilation quickly turned to complaint when Israel forgot what God had done. They grumbled over the lack of water and food, but God again proved Himself faithful by providing water, manna, and quail to sustain them, this time from their fears and inability to provide for themselves.

The story of God's people had just begun. The details of the Lower Story already form an outline of the big picture found in the Upper Story. God delivered His people from bondage in Egypt as an early clue of the deliverance that Christ would bring. It would be centuries before Jesus would come as God's perfect Passover Lamb and secure deliverance for His people. Yet the blood of Passover is a long shadow of what was to come when the Lamb of God set foot on the stage of history. These miracles were merely a hint of things to come; the I AM is still our Deliverer.

DISCUSSION STARTER:

Share a time when God delivered you from a close call, such as death or danger.

GROUP QUESTIONS:

1. How did Moses' life experiences prepare him for God's call? What life experience could God use to minister to others through you?
2. In the same way that God used Moses to set the Israelites free from slavery, He uses us to help people find freedom in Christ. Discuss your experiences with sharing your faith; what inhibitions keep you from doing so?
3. When Moses asked for God's "official" name, God replied: I AM WHO I AM. Why do you think God identified Himself that way? What is the significance of that name? What does this name for God tell us about Him?
4. When Moses tells Pharaoh to set the Israelites free, he responds by increasing their workload. Recall a time when you were obedient to God, but the situation worsened instead of improved. What life lessons can be drawn from these examples?
5. Look at God's description of Himself on page 48 (note the "I will" phrases). What is Moses focused on? What is God focused on?
6. Pharaoh was "plagued" many times over, yet still refused to humble himself before God. Is there someone you know who has hardened his or her heart toward God? Can you see how God might use their decision?
7. While this story has many obvious displays of God's wrath, we also learn a lot about God's goodness. List the ways this story shows God's goodness.
8. The Feast of Passover (p. 51-52) was to be perpetual reminder of how God delivered Israel. What are the parallels between Communion today and the Passover?
9. Even after being delivered, the people of Israel continue to grumble. Do you know any grumblers? Are you one? How does perpetual dissatisfaction affect those in its orbit?
10. God provides food and water for the Israelites while they are wandering in the desert. Describe a time God met your need (emotionally, physically, spiritually, financially, etc.) in an unexpected way. Share how this impacted you and others.

In the time remaining ask your group members to share any of their personal reflection insights from their journal entries.