

An artistic illustration of Moses standing on a wooden plank that has formed a path through the parted waters of the Red Sea. Moses is shown from behind, wearing a blue robe and holding a staff in his right hand, with his left arm raised. The water is depicted with vibrant, swirling colors of blue, green, and yellow, creating a sense of movement and divine power. The sky above is dark and turbulent, with swirling clouds and small white bubbles or droplets. The overall style is painterly and dramatic, emphasizing the miraculous nature of the event.

MOSES

DAILY DEVOTIONAL - WEEK 5

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MOSES

WEEK 5



MONDAY

Nostalgia for Egypt, manna from heaven

Amazingly, almost as soon as the Israelites realized the barren conditions of the Sinai Peninsula, they began to long for “the good old days”—their days as slaves in Egypt! Still, God graciously, miraculously answered their fear of starvation by providing food in a dramatic, long-lasting way. Moses commanded that they save a jar of manna, making God’s wonderful provision a permanent part of their story.

We still sometimes call a positive happening we didn’t expect “manna from heaven,” alluding to the way Israelite history said this food just appeared in the desert after God promised it. The name was a Hebrew pun. “Manna” echoed the phrase “man hu,” which meant “What is it?” (or even “What is this stuff?”). **When has God provided for you in a way that surprised, or even puzzled, you?**

Surely no one could forget food appearing every day. But God told Moses to keep some manna as a reminder “for future generations” (verse 32). And a reminder was necessary. In Numbers 11:6 we read that the Israelites complained so bitterly about their morning manna that Moses told God he wanted to die (cf. Numbers 11:15). **What helps you remember the ways God has cared for you, even when things get tough?**

read

Exodus 16:1-15, 31-32

pray

Lord Jesus, thank you for the ways (sometimes through your caring people) that you have sent “manna” into my life. Help me to have a generous spirit when I have a chance to help someone else who needs it. Amen.

TUESDAY

God gave water, and victory over Amalek

For generations, the Israelites had heard about the Egyptian pantheon of gods. Those gods were a changeable lot, like most pagan gods—they tended to reflect the characteristics of their human “inventors.” So God had to keep on showing his power to people who kept forgetting it, or at least struggling to trust it. Water (essential in the wilderness) from a rock, and victory over a fierce desert people, were God’s gracious gifts to the Israelites.

Facing an urgent problem—severe thirst, with no readily apparent water source—we read, “The Israelites argued with and tested the LORD, asking, ‘Is the LORD really with us or not?’” **Can you recall one or more times when, pressed by discomfort or danger, you’ve wrestled with a similar question? If so, how did you answer the question in a way that allowed you to keep your faith?**

The Amalekites were descendants of a grandson of Esau, Jacob’s twin (cf. Genesis 36:12). Exodus didn’t say why they struck Israel, but God used Moses’ rod (the same rod Moses held up as God parted the sea) to bring Israel victory. A few weeks ago we read Exodus 14:14: “The Lord will fight for you.” **How did this battle bolster that promise to Israel?**

In this world, we do not always reach what seems a victory to human eyes. Roman soldiers crucified Jesus, after all, and ended the apostle Paul’s life by beheading. **In what deeper (and eternally important) way(s) did God “fight” for them, and will God fight for you?**

read

Exodus 17:1-16

pray

Lord of all, you promised that wherever I go, you are there with me. And if that’s true, then I am always ultimately safe, no matter what may happen in this world. Amen.

WEDNESDAY

Leadership wisdom from Moses' father-in-law

The Task: lead a ragety bunch of ex-slaves safely through the Sinai desert. They weren't organized, and had just one clear leader. Their slave masters had run everything, so they hadn't learned to work out even minor conflicts. Moses was trying to assess and fix every little problem the people had—until his father-in-law wisely told him, “What you are doing isn't good.” Moses was astute enough to listen to his father-in-law. In doing so, he learned a lesson we all need to learn: he needed help. He couldn't do everything himself.

Moses took his role as leader seriously, a good thing. “The people come to me to seek God's will,” he said. But his father-in-law was God's instrument to remind him that he wasn't called to be a solo act, handling everything himself. **What tasks do you carry solo right now, in any area of life? Look prayerfully at what parts of them you could share with others, even if at first it takes extra time to help others learn the task.**

Exodus 2:16, 3:1 and 18:1 called Moses' father-in-law “Midian's priest.” Although we don't know a lot about it, Midian's religion probably differed from Israel's. But this priest of Midian sheltered Moses, gave him his daughter in marriage, employed him for about 40 years, and now came to his camp and counseled him about how best to handle a demanding leadership task. **Are you, like Moses, open to God's wisdom even if it comes through a source you didn't expect?**

read

Exodus 18:1-5, 13-26

pray

Loving Lord, I need your help, and you often send that help through other people. So deliver me from the pride that tries to make me pretend I can always handle things entirely on my own. Amen.

THURSDAY

How quickly the Israelites forgot

Moses went up Mount Sinai to meet with God (cf. Exodus 24:12). According to Exodus 25-31, God had a lot to tell him. But while he was gone, the Israelites relapsed into their Egyptian ways, demanding, “Give us a visible ‘god.’” (Unspoken, but very much a part of their demand: “Ignore the second commandment”). Moses’ brother Aaron gave in to their pleas, sculpted a golden bull, and identified the statue as “the LORD” (verse 5).

As we read this, it is haunting to recall the Israelites saying, “‘Everything that the LORD has said we will do, and we will obey,” (Exodus 24:7) just before Moses sprinkled them with the blood of the covenant. **Did you ever make a promise (to someone else, yourself or God) fully intending to keep it—and then crash into the reality that you’d forgotten or ignored your promise? How important does God’s grace, God’s willingness to give you a fresh start, become at those times?**

Taken alone, verses 10-14 of this reading sounded as though God was set on wiping out faithless Israel, and Moses had to talk God out of it. But we cannot take them alone. Two chapters later, God revealed himself to Moses, saying, “The LORD! The LORD! a God who is compassionate and merciful, very patient, full of great loyalty and faithfulness... forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion” (Exodus 34:6-7). And Jesus (the supreme revelation of God) said that in him we see God’s heart most clearly (cf. John 14:9, Hebrews 13:8). **What can help you trust in God’s goodness as Jesus revealed it to us?**

read

Exodus 32:1-14

pray

Loving God, you call me to be faithful. I really want to be. But I thank you that the psalmist wrote that you remember that we are just dust (Psalm 103:14). Thank you that I can trust your grace more than you can trust my faithfulness. Amen.

FRIDAY

A frightening report from 10 of 12 spies

With the law given (and re-given) at Sinai, God instructed Moses to lead the people toward the Promised Land. As they got close, Moses sent out 12 spies, one from each tribe, to scout the land. After all, none of them had ever been there. They reported that yes, it was a good, fruitful land. But 10 of the 12 spies were also gripped by fear, and said they didn't dare try to take the land. They seemed to utterly forget that God's power, not their own, had brought them this far.

Notice how the report of the 10 changed as their fears deepened. At first they said they saw "the descendants of the Anakites"—tall people who were supposed to be descended from "the Nephilim" (a legendary angel/human hybrid people). The second time through, they'd seen "huge men," and the Nephilim themselves, in the land! **Have you ever been in the grip of a fear that kept magnifying the danger of a situation beyond what it actually was?**

One of the spies, Caleb, refused to join in the others' fear-driven report. "We are more than able to do it," was his resolute, courageous report to the people. **What kind of inner spiritual compass does it take to speak out with courage and hope when everyone around you is gripped by fear? Have you ever had the privilege of knowing a Caleb?**

read

Numbers 13:1-3, 17-20, 25-33

pray

Lord God, this is such a sad story. Everything you'd promised was right there in reach—but their fear blocked the way. Help my faith and courage to keep growing, so that I do not let fear block me from whatever you call me to. Amen.

SATURDAY

“Don’t rebel against the LORD”— but they did!

The Israelites, panicked by the negative report of ten of the twelve men who’d “spied out” the Promised Land, were ready to mutiny. Two of the spies—Caleb and Joshua—begged Israel to trust God, and not refuse to go into the Promised Land. But the people were ready to stone them (and Moses) to death, and choose another leader to take them back to Egypt—until God’s glory intervened. Fear would not win out. But God did honour their negative choice. Except for Caleb and Joshua, God said, Israel would stay in the wilderness until all of those who didn’t want to go into the Promised Land reached the end of their lives.

Read verses 6-9 again, aloud if you can. Feel the pathos, the desperation, in Caleb and Joshua’s plead to the people. Imagine their feelings the next day as they packed up their tents and marched, not toward the “exceptionally good land” they had seen briefly on their scouting trip, but away from it, into the desolate Sinai landscape. God offers you an exceptionally good life, full of purpose, challenge and meaning, leading to eternity in a world made new with all the good things God has always intended for human life. Yet it can be scary to choose that life. **How can you keep fear from making you turn your back on God’s exceptionally good life? How can you set your life’s course firmly in the direction of God’s promised land?**

read

Numbers 14:1-10, 20-25

pray

*O God, lead me ever onward.
Guard my heart and mind from
the lure of nostalgia for the
“Egypt” from which you have
set me free. Keep my path
steady all the way to an eternity
with you. Amen.*