

Core Study #4

The Plagues

Passage: Exodus 6:28-7:24

Themes: miracles, obedience, judgment

You will find it helpful to read the Background Summary & perhaps the Leader's Prep. in your Core to help Core members understand the setting of the passage before moving on to the questions.

Background Summary:

Last week we looked at God meeting Moses in the desert in a burning bush. Most of us do not experience God's presence or His direction as clearly as Moses did at this time, but we are assured throughout Scripture that God is with those who choose to follow and obey Him. In obedience Moses returns to Egypt and together with his brother Aaron is given an audience with Pharaoh. Pharaoh responds with the words, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go." (Ex. 5:2). He then makes the labour of the Hebrew slaves even more burdensome. Pharaoh is about to discover who the Lord is and that God deeply cares about His people.

Leaders' Preparation:

Pray, and read through the passage a few times. This may be a difficult passage for some people as it records the beginning of the 10 Plagues that God brought against Pharaoh and his people. The Egyptians of the 15th century BC worshipped many gods and the statues of these gods were visible everyday as reminders to the people of the spirit world. The Hebrews were one of the very few peoples who worshipped one God, a God who was not confined to one country, but who was God over all of the earth, over all peoples and who was more powerful than any created god, any idol fashioned by human hands. Through the Plagues God reveals Himself to not only the Egyptians, but all the surrounding nations as the One true God who has ultimate power over the sky, the earth, water, animals and ultimately over life itself.

Be sure as the Core leader and co-leader to read over the passage several times before Core and note any questions that you may have about the passage. Refer to the NIV Study Bible or a good commentary to help you answer your own questions about the passage.

Introductory Question

- Do you feel it is so important to God that we obey and follow Him? Why?

Read Exodus 6:28-7:24

Discussion Questions (selection to choose from):

1. In 6:30 Moses repeats an objection he has already made to God in chapter 4 verse 10 when he was first told to return to Egypt (refer to 4:10). What might have been some of the reasons for why Moses was so reluctant to obey God?

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Perhaps Moses was reluctant to obey God because of the enormity of what he was being called to do and because of his past failures 40 years earlier when he had murdered an Egyptian and was subsequently rejected by the Hebrew slaves and Pharaoh (refer to 2:11-15).

2. Why do you think God called Moses of all people to lead the Hebrews out of slavery and to establish a new nation?

Think about Moses "credentials". For 40 years he was brought up in Pharaoh's court. In Acts 7:22 we read that Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action (He was actually a good speaker, though perhaps not an amazing orator). Growing up Moses would have been educated in one of the, if not the top "university" in the world as a political leader. He then spent another 40 years in the desert, the same desert he would later lead the Hebrew people through for another 40 years.

3. Sometimes we are afraid to step out and do the things we sense God wants us to do. What lessons can you learn from Moses' experience about doing those things that God calls you to do?

4. In 7:3 we are told that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. How do you understand this passage? Does this mean that Pharaoh and people in general have no choice in life or that God unfairly brought the plagues on the Egyptian people?

It is natural to come to the conclusion that if God hardened Pharaoh's heart, then why did Pharaoh and Egypt need to suffer the Plagues? Nine times in Exodus the hardening of pharaoh's heart is ascribed to God (4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:4,8; see Rom. 9:17-18); another 9 times the pharaoh is said to have hardened his own heart (7:13-14,22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7,34-35). The pharaoh alone was the agent of the hardening in each of the first five plagues. Not until the sixth plague did God confirm pharaoh's willful action/participation in this hardening (see 9:12) (NIV Study Bible).

5. In chapter 7 verse 11 we read that both Aaron and the Egyptian sorceress and magicians "produced" snakes. What is the difference in the sources of power between Aaron and the Egyptians? What does this tell us about the reality and strength of demonic power? Which snake ate the others and what does this tell us about the power of God?

6. What is the significance of the first Plague in demonstrating who God is to Pharaoh and his people?

Reflect on the fact that the source of life for Egypt was the Nile. It flooded every year bringing fertile silt to farm lands. It provided water in a thirty desert.

Each of the Plagues reveal the power of God over nature and over the gods of Egypt. Egypt's dependence on the waters of the Nile meant that it was deified as the god Hapi. The frog was deified as the goddess Heqt who assisted in child birth. The Egyptians worshiped many animals and animal-headed deities included the bull-gods Apis and Mnevis, the cow-god Hathor and the ram-god Khnum. The plagues on the livestock proved God's power over these false Egyptian gods.

7. What false gods do you feel many Canadians follow today? What or who do people place their trust in the place of the one true God?

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Application Questions:

- **How do we live life to be sure we do not harden our hearts to God?**
- **Moses was called by God to lead the Hebrew people at the age of 80 (see 7:7). In Acts 2:17-18 we are told that young men will prophesy and see visions while old men will dream dreams' in other words God desires to use old and young alike to accomplish His will on earth. What do you feel God may be calling you to do while you are at UBC? After graduation?**