



GOD'S EXIT PLAN • GRACE & GRUMBLING • EXODUS 15:1-16:34 • 3/23/2025

MAIN POINT

Worship is the unsparing individual and corporate response to who God is, what He has done, and what He will do.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Would you say your focus most days is on the past, present, or future? Why?

What are some ways your family celebrates significant events and accomplishments?

When dreaming about the future or looking forward to future events, are you more likely to share those thoughts with other people or keep those thoughts to yourself? Why?

Sometimes, if we are not in a healthy place, we hold on tightly to a past grievance or worry about some future unknown. But most of the time, our thoughts are focused on the here and now. Thoughts of the past come more sporadically, as in those times we celebrate important life markers and events. Thoughts of the future are often wistful or worrisome, so we try to avoid giving them too much attention. And that's good. In terms of productivity and accomplishment, it's true—we are wise to focus on the present. However, if daily worship is to be a part of our present, we should not ignore the past or resist thoughts of the future. The kind of worship that God desires requires our giving attention to all three.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ EXODUS 15:1-3, 6, 11.

What descriptions of God do you find in these verses?

Our worship begins and ends with who God is. Here, Israel was compelled to think about who God is because He exerted His power and love on their behalf. They would have done well to keep thinking about who God is, instead of letting their circumstances dictate their worship (see Exodus 16:1-3; 32:1). The fact is, regardless of what we perceive God is or is not doing on our behalf, He is worthy of our praise. His character never changes. His exaltation never ends.

Why do you think Moses and the Israelites compared God to other gods in verse 11, instead of to Pharaoh or powerful nations like Egypt?

In our lives and church today, is God viewed as glorious in holiness? Revered with praises? Performing wonders? Explain.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ EXODUS 15:1, 4-10, 12, 19-21.

Israel's rescue was no small thing. They had been enslaved in Egypt for centuries; entire lifetimes were spent in oppression. Their babies had been killed (Exodus 1:16). They suffered under forced labor. They were beaten and mistreated (Exodus 2:11). They had been denied the request to leave numerous times, despite numerous miracles by God that should have made Pharaoh relent. Even when they did leave, they'd been chased and found (Exodus 14:5-9). There weren't enough words to express the grandness of what God had done when they finally stood on the other side of the sea with no oppressors in sight.

What past actions has God done for us corporately that should compel our worship of Him now?

What past actions has God done for you personally that should compel your worship of Him now?

God never gets tired of our worship. We can't praise Him too many times. What God has done through the death and resurrection of Jesus is worthy of our worship every single day. What God has done in your life personally, drawing you to Him, using every circumstance for your good and His glory, should elicit unsparing worship in thought, word, and deed.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ EXODUS 15:13-18.

How would you characterize Israel's outlook on the future? What did they expect from God? Why?

What does it reveal to you about worship that Moses and Israel sang with confidence about the future?

How does a person's expectation of God impact his or her worship of God?

Israel's expectations of God's future acts were both confident and specific. Verse 18 tells us why. The Lord reigns forever and ever. Because He does, Israel could march on in confidence that God would be present and would act on their behalf. We, too, can know our future is secure. He will continue to act on behalf of those who belong to Him. No matter what it looks like now, ultimately His justice will prevail. We can look forward to God's future acts without losing sight of today. In fact, worshiping God for what He will do in the future gives us better focus on our calling for today.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ EXODUS 16:1-4.

God used the lack of water and bread as opportunities to test the Israelites' trust and loyalty. They chose to look back on what was familiar. What had the Israelites forgotten in their hunger and alarm? How did the food crisis cloud their memory about Egypt?

Given that the Israelites were in a desperate situation, was it wrong for them to grumble? If so, why? What might they have done instead?

What was the main complaint voiced by the Israelites in this situation? Was it a valid concern? Why or why not? How did God respond to their complaints?

In what ways do we tend to act like the Israelites? How does that attitude reflect on our relationship with God?

Sometimes God tests us through circumstances to strengthen our faith and commitment. Not all difficulties are direct tests from God. Whatever the source of our trouble, we can demonstrate loyalty to God. Often we grumble against God and others when we face problems. Instead of remaining loyal to God and trusting Him to see us through, we blame Him or doubt His concern and care for us. As we trust God to provide for us, we realize we can depend on Him in every situation.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ EXODUS 16:11-18.

What spiritual lesson did God teach the Israelites by providing them with quail and manna to eat? How did the results of their gathering reinforce His purpose?

Why didn't God provide the manna before the Israelites became desperate for food?

To what extent did God meet their needs? Why is this important? How does their experience give us confidence as we trust God to provide our daily bread?

Though God no longer provides manna for His people, He does build confidence in those who trust Him for salvation. What are some ways God continues to build your confidence in Him?

God does not promise to give us everything we want, but He will provide what His people need. His provision helps us grow in confidence in His desire and ability to care for us mentally and spiritually as well as physically. As we recognize His provision and demonstrate confidence in God's keeping His promises, we will grow in our devotion to Him.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ EXODUS 16:32-34.

Where was Aaron to place the preserved manna? Why would future generations need this reminder?

Why do we need reminders that God has provided for all our needs? How can we encourage people to trust God to provide all their needs?

How does remembering God's past provisions and counting our blessings preserve and deepen our devotion to God? How does talking about what God has done help us grow in our own devotion?

Throughout their wilderness wanderings, the Israelites often forgot God's past provision and failed to trust Him to meet their needs in the present. When faced with difficulties, we too might forget how God provided for us in the past and brought us through difficult times. When others experience difficulty, we might overlook opportunities to encourage them to trust God. By reminding ourselves and telling others how God has provided for us, we can strengthen our devotion to God and bolster the faith of others.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What do you know for sure about your future in Christ? Would you say you have been living and worshiping in response to those truths lately? Why or why not?

Taking cues from this passage, how can we as a group better worship God when we gather together?

What test are you in right now? How will you look for and acknowledge God's provision when it comes?

How will you demonstrate a growing devotion to God?

PRAYER

Thank God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do. Ask Him to help you recall His character, past actions, and future promises so that you might worship Him unsparingly this week.

COMMENTARY

| EXODUS 15:1-21

The "songs" of the Old Testament were Hebrew poetical compositions, usually brief, that could be set to music (v. 21). The song may either acknowledge God or, in some instances, some great exploit of man (1 Sam. 18:6-7). Some songs were carefully composed, while others, such as the present song and the Song of Deborah (Judg. 5), seem to be more of a spontaneous outburst. Later King David would organize the temple worship and make singing a prominent feature (1 Chr. 15:16-23).

Moses began his song by acknowledging the exalted Lord who turned back the advancing army by drowning them in the sea.

15:1-8. Moses acknowledged God as his strength and song, the true source of his joy. The Old Testament concept of salvation (v. 2) may encompass both physical and spiritual deliverance. Moses probably referred to Abraham when he called God his father's God.

The song continues (v. 3) with a declaration of God's role as a protector for the people of God. Wherever God's people go, their enemies are not far behind. Although at times they may resort to arms, their true defender is God himself, as the account of the exodus makes evident. This is why the Egyptian army was cast into the Red Sea. The right hand of God signifies his strength (Ps. 20:6), and even in the majority of people it is the arm of action, particularly in combat. The fuel for wielding his power was God's burning anger against Egypt's cruelty and mistreatment of his people.

15:9-12. At first the Egyptians boasted as they captured the outpaced Israelites. God's motive in delivering them was to exalt his name, but the Egyptians sought only to divide the spoils. Indeed the sight of the defenseless Israelites must have spurred the violent aggressors on even more. But at the command of God the waters enclosed and swallowed the riders alive. Moses saw the attributes of God in his acts. He asked, Who among the gods is like you, O Lord? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? Moses was so enraptured with beautiful notions of God's greatness that the "grandeur of the subject transcends the power of words" (Calvin, 259).

15:13-18. The revelation of God's love for his people unfolds gradually in biblical revelation. By the time we reach the New Testament and see the fuller unveiling of God's intentions for his people, we marvel at his love (1 John 3:1). Still, God chose his people from the beginning in love and never failed to love them as his own. Moses called that love unfailing, a truth made more evident by the deliverance through the Red Sea. God's people often find themselves in such straits that they despair of ever finding this love, wondering where God's kindnesses went. But God's miraculous rescue of the Israelites proves once more that his love never left them for a moment.

Moreover, this love for his people will cause the surrounding nations to realize that God makes a distinction between those who know him and those who don't. By the time the Israelites arrived at the borders of Canaan and entered under Joshua's command, the nations melted in fear. The goal of their journeys would be the mountain of God's inheritance, the glorious land of Canaan. The rest afforded the Israelites under Joshua would not be final, however (Heb. 4:8-9). They awaited a better time in the future, something that even the most enlightened of them knew only in part (1 Pet. 1:10-12). Then the Lord would reign for ever and ever.

15:19-21. The name Miriam has been alternately defined by scholars as meaning "bitter," "obstinate," and even "corpulent" (Gehman, 623). Yet her brief song in these verses reflects her devotion to God and her thankfulness for his marvelous deliverance. She

would later join Aaron in complaining to Moses about his marriage to a Cushite woman, an act that would leave her a temporary leper. Apparently she played the tambourine (timbrel), a percussion instrument often used by women while celebrating (Judg. 11:34; 1 Sam. 18:6-7).

| EXODUS 16:2-4, 11-15, 18, 32-34

16:2. The wonder of God's miraculous deliverance at the Red Sea soon turned to the routine of daily life in the wilderness. After three days of walking, the Israelites finally discovered water; but it was too bitter to drink. God instructed Moses to throw a tree into the water. When Moses did, the water became usable. God stated the lack of water had served as a test for the Israelites. If they continued to obey Him, He would not afflict them as He had the Egyptians. At the Israelites' next camping place they found 12 springs of water and 70 date palms. From there, they penetrated farther into the Sinai peninsula, arriving at the Wilderness of Sin (Ex. 15:22-16:1).

16:3. Difficulties in the present can often make us long for times when circumstances seemed to be better. Facing a lack of food, the Israelites reflected on "the good old days" of Egyptian slavery! As shepherds and herdsmen during their early years in Egypt, the Israelites could have eaten meat whenever they desired; but most would not have butchered animals needed for other purposes merely to satisfy their hunger. Grains probably constituted their basic diet. After they were enslaved they would not have enjoyed an oversupply of food. However, compared to their present circumstances even a slave's rations seemed like a feast.

16:4. God declared that He would meet the Israelites' needs for food—not just in the immediate situation but also over the long term. Beginning the next day, bread would fall from heaven each morning. As God had delivered them from the Egyptians and from a lack of potable water, so He would deliver them from hunger. His nature had not changed nor would His nature ever change. He consistently would care for His people. The gift of daily bread would test Israel's devotion to God.

16:11. Wanting to maintain the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship, God told Moses the bread of heaven gathered on the sixth day would be enough to feed the people for two days. Moses and Aaron announced to the Israelites that God had heard their complaints and would provide them with food. On the evening of that day the people would eat meat and the next morning they would have bread. As Aaron spoke, God's glory appeared in a cloud (Ex. 16:5-10).

16:12. Although the Israelites had addressed their complaints to Moses and Aaron, the complaints really were aimed at God. They thought He had redeemed them only to watch them die in the desert. They had seen God's miraculous acts, but they still did not know Him as their gracious, caring God.

God declared that He would satisfy the people's need for food by giving them meat at twilight and bread in the morning. God would meet their physical needs so that He also could address their spiritual needs. By providing food, He would demonstrate His graciousness and care for every aspect of their being. God wanted His people to know Him in a deeper way and to strengthen their trust in and commitment to Him.

16:13. In the evening, quail flew into the camp and the people easily caught, killed, and cooked them. God fed the people with quail only twice during the wilderness wanderings (see also Num 11:31-32). Some Bible students explain that the quail likely were migrating from their winter habitat in Africa and landed in the camp exhausted from their long flight. God may have used the natural movements of the quail to feed His people, but the biblical text emphasizes the quail constituted a miraculous gift from God. The quails' migration would not necessarily have taken them over the Israelite camp. In the final analysis, God miraculously sent the quail to feed His people and to encourage them to trust Him.

16:14. When the dew melted, the Israelites discovered fine flakes covering the ground. The Hebrew word translated fine flakes refers to things that resemble scales. The flakes also resembled frost in appearance, apparently indicating their white color. The Israelites called the flakes "manna" (see 16:31)

16:15. The Israelites had never seen the flakes before and asked one another what the substance could be. Moses identified the flakes as God's gift to them, emphasizing the people could rely on God to provide. The Israelites had accused God of not caring about them, but God was not stingy or uncaring. He was and is generous and caring. He would and will meet His people's needs.

16:18. God instructed the Israelites to gather as much manna as each person needed, up to two quarts per person. Some of the Israelites gathered a lot while others gathered a little (16:16-17). When the Israelites returned to their tents and measured what they had gathered, they discovered everyone had enough.

16:32. Moses passed on God's command to the Israelites to preserve two quarts of manna as a testimony to future generations about God's miraculous provision for His

people in the wilderness. Two quarts constituted the daily ration for one individual (see 16:16). Typically the manna would not last, melting as the sun rose (see 16:21). Anything made from the manna became rancid by the next morning (see 16:20). However, the manna set aside as a permanent testimony to God's provision would never spoil. This preservation was yet another miracle of God.

16:33. Moses instructed Aaron to place two quarts of manna in a container. Aaron probably used a clay jar as a container, although the manna was later transferred to a gold container (see Heb. 9:4). Moses also instructed Aaron to place the container of manna in a place where it would be before the Lord yet also constantly remind the people of God's care.

16:34. The statement that Aaron placed the container of manna before the testimony indicates the later location of the container in the ark of the covenant beside the second set of tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written (see Ex. 31:18; Heb. 9:4). Some Bible students suggest that when the Israelites later built the tabernacle and the objects that went inside it, they made a gold container to house the manna. Aaron could have moved the manna to the new container or perhaps gathered a new supply of manna to place in the container.