



EXODUS SERIES: FREEDOM TO LIVE

#5: BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW

August 5, 2018
Pastor Ted Vail

BIBLICAL TEXT

"Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites, and Aaron told them everything the Lord had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people, and they believed. And when they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.

Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.'"

Pharaoh said, "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."

Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword."

But the king of Egypt said, "Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!" Then Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working."

That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and overseers in charge of the people: "You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don't reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' Make the work harder for the people so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies."

Then the slave drivers and the overseers went out and said to the people, "This is what Pharaoh says: 'I will not give you any more straw. Go and get your own straw wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced at all.'" So the people scattered all over Egypt to gather stubble to use for straw. The slave drivers kept pressing them, saying, "Complete the work required of you for each day, just as when you had straw." And Pharaoh's slave drivers beat the Israelite overseers they had appointed, demanding, "Why haven't you met your quota of bricks yesterday or today, as before?"

Then the Israelite overseers went and appealed to Pharaoh: "Why have you treated your servants this way? Your servants are given no straw, yet we are told, 'Make bricks!' Your servants are being beaten, but the fault is with your own people."

Pharaoh said, "Lazy, that's what you are—lazy! That is why you keep saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.' Now get to work. You will not be given any straw, yet you must produce your full quota of bricks."

The Israelite overseers realized they were in trouble when they were told, "You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day." When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron waiting to meet them, and they said, "May the Lord look on you and judge you! You have made us obnoxious to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us."

Moses returned to the Lord and said, "Why, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble on this people, and you have not rescued your people at all."

(Exodus 4:29-5:23)

MESSAGE SUMMARY

At the end of Exodus 4, things are looking great. God sends Aaron to meet Moses. Together the two men head to Egypt where they share with the Israelites what God has said. The Israelites worship God together, celebrating that God has heard their cries. Moses goes before Pharaoh and asks that he let the people go. Not only does Pharaoh say no, he makes the Israelites work even harder. Though God does eventually come through for His people, this part of the story is a reminder to us that sometimes we will suffer, even if we're doing the right thing. God's ways are not our and sometimes His plan feels counterintuitive to us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you lead your group through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage and the speaker's message, helping them understand and apply the teaching.

LEAN IN

These are icebreaker/warm up questions, mostly just to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. Have you ever been unfairly punished for something someone else did?
2. Tell about a time you already had too much to do/too much going on and something else got added to your plate. What happened?
3. What is one thing that you're looking forward to this week? What's one that you are dreading?

LOOK DOWN

These are questions on the passage and observations about what's been read.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. What was the request Moses and Aaron made of Pharaoh in these verses? If Pharaoh would have honored the request, what would have been the result?
2. Compare the response of the people (the same people) in Exodus 4:29-31 and 5:19-21. How did their attitudes change and what caused that change?
3. What was Pharaoh's response to Moses and Aaron's request? What does this response reveal about Pharaoh?
4. Do you think Moses' response to God in Exodus 5:22-23 justified? Why or why not?

LOOK OUT

These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. What are some examples in our world today of how one person's actions can influence others, even if they don't realize it at the time?
2. Can you think of a situation (either in your own life, in the world at large, or in the life of someone you know) where things went from bad to worse? What happened in the end?
3. What can we learn about suffering from this passage?
4. In this story, God's plan is ultimately good, but it isn't very safe or pleasant all the time. The Israelites experience suffering while God is bringing about something good for them. What does it mean to you that God is good, but not safe? How does that change how you see the world?

LOOK IN

These are questions that help you consider personal application.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. Do you have an example of where something hard helped you to grow or had a better outcome than if everything had worked out perfectly?
2. Have you ever taken a step of faith and then things got worse? What happened?
3. How have you experienced God's "counterintuitive" ways in your life? How has God used less than easy or pleasant experiences to accomplish his purposes?
4. How can you encourage those who, like the Israelites in this story, are experiencing suffering, even though they are doing what God wants them to?
5. How can you praise God in the midst of suffering or a difficult situation?

LIVE IT OUT

These action steps help apply this week's message to day to day life.

Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. What's one thing you could do this week to live more confidently in God's call on your life instead of trying to live safely?
2. How can your group pray for you this week as you seek to see God at work in your life?