



Today's study comes with a warning: getting caught up in the details and missing the main point is easy. Sure, the Nile turning to blood, frogs filling beds and homes, hail and fire raining down from the sky, and the darkening of the sun are all fascinating. Still, if we're not careful, we forget that the purpose of Exodus is not for us to learn about plagues, Moses, Pharaoh, or the Hebrew people being rescued from Egypt. The main point of Exodus is to know God more today than we knew Him yesterday, more about His character, desires, and power. Everything we're about to read in chapters 9 and 10 goes back to a question in chapter 5. Moses and Aaron deliver the "let my people go" message to Pharaoh, and he responds with: "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?" (Exodus 5:2). Pharaoh's essentially saying, "This is Egypt. We have our gods. You have your God. Fine. Why in the world would you insist I should obey or listen to your God? The plagues are God's answer to that question. Each plague is God's dramatic display about why Pharaoh—the most powerful man on the planet—should obey Him. In doing so, these plagues reveal why we should obey Him, too.

Key Passage: Exodus 9:8 – 10:29

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways do the plagues in Exodus respond to Pharaoh's question, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?"
2. Why does it mean that the details of the plagues should not distract from the primary purpose of the book of Exodus? How do the plagues in Egypt relate to the modern question of "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?" in today's pluralistic culture?

Like America, Egypt was a pluralistic culture, which simply means that they had tons of gods that they worshipped. They were very spiritual people. When Pharaoh asks, "Who is the Lord?" he's not speaking as an atheist, "I don't believe your God exists." He's speaking as a pluralist. "This is Egypt. We have our gods. You have your God. Fine. Why in the world would you insist I should obey or listen to your God?" Studies show that in America, the percentage of atheists who would say there is no God is rapidly declining, and the number of people who are "spiritual" is increasing. But the overall mentality is, "You've got your faith, I've got mine." We're all good if your God doesn't try to oversee MY life. It's the same question: "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?"

3. What role do the false gods of Egypt play in the narrative, and how does God systematically challenge their authority through the plagues?

Remember, Egypt was a pluralistic culture, and the Egyptians were known for trusting all sorts of gods. As we read through these chapters in Exodus, it can feel like the plagues are random, but they aren't. These plagues are a demonstration of God's power and the powerlessness of false gods. If the only thing God wanted to do was rescue His people, He could have done that much quicker than sending

plagues. He could have just gone for the jugular right away. But He doesn't! Instead, which is amazing, He methodically goes to battle with all these other "gods" to show Israel and Egypt that He alone is the only God worthy of putting their trust in.

4. What is the significance of God wanting the whole world to know who He is, even in the midst of delivering judgment through the plagues?

God wants the whole world to know who He is! He alone is the creator. He alone is the giver of life. He alone is the source of security. He alone is sovereign over all things! The plagues are God's pursuit of His people, but it was also His pursuit of the world. Even in His judgment, He is pursuing their hearts – aiming to rescue them from the futility of false hope in false gods.

5. How do the gods of ancient Egypt correlate to modern-day idols that people might worship, such as success, family, health, security, and control?

No doubt there are those of us who are on the treadmill of success and approval, thinking that's what will make us happy. Some of us could readily admit that our god is our kids. For some, our health and physical appearance constantly command our attention. For others, we do whatever we must to feel secure about our future. For some, it's power or control. You want to control all the areas of your life and think that if you can control your situation, everything will be okay. God has brought you here today to show you lovingly- these are false gods that are unworthy of your trust! Wealth will come and go. Kids will come and go. Health will come and go. The approval of others will come and go. Control will come and go. None of these can provide joy and peace. Only YAHWEH, the creator of all things, is worthy of your trust and obedience. And he is deserving of all of it!

6. Why is negotiating with God, not true obedience? What consequences might come from a half-hearted surrender to God?

In Exodus 10:24, we see Pharaoh trying to deal with God like you would a car salesperson when it comes to obedience to God's commands. Yikes. "Then Pharaoh called Moses and said, 'Go, serve the LORD; your little ones also may go with you; only let your flocks and your herds remain behind.'" First, there were no women and children, and now there is no livestock. He's bartering with God, but God never relents. Make notes of this: Negotiating with God is not obedience. Some of us are in a season of negotiating with God right now. We're half-heartedly obeying Him and hoping that will suffice. Here's the truth: You'll never experience the freedom and joy God offers if you're trying to negotiate with Him. If God calls you to do something, it's for your good. Why would you fight the One who knows you better than anyone else and knows what's best for you? He alone is worthy of your trust and affection!

7. In what ways does the text highlight God's patience and desire for repentance, and how does the concept of godly grief leading to repentance apply to our lives today?

There is no denying that the plagues we're looking at today are a resounding judgment against Pharaoh and the Egyptians. For 400 years, they brutally oppressed the Israelites. For 400 years, they had given all of themselves to false Gods when the true God was in their midst. And now judgment was here. Four hundred years shows a lot of patience on God's part. No doubt the people of Israel who were waiting and believed He was showing too much patience, but let's remember this about God's character: "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

8. What's one personal takeaway from today's study you can focus on this week?