



January 19–20, 2013
Exodus 21-24
“Little by Little”
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So far in the book of Exodus, we’ve learned that the Israelites have been slaves in Egypt for 400 years. Their cry for deliverance was heard and answered by God. Through a series of ten plagues, God used Moses to be their deliverer. In the third month of their journey from Egypt to Israel, they came to the base of Mt. Sinai, in the Sinai Desert.¹ It was at Mt. Sinai that God spoke the Ten Commandments in the hearing of the people, and they were etched in stone by God’s own finger. The Israelites remained at Mt. Sinai for one more year, but it wasn’t an easy-going, “let’s have a picnic” time, to be sure. In fact, it was a year of intensive training. As slaves in Egypt, they didn’t know much about God; only what was verbally handed down to them. They had no temple or Scriptures, nor did they have a clue as to how to approach God or how to behave as his people.

It was exactly for these reasons that God was going to help them know him better through a series of instructions. As we will see in this and other studies to come in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, God provided the Israelites with additional laws and statutes, along with his judgments for breaking them. The Ten Commandments were the summary of God’s moral code, and these instructions provided the details behind each commandment.

The Israelites received instructions on building a mobile sanctuary (the Tabernacle), the priesthood (who is qualified, etc.), and the Feasts and Sacrifices. In doing all of this, God painted a picture of Jesus Christ, which is an important point for us to understand. We need to be reminded that the Bible is a book about Jesus, in both the Old and New Testaments.² We will see Jesus through the wilderness wanderings, the details of the

¹ Throughout the rest of the books of Exodus and Leviticus, the Israelites are encamped at Mt. Sinai.

² Graham Scroggie, a well-known Scottish preacher of the early 20th century, once said, “Cut the Bible anywhere and it bleeds.”

Tabernacle, the priesthood, as well as the Feasts and Sacrifices. Every detail points ultimately to Jesus!

In this study we'll learn how God guides with his law, how he guards with his presence, and how he grows his people little by little.

God Guides People With His Law

1. People need to know what God considers to be right and wrong.
2. If people know God's standard, they will be able to align themselves with those standards, and live their life by God's rules.
3. Every civilized society must have a set of laws to govern its citizens, and, hopefully, those laws are not oppressive or inhumane.
4. Our legal system was adapted from the Bible by our Founding Fathers.
5. Even though it seems like our nation is straying further and further away from a biblically sound system of laws, much of the freedom and responsibility we enjoy has been shaped and guided by biblical principles.
 - a. [Exodus 21:12-14](#)
 - i. 2nd degree murder (v. 12)
 - ii. Involuntary manslaughter (v. 13)
 - iii. 1st degree murder (v. 14)
 - b. [Exodus 21:18-19](#)
 - i. Compensation must be given to people for lost wages.
 - c. [Exodus 21:33-34](#)
 - i. Laws concerning negligence.
 - d. [Exodus 22:14](#)
 - i. Laws concerning borrowed items.
 - e. [Exodus 22:21-24](#)
 - i. Laws concerning God's care for foreigners, widows, and orphans.
 - f. [Exodus 23:1-2](#)
 - i. God's instruction to avoid following others who are in the "wrong crowd."
6. When you follow the Lord, there will be many times when you find that you will have to stand alone, as well as experience times of loneliness and isolation.
 - a. [Jeremiah 15:17](#) - *"I never sat in the company of revelers, never made merry with them; I sat alone because your hand was on me..."*

- b. [1 Corinthians 15:33](#) - *“Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’ ”*
 - c. [1 Peter 4:3-5](#) - *“For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do - living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”*
7. God gave the Israelites a word of encouragement in [Exodus 23:20-33](#), by letting them know that he would guard them and grow them in their relationship with him on their way to the Promised Land.³
- a. [Genesis 15:18](#)⁴ tells us that these are the same borders that God told Abraham about 600 years earlier.
 - b. Israel only occupied about 8,130 square miles of the 5.2 million square miles occupied by Arab nations!
8. In [Exodus 23:20](#) we read that God sent an angel ahead of them to guard them and bring them to the place he had prepared for them.
9. This “angel” has three unique characteristics that need to be mentioned.
- a. He is to be obeyed.
 - i. [Exodus 23:21a](#) - *“Pay attention and listen to what he says.”*
 - b. He has the power to forgive sin.
 - i. [Exodus 23:21b](#) - *“Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion...”*
 - c. He bears the name of God.
 - i. [Exodus 23:21c](#) - *“... since my Name is in him.”*
10. [Exodus 23:21](#) is a description of Jesus.
- a. Scholars call this a Christophany, which is an appearance of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, before he came into the world through the virgin birth.
 - i. Examples of times in the Old Testament when Jesus took on a human or angelic appearance for specific reasons, include:
 - 1. In [Genesis 18-19](#), we see that Jesus was one of the three visitors to Abraham before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed.
 - 2. In [Genesis 32:30](#), we see that Jesus was the one who wrestled with Jacob.

³ The territory God originally desired for Israel to occupy was supposed to be *“from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines [Mediterranean], from the desert to the River [Euphrates].”* ([Exodus 23:31](#))

⁴ *“On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates...’”*

3. In [Joshua 5](#), we see that Jesus appeared to Joshua as a man with a drawn sword who was *“the commander of the Lord’s army.”*
- b. The Bible tells us that Jesus has always existed, being co-equal and co-eternal with God as God.
 - i. The Mormons are in error when they claim that Jesus is the spirit brother of Lucifer.
 - ii. The Jehovah’s Witnesses are in error when they claim that Jesus is the archangel Michael.
- c. In the New Testament, Jesus is the Son of God, who can forgive sins, and is God’s salvation.
 - i. [Mark 9:7](#) - *“Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: ‘This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!’ ”*
 - ii. [Mark 2:5](#) - *“When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’ ”*
 - iii. [Matthew 1:21](#) - *“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, [Yehoshua, means salvation] because he will save his people from their sins.”*

God Guards His People With His Presence

11. [Deuteronomy 31:8](#) - *“The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”*
12. [Matthew 28:20](#) - *“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*
13. [Exodus 23:28-30](#) - *“I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way. But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land.”*

God Grows His People Little By Little

14. God doesn’t do everything at one time; he does things little by little.
15. He takes us through the maturing process in a way that takes time and cannot be rushed.

16. It's his design and plan that we don't learn every lesson overnight, and because this is true, we aren't spared from the heartaches and difficulties of life.
17. The Christian life is not a sprint; it's a marathon.
18. As time goes by, God does a "weeding" in our lives, so that little by little he mature us to be more Christ-like.
19. In [2 Timothy 2:3-6](#), Paul likens the Christian life to a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer.
 - a. In this Scripture, God emphasizes the need for endurance, discipline, and patience in the life of Believers.

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Have you ever felt like the Hebrews, thinking that the Bible is too complicated, church services don't make sense, and you don't know what makes God mad, sad, or glad?
3. How has the Lord helped you grow in these areas?
4. Review the Scriptures in #5a-5f above prior to talking about the ways our nation has moved away from the biblical principles our Founding Fathers used as the basis for our legal system.
5. Are you a rule follower or do you tend to dislike rules and regulations?
6. How have you experienced a lack of structure create situations of chaos, confusion and anarchy?
7. Read [Jeremiah 15:17](#), and allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they stood by themselves for the Lord.
 - a. How did you deal with feelings of isolation and loneliness?
8. Read and discuss [1 Corinthians 15:33](#) and [1 Peter 4:3-5](#).
 - i. Allow the people in the group to share examples of times when they had to deal with the consequences of "*bad company [corrupting] good character.*"

- ii. How have people reacted to your commitment to live for the Lord?
 - iii. How do you explain the fact that the things you used to do before you came to know the Lord are no longer part of your life?
 - iv. How did you respond to people when they labeled you a member of the “Holier-than -thou” club?
 - b. How did the Lord minister to you during these times?
 - c. What did the Lord teach you about following him?
- 9. Spend time talking about [Deuteronomy 31:8](#), [Matthew 28:20](#), and [Exodus 23:28-30](#).
 - a. Share examples of times when you had a great sense of the Lord's guarding presence in your life.
- 10. How has your relationship grown since you came to know him personally?
 - a. Was there a slow and steady growth, or did you experience a radical change?
- 11. Read and discuss [2 Timothy 2:3-6](#).
 - a. In what ways have you seen having endurance, discipline, and patience bring a dividend, so to speak, from the Lord?
- 12. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: ask the Lord to help them develop endurance, discipline and patience as they walk with him; see how God guides them with his law, guards them with his presence, and grows them little by little.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).