God Delivers His People

Summary and Goal
God had heard the cries of His people and delivered them from bondage in Egypt through a series of ten plagues, culminating in the death of the firstborn sons of Egypt throughout the land. In this session, we will follow the Israelites as God leads them out of Egypt and through—not around—the Red Sea. As we see God leading His people with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, we will be reminded that God, by His Spirit, fills us, empowers us, and leads us still. We will also note that despite seeing supernatural acts of God, the Israelites continued to doubt Him, much like we are prone to do today.

Session Outline
1. God delivers His people through His guidance (Ex. 13:17-22).
2. God delivers His people for His glory (Ex. 14:1-4).
3. God delivers His people through His power (Ex. 14:13-14,21-22,26-28).

Session in a Sentence
God proves He is worthy of praise through who He is and what He has done to deliver His people.

Christ Connection
God made a way of deliverance for His people through the Red Sea. In a similar manner, God made a way of deliverance for us by sending His Son, Jesus. Through faith in Jesus we are saved from sin and death.

Missional Application
Because we have been delivered from sin through salvation in Jesus, we praise Him at all times, showing others that God is of utmost worth so that they too might be compelled to trust in Him and be saved from their sin.
Group Time

Introduction

READ the following paragraph in the DDG (p. 65).

In the spring of 1940, during World War II, a large force of British and French soldiers became trapped in the coastal town of Dunkirk, France. The advancing German army had them surrounded on land while the English Channel halted their retreat. But then, between May 26 and June 4, the unthinkable happened. More than eight hundred military and civilian vessels of all kinds made the dangerous run to Dunkirk to evacuate as many troops as possible. In the end, around 338,000 men were rescued—the original estimate was 45,000 men at most. The Allies still suffered a great loss in soldiers and resources, but the army survived to fight another day—a turning point for the war.¹

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

¿ Why are we captivated by stories of escape or of people overcoming great odds? (we have an innate desire to cheer for underdogs; such stories often reveal the nobility of having been made in the image of God; we like to see ourselves in these stories)

SAY: As we read the Book of Exodus, we can see ourselves in this story. Like the Israelites, all of humanity is enslaved, only by sin. They needed deliverance—rescue—from outside of themselves. They needed a deliverer, and so do we. For the Israelites in Exodus, God raised up Moses, one of their own born in Egypt, to lead His people out of slavery. For our rescue, God sent Jesus, born as a human, to lead us out of slavery to sin.

SUMMARIZE: In this session, we will follow the Israelites as God leads them out of Egypt and through—not around—the Red Sea. As we see God leading His people, we will be reminded that God, by His Spirit, fills us, empowers us, and leads us still. We will also note that despite seeing supernatural acts of God, the Israelites continued to doubt Him, much like we are prone to do today.

For additional teaching options and other resources, please visit www.GospelProject.com/additional-resources.
**Point 1: God delivers His people through His guidance (Ex. 13:17-22).**

**READ** Exodus 13:17-22 (DDG p. 66).

17 When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them along the road to the land of the Philistines, even though it was nearby; for God said, “The people will change their minds and return to Egypt if they face war.” 18 So he led the people around toward the Red Sea along the road of the wilderness. And the Israelites left the land of Egypt in battle formation.

19 Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, because Joseph had made the Israelites swear a solemn oath, saying, “God will certainly come to your aid; then you must take my bones with you from this place.”

20 They set out from Succoth and camped at Etham on the edge of the wilderness. 21 The LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to lead them on their way during the day and in a pillar of fire to give them light at night, so that they could travel day or night. 22 The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night never left its place in front of the people.

**EXPLAIN** the significance of how God chose to lead the people as they left Egypt.

- Instead of using Moses for this purpose, God chose to lead the Israelites Himself by going ahead of the people in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. There would be no mistake that they were precisely where God wanted them to be, even when their journey took them in unexpected directions.

- The Israelites followed the Lord and set out in battle formation, but they would not raise a sword or hurl a spear for some time. God chose an irregular route for His people because He knew they were not ready for war.

**Commentary:** God had delivered His people from Egypt as He had promised. Rescuing them from bondage, however, was just the first part of His plan; now it was time to return the people to the land He had promised to Abraham and his descendants (Ex. 3:8). Joseph had brought Jacob’s family from that land to Egypt four hundred and thirty years earlier. Now it was time for the patriarch’s descendants to go home. In keeping with Joseph’s last wishes (Gen. 50:24-25), they took his bones with them to bury him in the promised land.

**INTERACT:** Ask group members the following question.

What can we learn of God’s heart for His people in how and where He guided them? (God wanted His people to know He was with them always; God was concerned about the people’s psychological and emotional well-being; God is kind)

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EXPLAIN: Connect the Israelites’ experience with how we as God’s people today are guided by the Holy Spirit and the Bible.

- God guided His people in a tangible way in the pillar of cloud and fire, but God’s people today are guided by a greater means: the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God lives in Christians, opening our eyes and hearts toward Him and conforming us to the image of the Son. This is the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead, and this Spirit empowers us to walk a faithful journey through life. God is with us.

- God is with us to guide us in another way as well: through the Bible. God has spoken to us in His Word and revealed all we need to know about Him and to live faithfully as His people. The Spirit within us illuminates the Scriptures to help us understand them.

READ the following paragraph in the DDG (p. 66).

It would be fascinating to see what the pillars of cloud and fire looked like and be guided by them, but God is ever-present with His people and continues to guide us today—He just does so in a better way. We can’t forget that the same God who led His people out of slavery in Egypt is the same God we follow today. Through Jesus and by His Spirit, God leads us out of slavery to sin, crushing the enemy of Satan, and then He dwells within us, in our hearts, leading us and guiding us every step of the way.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

What are some ways we can be more in tune with God’s guidance through the Spirit and Scripture? (we can pray constantly; we can immerse ourselves in God’s Word on a daily basis; we can commit to regular attendance with the gathering of God’s people in worship and Bible study; we can fellowship with God’s people during the week for encouragement and support in the faith)
**Point 2: God delivers His people for His glory**  
(Ex. 14:1-4).

**READ** Exodus 14:1-4 (DDG p. 67).

1 Then the **Lord** spoke to Moses: 2 “Tell the Israelites to turn back and camp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you must camp in front of Baal-zephon, facing it by the sea. 3 Pharaoh will say of the Israelites: They are wandering around the land in confusion; the wilderness has boxed them in. 4 I will harden Pharaoh’s heart so that he will pursue them. Then I will receive glory by means of Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the **Lord**.” So the Israelites did this.

**PACK ITEM 8: THE EXODUS MAP:** Use this map poster and the information below to show how God led the Israelites in such a way that Pharaoh would decide they were easy prey and pursue them. Then use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 67) to highlight how this was all part of God’s plan to receive glory through them.

- The Israelites had set out from Egypt in an unexpected way. Instead of heading toward their promised homeland, they took an indirect route and remained within Egypt’s borders, hemmed in by the wilderness. The news reached Pharaoh that the Israelites had turned back and camped in the worst possible place. They were boxed in—trapped.

- Pharaoh probably thought the Israelites were inept and that their God had either abandoned them or had betrayed them. It was time to act. It was time to avenge his son and all of the others who had perished on that terrible night. He would lead his army—one of the mightiest in the world—out to where the Israelites were camped, where they were trapped, and he would crush them.

God was not just guiding His people as they left Egypt, He was also guiding Pharaoh and the Egyptians. God’s sovereign hand was at work to bring what He willed to pass, as He always does. Pharaoh would indeed march his forces out to a victory, but it would not be his victory. Neither would it be Israel’s victory. It would be the Lord’s.

**FILL IN THE BLANKS:** Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 67).

God acts for His own **glory** and for the **good** of His people.
EXPLAIN how this moment God had orchestrated would work for His glory and the good of His people.

• The Israelites couldn’t see what God was doing. We read later that as the Egyptian army approached, God’s people cried out in terror to Him for help—help they didn’t believe would come. They thought they would have been better off to remain in Egypt as slaves than to die in the wilderness (Ex. 14:10-12). But God wanted Egypt to boast, because it would be through the helplessness of His people and the pride and strength of their enemies that He would make His glory known to all. Everyone—Israelites and Egyptians alike—would know that He alone is God. God had revealed Himself to the Egyptians in the plagues and demonstrated how He was superior to their false gods, and He was about to proclaim His might and glory to them once again.

• At the same time, the Israelites’ journey was far from over. Escaping Egypt was only the beginning. God knew that they had to continue on toward the promised land, a land that was not barren but inhabited by other nations with strong armies and fortified cities. So in the victory God would give His people, He would show them His power. For the good of His people, He would close the door on their past with Egypt and would give them what they needed to continue to follow Him in faith.

READ the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 67).

God overflows with love and care for His people and the nations, so He works all things together for their good (Rom. 8:28). For this reason, God orchestrated this clash with Egypt’s army, that the Israelites would see His power and goodness on their behalf. But that was not the only reason, nor the primary reason. God told Moses, and us, that He worked in this way so that He would be glorified. These two truths are not opposed to one another. God seeks His glory, so He loves His image bearers and works for our good. May God’s love for us, and our love given Him in response, drive us and those around us to experience the glory of our good God.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

How has God shown His love for us that we should seek His glory? (God has given us everything we need, so we should be grateful and praise Him for His blessings to us; God has given us His Son, Jesus, to save us from our sin; God has taken difficult and painful circumstances in our lives and redeemed them for our good and the good of others)
**Point 3: God delivers His people through His power (Ex. 14:13-14,21-22,26-28).**

**SAY:** In a moment, the Israelites’ praises of God for freeing them from Egypt gave way to accusations that they were better off in Egypt (Ex. 14:10-12). The people of God were slow to learn what God had been teaching them through the plagues, but God was about to give them an unforgettable lesson.

**READ:** Ask three volunteers to read Exodus 14:13-14,21-22,26-28, one for each section (DDG p. 68).

13 But Moses said to the people, “Don’t be afraid. Stand firm and see the Lord’s salvation that he will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians you see today, you will never see again. 14 The Lord will fight for you, and you must be quiet.”

21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back with a powerful east wind all that night and turned the sea into dry land. So the waters were divided, 22 and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with the waters like a wall to them on their right and their left.

26 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the water may come back on the Egyptians, on their chariots and horsemen.” 27 So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea returned to its normal depth. While the Egyptians were trying to escape from it, the Lord threw them into the sea. 28 The water came back and covered the chariots and horsemen, plus the entire army of Pharaoh that had gone after them into the sea. Not even one of them survived.

**EXPLAIN:** Point out that when all seemed lost to the Israelites, God provided the way of escape, not around their obstacle but through it—the Israelites passed through the sea on dry ground. Then use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 68) to show that God fights for His people even when they doubt His commitment to them, comparing the Israelites’ attitude with ours.

When we are honest, we have to admit that we are no different from the Israelites camped by the Red Sea. We have looked around in fear of our situation, accused God of forsaking us, and given up hope. And yet, what was God’s response? He always fights for His people. He never abandons them, and He is not powerless.

**FILL IN THE BLANKS:** Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 68).

**God Is Omnipotent:** God has power and authority over the universe He created. As Christians, we rest in the belief that the God who has all power is **good**, and we gain great **comfort** by knowing that an all-powerful God is **working** for our good and joy.
Essential Doctrine “God Is Omnipotent”: God is all-powerful; there is nothing God cannot do so long as it does not contradict His own nature or law. God has power and authority over the universe He created, from the largest solar system to the smallest particle. Affirming that God is all-powerful does not mean that God can sin—since that would go against His perfect moral nature. As Christians, we rest in the belief that the God who has all power is good, and we gain great comfort by knowing that an all-powerful God is working for our good and joy.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

? How have you seen God work in your life to lead you through a trial instead of protect you from it? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

READ the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 68).

If we miss the story of the unfolding of God’s plan throughout history to establish His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, we can actually miss the gospel, at least parts of it. What God has done helps us see what He is doing and what He will do. The Old Testament helps us understand the New Testament better. God’s salvation of the Israelites in the exodus is a shadow of the greater salvation that would come in Christ.

EXPLAIN: Note the parallels between God’s rescue of the Israelites and the gospel: The Lord delivered a people from slavery, destroyed their enemy, and then dwelled with them as they made their way toward the promised land. This is a picture of the gospel, of rescue from death to life, of the birth of a new people, of God drawing His people out of darkness and into the light of His presence. We could even go as far as to say that the exodus narrative, including the crossing of the Red Sea, functions as an early gospel.

Commentary: At the Red Sea, we are reminded of God’s distinct activity throughout Scripture: the way He uses water to bring about judgment, cleansing, and thus, redemption. He takes His people safely through water, out of a miserable state, and rescues them. Noah’s ark, Moses’ basket, the parting of the Red Sea, the crossing of the Jordan River, and Jonah’s three days in the fish—these are all examples of God delivering through water. God has given us these stories in Scripture for our instruction, so that we may have a better understanding of the deliverance we have been given in Christ. A deliverance that looked just as impossible—even more so—as the Israelites’ deliverance from the closing vise of Egypt’s army and the Red Sea. A deliverance where God made the impossible possible, rescuing us from the clutches of sin and death through the sacrifice of His Son.
My Mission

EXPLAIN: As we read the exodus account, we are swept up into the greater drama of Scripture: the story of salvation. How God acts in the Book of Exodus for the Israelites reveals His divine purposes in history: to liberate His people from slavery and lead them into the land of rest. In Exodus, the slavery was to the Egyptians, and the land of rest was the physical land God had promised to Abraham and his descendants. In the bigger story of Scripture, we see that we are enslaved to sin and Christ leads us into the “rest” of salvation in Him. Not only does Exodus help us better understand the gospel, but the gospel helps us better understand Exodus.

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 69), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God’s Word.

Because we have been delivered from sin through salvation in Jesus, we praise Him at all times, showing others that God is of utmost worth so that they too might be compelled to trust in Him and be saved from their sin.

- How will you respond in faith to the one true, all-powerful God of the exodus and the Son given to save us from our sin?
- In what ways can we demonstrate God’s power to the unbelieving community around us?
- How will you share the way of escape God has provided in Christ with someone you know to be enslaved by sin and the fear of death?

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Father, You demonstrated Your power by delivering Your people from Egypt through the Red Sea, and You further demonstrated Your power in delivering us from sin through the death and resurrection of Your Son. You are worthy of our praise for who You are, for what You have done, and for what You do. Help us to live for Your glory as we point people to the redemption found in Jesus Christ. Amen.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the Daily Study devotions in their DDG (pp. 70-72), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use Encourage One Another (p. 73) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God’s Word.
Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage your group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The Daily Study devotions in the DDG (pp. 70-72) will help group members get into God's Word and study it for themselves. Encourage One Another (p. 73) will help group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 70-72) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.

- Share the following idea from the devotion for Day 5 as a part of point 2 in the session: We need to fight to worship God without ceasing—in the “highs” of life as well as the “lows.” This is our goal: to respond properly to God’s day-by-day, minute-by-minute acts of grace and mercy in our lives.

Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God’s Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- **Day 1:** “All acts of God’s deliverance have pointed toward a greater rescue—the one from sin and death that was to come through Christ.”

- **Day 3:** “God gives us opportunities each day to show those around us how beautiful and amazing He is, to show an unbelieving world the gospel.”

Visit [www.GospelProject.com/Blog](http://www.GospelProject.com/Blog) for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God’s Word.

Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the group member’s DDG (p. 73) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using The Gospel Project in their groups.

- **Encourage group members to challenge each other to live by faith and to praise God at all times and in all circumstances.**

- See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.
Additional Commentary

**Point 1: God delivers His people through His guidance (Ex. 13:17-22).**

“The Lord went before them. It has already been pointed out that throughout the early history of this nation, just come out of an idolatrous land, and too ready to lapse back into superstition, God never reveals Himself except in fire. To Abraham and to Jacob He appeared in human form, and again to Joshua; but in the interval, never. So now they see Him by day in a pillar of cloud to guide them on the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light. The glory of the nation was that manifested Presence, lacking which, Moses besought Him to carry them up no farther. Nothing in the Exodus is more impressive, and it sank deep into the national heart. Many centuries afterwards, the ideal of a golden age was that the Lord should create over the whole habitation of Mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud of smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night (Isa. 4:5).”

“The road of the wilderness would take Israel east into the Sinai Peninsula, to the Wilderness of Shur (15:22; cp. 1 Sam. 15:7). ‘Wilderness’ describes uninhabited areas with varying amounts of water and pasturage, depending on the area and the time of year. The description of the Israelites leaving in battle formation uses a rare word (Josh. 1:14; 4:12; ‘troops’ in Judg. 7:11) and seems contrary to the Lord’s assessment. Perhaps there is irony to be recognized in the discrepancy between outward and inward readiness.”

“Moses also takes the bones of Joseph with him, keeping the oath the Israelites had sworn to Joseph just before he died (13:19; Gen. 50:24-25). Joseph trusted that God would keep his promise to give the descendants of Abraham the promised land and assured the Israelites that they would one day leave Egypt. But perhaps because Joseph was a national hero in Egypt, or even because he was still a slave when he died, the Egyptians would not allow him to be buried in Canaan as he and his brothers had buried Jacob. So he asked the Israelites to carry my bones with them when they left.”

**Point 2: God delivers His people for His glory (Ex. 14:1-4).**

“Fear not. At the crucial point of Israel’s deliverance they must see that their salvation is entirely God’s work. His judgments on Egypt, His hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, His leading Israel to this hopeless impasse, pinned between Pharaoh’s chariots and the sea—all prepare for the climactic display of His saving power. The Lord will fight for them; they need only be still. He will gain the glory (14:18).”
“God’s final victory over the Egyptians and their stubborn Pharaoh at the Red Sea can be said to be like an eleventh plague. Many of the same themes that were heard over and over again in the earlier account of the plagues resurface here: the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart (14:4a,17), the use of Moses’ staff (14:16,21,26-27), the contrast between the suffering of the Egyptians and the deliverance of the Israelites (14:20,28-29) and God’s insistence that he is taking action so that the Egyptians will know I am the Lord (14:4b,18).”

Point 3: God delivers His people through His power (Ex. 14:13-14,21-22,26-28).

“The command Don’t be afraid, given as a word from the Lord to his people or an affirmation of confidence before battle, has many parallels (Num. 21:34; Deut. 1:21,29; 3:2,22; Josh. 8:1; 10:8,25; 2 Chron. 20:15,17; 32:7; Neh. 4:14). Moses gave no defense of himself but focused instead on what the Lord would accomplish. The words salvation (here and Ex. 15:2; Hebrew, yeshu'ah) and ‘saved’ (14:30) mark the instructions for the encounter with Egyptian forces, its summary, and its celebration. The ‘save’ word group in Hebrew (the root yasha') was applied in a variety of situations, often military ones, so that salvation took the form of victory (Deut. 20:1-4; Judg. 10:12-14; 2 Kings 19:32-35; Ps. 3) or rescue (Ex. 2:17). An earlier pharaoh was afraid that the Israelites might fight against Egypt (1:10), but something greater happened—the Lord fought for Israel and against Egypt (14:14,25).”

“This scene would prove significant in the memories of Israel as they recalled God’s mighty acts of salvation (Pss. 77:16-20; 78:13; 136:13-16). This was the final contest between the Lord and Pharaoh: did Pharaoh have power over Israel as their ruler or did the Lord have that power? The Lord tells Moses in advance what would happen … All of this signals that God is in control, ruling over events for his greater glory. He is the true King of Israel. Here is a profound foreshadowing of the effect of the cross and resurrection of Jesus. For at the climax of human history God redeems his people through the substitutionary death of Jesus and the shedding of his blood. God takes Jesus through the depths of the grave and raises him from the dead as a confirmation of that redemption. For those who have been united to Jesus, who have been ‘baptized into him,’ never again will we be brought back into slavery to sin, Satan, or death. God in Jesus has delivered us completely (Acts 2:22-36; Eph. 1:7-10; Rom. 1:1-5; 6:1-11; 1 Cor. 10:1-4).”

References
3. G. A. Chadwick, The Expositor’s Bible: The Book of Exodus (Georgetown, TX: WORDsearch, 2013) [WORDsearch].
The Books of Genesis and Exodus are meant to be read together, providing an important clue for our approach to the rest of Scripture. The story begins in Genesis and unfolds with breathtaking speed, but then the pace slows as the rest of the book tells us the story of four generations of the one family through which God promised to bring blessing to the world.

As Genesis winds down, we encounter Joseph, one of Abraham’s great grandsons, and see that God’s promises are not always easy for His people. But through Joseph’s difficulties, we encounter the vital concept of redemption. His life was one of setbacks, frustration, and disappointment. But all the while, we see that God was at work through Joseph’s adversity, not despite it. God brought about redemption for Joseph and his family: God is always bringing glory to Himself and good to His people through their hardships, even by overriding their sins.

Then as we move from Genesis to Exodus, we pass over nearly four hundred years to a time when God’s people are enslaved. The stage is set for an even greater display of God’s desire and ability to redeem His people. When they cry out to God for deliverance from their slavery in Egypt, He provides a rescuer in Moses to free His people and to provide for them.

God’s deliverance of Joseph and the nation of Israel were the early stages of a beautiful crescendo of God’s plan to redeem His people that culminated in Christ Jesus. In Him we have experienced redemption from the slavery of sin and death. As we study these sessions, let us pray that the Holy Spirit stirs our hearts anew so that we are captivated by the love, grace, and mercy of God made known to us in our redemption through Christ so we can share Him with others.
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