



christ church  
moreton



# **Exodus The mission of God**

Christ Church Small Groups  
Autumn 2022

## Dates

Study 1 – Passion	September 12
Study 2: Mercy	September 19
Study 3: Freedom	September 26
Prayer Meeting	October 5
Study 4. Salvation.	October 10
Study 5: Justice.	October 17
Study 6: Hope.	October 24
Prayer Meeting	November 2
Study 7: Worship.	November 7
Study 8: Community.	November 14

Home groups may choose to do all eight studies meeting every week except the week of Prayer Meeting. Alternatively, you may meet every other week dropping some of the studies, which are all standalone.

## Introduction to the mission of God

The story of the Exodus has all the ingredients of a blockbuster film confrontation, a battle between good and evil, a showdown between the hero and his nemesis and a decisive victory, with the potential for the special effects department to go to town.

But exodus is not just a good story, nor is it just the biography of the Prince of Egypt, amazing though Moses' story is. This is the story of the King of Heaven and his mission to call out a people faithful to his name and whose lives reflect his character.

The book of Exodus contributes foundational ideas for an understanding of a mission of God. It is not the only biblical source on God's mission, nor does it tell the whole story: but it is a rich, dramatic account of God's dealings with humanity, and as such has plenty to teach us. We approached the text as Christians, not as Jews, so we will look at a text in the light of Christ, asking what the death and resurrection of Jesus add to our understanding of what it means to be the people of God.

Our journey through Exodus will not be a systematic verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter exegesis. We will look at the realities of the mission of God as Moses discovered them. The heart of it all is God's passion and mercy, which is expressed in salvation and freedom: in response to this there is a call to a lifestyle of justice and hope and the whole is entrusted to the church as a 'cycle' in which worship and community both extend and fulfil God's mission. These eight key themes run through the texts like threads in a rich, multi coloured tapestry. They do not claim to be a comprehensive 'menu' of the mission of God. God's mission is wide. There really isn't anything outside its scope, so no list of eight words will ever do it justice. The eight themes we have chosen, though, do begin to give a flavour of the breadth and majesty of God's mission. We have selected them because they are important aspects of the mission of God, and because:

- They are all present and evident in the call of Moses and the subsequent events of the Exodus.
- They are all clearly present and evident in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.
- They are all relevant to the lives we lead in the contemporary world: not just for the leaders of churches and the strategists of mission, but for all of us as we work, rest and play in the light of God.

## Study 1 - Passion

**Aim:** to introduce the overall theme of these Bible studies - the Mission of God.

**To discover more of God's passion for his people and of our place in mission.**

God is passionate about the future he has for his people, and will act for their liberation and salvation. Exodus is a story of passion...

To set the scene.

In what context do we use the word 'mission' today? Think of characters in films, songs or examples from everyday life that talk about mission. Produce a group definition of the word 'mission'.

Read Exodus chapter 2: 23 - 3: 12

1. Tell the story of Moses up to this meeting with God at the burning bush - how did he get here? What relationship does he already have with God?
2. Moses may not have known much about God, but he is about to find out what God is like. Exodus 2: 23-25 uses four verbs for the way that God responds to the Israelites, what are they? What does this tell us about God's character?
3. In 1998, DreamWorks produced the animated film the Prince of Egypt, which tells the story of the Exodus. But is this story just about Moses?  
According to the Bible, who is the real hero of this story?
4. Theologians used term *Missio Dei* - the Mission of God, to capture this sense of God being a missionary. Can you think of other stories in the Bible where God takes initiative to seek out men and women?
5. What difference does it make to your perspective to see mission as first and foremost the Mission of God? What role does this give the church in mission?

6. The story of the Exodus fits into the bigger picture of the Bible. God tells Moses at the burning bush, 'I will be with you'. What is the ultimate expression of God with us?
7. Although mission is God's initiative, he involves his people in it. How had Moses' life so far prepared him for his role in God's plan? Did he feel equipped for the task?
8. What can you learn from Moses' story about finding the call of God in your life? Do you have a sense of vocation for your life, of how you can be involved in the Mission of God? What is your advice to others who are looking for a sense of calling?

*Once having the vision, the second step to holy obedience is this: Begin where you are. Obey now. Use what little obedience you are capable of, even if it be like a grain of mustard seed. Begin where you are.*

Thomas R. Kelly

## Homework

Sit down during the week and read the 1st 20 chapters of Exodus to remind yourself of how God sets his people free from oppression in Egypt. You could also watch a video of the Prince of Egypt. It helps makes some of the characters more real by showing the context in which they were living, but read the Bible version too to understand fully God's role in this great story.

## Study 2: Mercy

**Aim:** To understand more of what God is like by examining his actions, and in particular his mercy. God chooses to show mercy to his people, carrying them on Eagles wings to freedom. Exodus is a story of mercy...

### To set the scene

Choose a new name for yourself that says something about you. Borrow a first name from a well-known person with whom you share a skill or an attribute (or aspire to!) and a last name from someone else. You might be David Oliver a fantastic footballer who is also a good cook, or Anita Radcliffe, a shrewd businesswoman who excels at long distance running. See if others can guess why you have chosen these names. What names would you choose for each other?

### Read Exodus 3: 11 – 22

1. To the Hebrews, a name was more than just a label, what you called somebody. A name contained within itself the character of the person it belonged to, indicating who they really were. What do you think God's name "I AM WHO I AM" says about his character?
2. The name "I AM WHO I AM" also carries the sense of "I will be who I will be" – God's nature will be revealed by what He does. Compare God's promises to the Israelites in Exodus 3: 7-10 to the way pharaoh treats them in Exodus 5: 5-18. What does this tell us about God's character compared to Pharaoh's?
3. In the light of the New Testament and our place in history, what else does God's action in sending Jesus and Jesus' life, death and resurrection reveal about God's character? Has God stayed consistent to his name and nature as revealed in Exodus?
4. The prophet Hosea looks back on the Exodus in Hosea 11: 1, 4. He highlights the relationship God has with Israel, that God describes to Moses in Exodus 4: 22, 23. What is this relationship? Can you think of examples from Jesus' life and ministry that emphasise that this relationship is for us too?
5. Some people might say that God is being elitist in choosing only Israel to be his people. What do these passages say about how far his mercy extends (Genesis 12: 1-3, Exodus 9: 16, Exodus 12: 37, 38,

Matthew 28: 18-20, Acts 10: 34-36)? How would you answer that accusation of elitism?

6. God's mercy is expressed in his forgiveness of us. What difference has God's mercy and forgiveness made to your life?
7. Are there people you struggle to forgive to whom God might long to show mercy?
8. What new and different activities might you engage in if your definition of mission was "God using me to show his mercy"?

"Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that... Forgiveness does not mean ignoring what has been done or putting a false label on an evil act. It means, rather, that the evil act no longer remains a barrier to the relationship."

*Martin Luther King Jr.*

## Homework

Next week we will be looking at freedom. If you have time, read the story of the plagues again in Exodus 7 to 11. Make a note of your thoughts and feelings and bring it to the next session.

## Study 3: Freedom

**Aim:** to appreciate the freedom won for the Israelites in the Exodus and won for us by Jesus on the cross.

God is a Liberator who breaks the power of slavery and ends the oppression of his people. Exodus is a story of freedom...

To set the scene.

The Shawshank Redemption is the story of Andy Dufresne's time in prison. Sentenced to two life sentences for the murder of his wife and her lover, he maintains his innocence as he strives to retain his dignity and freedom, even in prison. And then one day, after 19 years in prison, and he doesn't emerge from his cell for the morning headcount - he has finally escaped. Watch the section of the film that shows Andy's epic journey to freedom. Would you be prepared to go to those lengths to be free? Who in our world most needs freedom at the moment?

Read Exodus 5: 1-4, Exodus 11: 1-10

1. The story of the plagues in Exodus isn't easy to understand for contemporary western readers. What were your thoughts on reading about the plagues?
2. God's desire to set his people free turns into a real battle with pharaoh. Look up the following verses and see how the battle develops:
  - The plague of blood - Exodus 7:22, 23.
  - Pharaoh's response to the plague of frogs - Exodus 8: 8, 15.
  - The Egyptian magicians - Exodus 8: 18, 19.
  - The Israelites and the plagues - Exodus 8: 22, 23.
  - Pharaoh's response to the plague of flies - Exodus 8: 25, 28, 32.
  - The plague of hail Exodus - 9 :18, 21.
  - Pharaoh's response to the plague of darkness - Exodus 10 :24-29.
  - Time to go - Exodus 12: 31-32.
3. the Bible continually says that the Lord hardened pharaoh's heart (see Exodus 9 :12, 10 :20). Does this mean that God was prolonging the battle and that pharaoh might have let the Israelites go earlier if God had not intervened?



4. The Israelites are in a battle to be free from slavery and oppression - they need political and social liberation. But what else is this battle about. Read Ephesians 6: 10-12.
5. Once again, God's liberation of the Israelites from Egypt is a foretaste of the freedom won for us by Jesus on the cross. What has Jesus set us free from? (See Colossians 2: 13-15 and Hebrews 9: 11-15 for example.)
6. As we have seen God won freedom for the Israelites and those who chose to go with them, in order to give the whole earth a chance to taste his salvation. But the freedom Jesus won on the cross goes even further than every person on the planet. What else will be liberated according to Romans 8: 18-21?
7. Paul reminds the Galatians that they are to enjoy the freedom that Christ has won for them - Galatians 5:1, 13, 14. And tells the Romans that they are slaves to righteousness - Romans 6: 15-23. How can you reconcile these two ideas?
8. The type of freedom that God won for the Israelites - social, political and spiritual - demonstrates the type of complete freedom he longs to bring to all people who are oppressed and in bondage. Do you think the church still carries that holistic view of freedom, or do we tend to emphasise one aspect over another? How can we make sure that our involvement in the mission of God brings a holistic freedom to people?

“Jesus Christ, God’s son, became a slave, that we who were spiritually enslaved might become sons. Are we living like slaves or like sons?”

*Mark Stebbe*

## Homework

Make a note during the week of every time you are offered something “free” - it could be a “buy one get one free” offer at a supermarket, or a free trial of a magazine as long as you sign a direct debit form. What is the motivation behind these offers? How do they compare with the freedom God gives? If they don't match up, spend time thanking God for the nature of the freedom he gives!

## Study 4. Salvation.

**Aim:** to understand how to salvation of the Israelites from Egypt is a foretaste of salvation we experience in Christ. God takes action for the rescue of his people: it is by his initiative alone that they are saved. Exodus is a story of salvation...

### To set the scene.

How did you become a Christian? Can you remember a distinct date, or did it happen over a period of time? Was it recently or a long time go? Was it a dramatic event or gradual realisation of God's love? If you are happy to do so share your story but keep it to two minutes. That's 120 seconds.

1. Picture the scene. The Israelites are on their night-time flight from Egypt when they suddenly realised the Egyptians are coming after them. They are trapped between the desert and the sea, caught like frightened rabbits in the glare of a car's headlights. Read what Moses says to them in Exodus 14: 13, 14. What central truth about salvation do these words reveal?
2. What have the Israelites been saved from? Exodus 2: 23-25, 5: 2. What have they been saved into - what has changed at the result of their escape from Egypt? Exodus 3: 17, 4: 22, 23
3. God promise salvation to the Israelites from the first time he spoke to Moses. But it was a while before they received it. What parallels can you see between the Israelites struggle to be free from Egypt and the way somebody might experience God's salvation today?
4. Christians are people of the cross. Whatever we see in the Exodus story of a God who saves, we see more fully in the cross of Christ. Read 2 Corinthians 5: 17-21. What does Paul say has been accomplished through the cross?
5. Israel received salvation and was also given the task of carrying salvation to other nations. The first Christians were instrumental in bringing thousands to Christ. Paul counted himself as an ambassador for Christ. It seems that we cannot accept God's offer of salvation and then reject his call to mission. How do you feel about that? How effective an ambassador are you?

6. God's salvation is available to all: there is no other way that people can be saved. This is an essential truth of the Christian faith - perhaps the most offensive thing about Christianity to those outside the faith, especially in our culture that prizes tolerant relativism - they believe that all faiths are equally valid and there is no such thing as universal truth. How can we relate to people of other faiths and no faith, without compromising our beliefs, but without being arrogant and divisive?
7. The salvation that the Israelites experienced was physical as well as spiritual; their circumstances changed and they were set free from slavery and oppression. What might salvation look like for each of these people below? Will it have an impact on their circumstances and actions, or just be a spiritual change?
  - a. Millie is a student, studying philosophy at university. She will be heavily in debt by the time she graduates.
  - b. Stella and Pete have been living together for several years. They have two young children and have brought a house together.
  - c. Steve runs his own business creating advertising signs for companies. He works long hours and employs other people.
  - d. Dave has an alcohol dependency. He has struggled to hold down a job and is currently living on benefits.
8. God told the Hebrews to tell their children the stories of their faith - how they came into being and how God freed them from Egypt. This would enable the next generation to know who they were and how they should live. Where and how do we pass our stories of faith on to the next generation? What about the children outside our communities - where do they hear the stories of what God has done?

## Homework.

When you stop to look, you can see the sign of a cross 'hidden' all over the place - in the panelling of a door, in the framework of a window, in the branches of a tree. This week, every time you see a 'hidden' cross, pause for a moment to reflect on the victory of Christ on the cross and the difference it makes to your life.

## Study 5: Justice.

**Aim:** to understand more of God's heart for justice and our calling to lead just lives.

God stands against the injustice of Pharaoh's regime, and causes liberated people to adjust lifestyle. Exodus is a story of justice...

To set the scene.

How important is justice to you - in games and in life?

Read Exodus: 5:6-6: 1

1. What was the immediate impact of Moses asking pharaoh to let the people go? How did that make the Israelites feel about Moses? And what was his response?
2. Although we don't know much about Moses before he meets God at the burning Bush, we are told about three incidents in Exodus: 2: 11, 2: 13 and 2:17. What do they tell us about Moses' character? Two of these were failed attempts to do something about the oppression of the Israelites - why would his current mission have a different outcome?
3. We have seen that God has saved the Israelites and set them free, but one of the first things he does once they leave Egypt is to give them lots of laws about how they should live. Are they just moving from one set of restrictions to another? What is the purpose of the law?
4. Look at the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20: 1-17. Many people see these as controlling "THOU SHALT NOTs". Choose one of the commandments and phrase it positively. What does it tell us about God's character and about the type of people he wants the Israelites to be?
5. The Laws that God gives make special provision for the poor and powerless - they are about justice for all. Jesus' ministry had that same emphasis. Read the verses he chose at the start of his public ministry in Luke 4: 14 - 21. Can you think of examples from Jesus' life, of his ministry to the poor and his heart for justice?

6. Isaiah 58 suggests that the pursuit of justice for the oppressed is, in some mysterious way, God's key to revival and at the heart of the mission of God. Read verses 1-11. Do these words change your expectation of what revival and renewal are, and how you might seek them?
7. What would be the issues highlighted in this passage if God had sent Isaiah to deliver this passage to you personally or to your church?
8. How should the need for justice affect the way that we live? What's your response to the words of Ajith Fernando below?

“There is a lot of enthusiasm about missions today, but there isn’t enough teaching about the simple and economically deprived lifestyle needed to minister effectively and a world where the majority of the unreached are poor.”

*Ajith Fernando.*

### Homework.

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by poverty and injustice in the world, but we can make a difference. Christian Aid suggests three responses:

- a. Give - money or time to an organisation working for justice.
- b. Act - by fairly-traded goods, for example, or take part in a simple campaign action.
- c. pray – Ask God to intervene, and for people's hearts to be changed.

Each time you are reminded this week of poverty and injustice, aim to respond in one of these ways.

## Study 6: Hope.

**Aim:** To grasp the certainty of a hope God offers to the Israelites and to us.

By his presence and his promise, God calls his people to a new and different future. Exodus is a story of hope...

### To set the scene.

Discuss what you think the future will be like. Compare the visions of a future that we are often given in films and stories with the expectations that most ordinary people have.

### Read Exodus 13 :17-22.

1. Once out of Egypt, Israel has to learn that the promises of God are not delivered in an instant. There is a 'now-but-not-yet' dimension to God's plans. What have they already received from all that God has promised, and what still lies in the future (Look back at Exodus 3: 7-10, or Exodus 6:6-8)?
2. Their journey to the promised land is only just beginning. They need to keep their eyes on the promises of God. What two signs of hope are given in the passage?
3. Think of the times recently when you have said I hope that...? In most ordinary speech, hope means little more than a desire for a better future. Do you agree? What is the difference between a biblical use of the word hope, and its use in a sentence like 'I hope it doesn't rain today'? (See 1 Peter 1: 3-5, Romans 5: 1-5).
4. We too can have hope in God's promises because we have Jesus, the guarantee of a better covenant. (Hebrews 7: 22) What other guarantee has God given us (2 Corinthians 1: 22, 2 Corinthians 5: 5, Ephesians 1: 14)?
5. How real is God's presence in your life from day-to-day? What is your 'pillar of fire' and 'pillar of cloud'?
6. How does God's action in your past affect your hope for the future? What has God already done in your life, and what comes into the 'not yet' category - what are you still hoping for?
7. The Hebrews had to journey through a desert, a physical wilderness where they faced many hardships and had to be dependent on God.

Many Christians go through a similar spiritual experience - a time of spiritual exile where God seems distant and life is hard. What do you do to find hope in desert places? What does the patient, provision, protection and presence of God for the Hebrew slaves in their wilderness tell us about what we should look for in ours?

8. Two caricatures of mission are “turn or burn!” - presenting a horrific view of the future that will scare people into accepting Christ - and “Come to Jesus and be happy!” - offering a saccharine present that belies the reality of the broken world that we live in. How can we communicate in mission the ‘now-and-not-yet’ nature of God's promises with the certainty of future hope?

“Somehow, in the midst of our tears, a gift is hidden. Somehow, in the midst of our mourning, the first steps of a dance take place. Somehow, the cries at well up from our losses belong to our song of gratitude.”

*Henri Nouwen.*

### Homework.

Think about how you could bless someone this week by reminding them of God's presence and helping to make a future hope more tangible in the present. You could write some words of encouragement to somebody that you know is going through a desert experience; You could go and pray with someone in need - after all, prayer is the language of hope.

## Study 7: Worship.

**Aim:** to discover the central place of worship in the story of Exodus and in our lives.

God does not set his people free to wander but to worship. He calls them to himself - to know him, to love him and to honour his name in all the earth. Exodus is a story of worship...

### To set the scene.

Think of a well-known person. Perform the actions, or catch phrase, that they are well known for and see if the group members can guess who you are pretending to be.

### Read Exodus 15: 1-18.

1. Having seen the Egyptian army decisively dealt with, the Israelites sing a song of praise and worship to God. Pick out words from these verses that show what they have learnt about God's character through their adventure so far.
2. Although there have been some pretty dramatic happenings in this story, we mustn't get distracted by plagues, miracles and destroyed armies. Look at these verses to see how central worship is to the Exodus story: Exodus 3:12, 4: 23, 5: 3, 15: 1-18, 20: 1, 2, 29: 44-46.
3. Jesus talked about worship in his conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, and hinted that his coming would herald a change in worship. What was it? (John 4: 19-26.)
4. Very often worship and mission are seen as separate categories, distinct and unconnected. But in Exodus worship is intertwined with mission and mission is interlaced with worship. What do you think are the links between worship and mission?
5. Kenny Mitchell is a professional DJ who likens the contemporary tools of turntables, CD players, drum machines, samplers and computers to the ancient temple instruments of Israel. He often works in the context of secular clubs, where people have all sorts of problems and none. He often prays "I want to see freedom and joy and something of your truth come out – God do your stuff."



Is this a description of worship - or of mission? Is there a place for worship in secular contexts and venues? How else might Christians take worship out of its box and into mission?

6. The book of Exodus is filled with instructions for the Tabernacle, the mobile House of God that will travel with the Israelites. Read Exodus 25: 1-9 to see how these instructions begin. What contrasts are there between the Pagan gods and Yahweh, the God of Israel?
7. The Tabernacle was not just a bare tent - it was to be a place of beauty, worthy of the God who was worshipped there. Exodus 31: 1-5 relates the story of the first person in the Bible to be recorded as being filled with the spirit of God. What was his task?
8. We worship a God who has created a stunningly beautiful, intricate and awe-inspiring world; but how creative is our worship of him? How can we make space in our worship for art, music, poetry, dance, painting, sculpture, photography, film, storytelling and so on?

### Homework.

Everybody worships something, even those people who would say there is nothing religious about them. Our objects of worship can be seen in what is most important in our lives, what we give time and energy to, what we make sacrifices for, and what we trust to bring us well-being and all rewards. What do people in our culture worship? Look out for examples during the week.

## Study 8: Community.

**Aim:** to explore the type of community that people of Israel were and the Church of Christ is called to be.

Israel begins the drama as an oppressed generation of slaves, but ends it as a nation. God's act of liberation and salvation are people-forming in their implications. Exodus is a story of community...

### To set the scene.

What groups, clubs or communities do you belong to? Do you have proof of membership of any of them? Which is the most significant for you? If someone asked, 'what community do you belong to?' How would you answer?

### Read Exodus 12: 1-3, 21-28.

1. This is the first time that Israel has been referred to as a community, although God promised Jacob that his descendants would form a community many years before (Genesis 28: 3, 35: 11). What has stopped Israel being a community up until now? What now gives them a sense of community?
2. The following verses show the ways in which the community of Israel is distinctive.
  - a. At whose initiative are they a community? Deut 7: 7, 8.
  - b. For what purpose are they a community? Deut 4: 5-8.
  - c. What type of community are they to be? Deut 28: 9, 10.
  - d. How will they participate in their calling to be community? Exodus 19:5.
3. We are part of a church, the body of Christ. Do we share the same distinctive characteristics? Can you think of New Testament verses that support them?
4. Just as the people of Israel were formed by the Mission of God in Exodus, so the church today is formed as the Mission of God finds fulfilment. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "The church is the church only where it exists for others." How many of the events and activities that your church is involved in of for 'others' - those outside the church? Is counting these type of activities a fair measure or whether

the church is fulfilling its calling to be God's people for the sake of all people?

5. Does your church community look like the community that Jesus gathered around himself? (See Luke 8: 1-3, Mark 2: 13-17, Luke 7: 36-50). Does that matter?
6. It's significant that the word community is used four times in the chapter that describes the Passover meal that the Israelites were to celebrate together in such dramatic circumstances. How have shared experiences helped your sense of community?
7. Surveys show that church attendance is changing and declining. Mike Riddell and others have commented that the fastest growing sector of the church in the West is made up of people who don't go anymore. Is believing without belonging an authentic way to follow Christ? How can we reach those for whom spirituality is an individual quest and church is a cold and irrelevant institution?
8. There's a danger that defining a community makes it exclusive. How can we be an inclusive community? How easy is it to belong to your church?

### Homework.

How does the presence of the Internet affect our ways of being church?

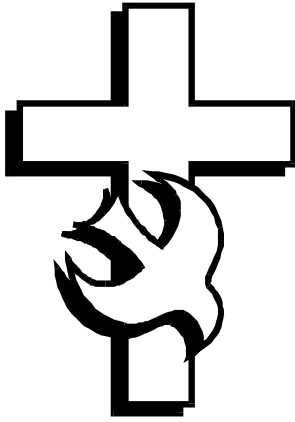
Some Christians feel that web church is no substitute for the real thing and that virtual communities are only a pale reflection of it. Other Christians are attempting to create true worship, genuine community and authentic Christian interaction through the Internet. What do you think?

## NOTES

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christ church

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making disciples

growing disciples

being disciples