



## Exodus – Looking Back and Going Forward

Matt Chandler – February 5, 2017

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[Video]

From darkness to light, this is the story we all share as the people of God. He draws us out to draw us in. From the birth of Israel to the church today, God delivers and dwells with his people. This story began several thousand years ago, and it began with a promise from God to Abraham that he would make his offspring more numerous than the stars in the sky, a great nation that would one day dwell in the Promised Land.

More than 400 years passed, and Abraham's descendants had not seen this promise fulfilled. Instead, the Israelites lived as foreigners in the land of Egypt. Fearing that the Hebrews would grow into a mighty nation and overtake them, the Pharaoh of Egypt forced them to work as slaves, but Israel continued to grow. In response, the Egyptians increased their oppression of God's people, and Pharaoh gave a terrible decree. Every son born to the Hebrews would be thrown into the river.

But a Levite couple defied this order, trusting God's will for their son's life, and God did have a plan for this child. Pharaoh's daughter found the baby and took pity on him. She named him Moses because he was drawn out of the water. As Moses grew older and saw the suffering of his people, anger burned within him. When he witnessed an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, Moses killed the man and fled Egypt to hide in the desert.

Years passed, and Moses made a new life for himself in Midian. Then one day the voice of the Lord called out to him from a burning bush. God told Moses that he saw the persecution of his people in Egypt and he heard their cries. He promised to deliver the Israelites from slavery, and he commanded Moses to go before Pharaoh on their behalf. Moses was terrified, so God sent Moses' brother Aaron to go with him.

The brothers went before Pharaoh, performing signs and wonders, but Pharaoh would not listen, so God brought down plagues upon Egypt, yet Pharaoh's heart remained as hard as stone. To prepare for the tenth and final plague, the Hebrews marked their doors with the blood of spotless lambs. That night, the angel of death passed through the kingdom, killing the firstborn child of every Egyptian household that did not bear the mark, including Pharaoh's.

Heartbroken, Pharaoh told the Israelites to go. They were finally set free, and the Spirit of God led the people out and toward the Promised Land, but Pharaoh's grief soon turned to rage. He changed his mind and then commanded the Egyptian army to pursue them. When the Israelites came to the Red Sea, Moses lifted his staff to the sky and the waters parted. The Hebrews passed through the towering waves, and the Egyptians were swallowed by the sea.

The Israelites found themselves in a harsh wilderness. Though they had just witnessed God's power and might in rescuing them, the people doubted their Deliverer would provide and, instead, complained of hunger and thirst. A few days later, they found manna on the ground, sweet and good to eat, and the Lord told Moses to strike a rock with his staff, giving them water to drink. The Lord had provided yet again.

As the Israelites approached Mount Sinai, Moses delivered a word from God. If they obeyed and kept God's covenant, God would make them his treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, and the people promised to do so. Three days later, the mountain shook as a sound like a trumpet grew louder and louder. Then the Lord came down in fire and smoke. When the people heard God's voice, they grew afraid and asked Moses to speak with God on their behalf.

God gave Moses many laws and instructions, including the Ten Commandments, and the Hebrews promised to worship the Lord alone and to keep his laws. Moses spent 40 days and nights on the mountain with God and returned to find the people bowing down to an idol. They had forgotten their promise. Moses burned the idols and atoned for the people's sin, and though God punished the Israelites, he did not destroy them completely.

After the Israelites repented of their unfaithfulness, they went to work making everything the Lord had instructed. They sewed fine garments for Aaron and his sons and consecrated them with oil for their service as priests. They built the ark of the covenant to hold the tablets of the Law and also built the tabernacle where God would dwell with his people...Yahweh, the one who drew them out of slavery.

Though the Israelites would endure more strife and hardship, they continued on in hope toward the Promised Land. The story of Israel is the story of us today. We are God's people. He draws us out to draw us in, and, like the Israelites, we still await the Promised Land. In the midst of our sin and suffering, yet God is with us.

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If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. We're going to be in Exodus, chapter 19. It's good to be back. I always love to bring in friends who can faithfully preach and teach to you the Word of God, but when I'm here and they're doing that there's always this angst to be up here with you, so it's good to be back. I'm really excited to be back in Exodus. If you haven't been around, from August to December we covered chapters 1-15, and now starting this weekend through the end of May we're going to do chapters 16-40.

What I thought we would do today is look back on two foundational truths we saw in the first 15 chapters and then look ahead at what's to come. My hope in doing that is to orient us around some truths that are going to be necessary for us to flourish as the people of God, and then from there just touch on what I think are four categories of things we're going to get into as the spring, winter, whatever this is, progresses. Depending on the day. Right?

Before we dive into that, when you came in today you should have received one of these. If you didn't, there should be some on the table in the foyer. This is our *Exodus* Part 2 guide. There's everything from family devotionals to a reading plan to place for sermon notes to Home Group questions, and on and on and on it goes.

We've given this to you as a resource so that we might, as a community of faith, let the Word of God shape us and mold us more into the image of Jesus. If paper booklets aren't your thing, you can download this onto any device you have. If you go to the web page, you can download it on any of your devices or go to the "resource" page that we have and find it there also.

Now maybe you're wondering how I could take 17 sermons that were each roughly around 45 to 50 minutes long and condense them into two truths that are going to be necessary to orient our hearts. Well, like this. The first truth we talked about over and over and over again in the fall was that *God is working a plan and that plan is good, but that plan will rarely play itself out like we think it's going*

to. On repeat through the first 15 chapters of Exodus we saw this to be true. God is working a plan. God is in it, and it's rarely playing out like the people of God think it should.

If we just stop for a second, that should make complete sense. God is infinite; we are finite. God knows everything; we are limited in every measurable way. How many of you slept last night? Do you know who didn't? God. You're going to need to eat or you're going to die. That is not true about God. There are things you are completely ignorant about, I mean *completely* ignorant about, and the Lord is not that way at all.

So it would make sense that his plan for us has some variance from *our* plan for us. What we can trust in, though, is that the plan is good. We need to be oriented around that. Our lives need to have a deep understanding that that is true so that when some wave crashes over the top of us we're not thinking, "God hates me. This is punishment. I knew I should have been more consistent with my quiet time. I knew I should have been tithing." We won't do that, but we'll run to him and trust him.

The second thing we learned in those first 15 chapters of Exodus is that *God is self-defining*. That is significant. In fact, God is the only self-defining thing in the universe. Only God self-defines. Everyone else defines based on others and based on things outside of themselves. That's not true about God. Our temptation is that we want to make God in our own image.

We want to decide for God who he is and what he does and how he acts and how he doesn't act and what he would do and what he wouldn't do. This is human to try to make God in our own image, but we are made in his; he is not made in ours. The more you try to define God outside of God's self-definition you leave the realm of reality.

You become the person who says that their favorite fish is a labradoodle. It doesn't matter if you have a thousand people who say, "That's my favorite fish too." It doesn't matter how many people agree with you. You're wrong, because a labradoodle is not a fish. It's a genetically modified animal of some sort that will probably spawn more mutations and eventually kill all of us. We've seen the movie.

God is not a concept we get to shape as we choose. God is God. He is ultimate reality. He is self-defining. We see this in Exodus 3:14-15. "**God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.'**" This is in response to Moses saying, "What should I say when the people ask who sent me?"

**"And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: "I AM has sent me to you." God also said to Moses, 'Say this to the people of Israel: "The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you." This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.'"**

"I Am Who I Am" is the personal name of God. It is translated *Yahweh* or *Jehovah*. Most consistently, you're going to see it in your Bible as *the LORD* in all caps. Maybe you've seen this. Maybe you haven't wondered at all, but if you're in the Old Testament and all of a sudden you see that *the Lord* isn't in all caps, then it's not Yahweh or Jehovah; it's another name, but if you see *the LORD* in all caps it's referring to this personal name of God: Yahweh, Jehovah, "I Am Who I Am."

This is meant to deliberately blow up our definitions. Let me try to explain that. I am some things. You are some things. I am a husband. I have a wife, Lauren. I am a father. I have three children. I am a pastor. This is the church that I pastor. I could go on and on. I am some things, and you are some things. The Lord is saying, "No, I Am Who I Am." A better translation with force would be, "I Be Who I Be." That's even more fun to say.

What's happening when God says, "I Am Who I Am"? Here's what he's trying to unpack for us. "I have been who I have always been. I have a track record of faithfulness and goodness. I have been who I have been." Then he's saying, "I am who I am in the present. No one defines me." Now think about that. In my "I am" statements, I am defined by others.

"I am a husband" means I require a wife to be defined as a husband. "I am a father" requires that I have children to be defined as a father. "I am a pastor" requires a church that I pastor in order for me to be a pastor. I am dependent on for my "I am"s. God does not work that way. "I Am Who I Am" is his name. He is not defined by man. He defines what man is. There's a lot of force in the personal name of God. Then finally, "I will be who I will be." God is all that will matter in the future.

God is self-defined, and he is the only thing in the universe that is. Everything else catches its definitions from him and from others. He catches his defining from no one but himself. "I Am Who I Am." We have this God who's working a plan. That plan is good. It's going to play out differently than we expect, because he's infinite and we are not. He puts the force of his "I Am-ness" to bear to rescue his people from slavery, to rescue his people from oppression, to pull his people out of the muck and the mire, is how David would later sing about it.

If we can root ourselves or orient ourselves around these truths, then we have a foundation upon which joy can flourish. I just want to keep banging this drum that joy and happiness are not the same things and joy is significantly more valuable than happiness. Happiness is fragile. It's fleeting. It depends on the things that are attached to our lives, but joy is bedrock. It's unshakable. It can't be taken from us despite life's circumstances.

We want to invest in a pursued joy and, where we get happiness, be really glad, but if you pursue happiness, you might not find joy. If you pursue joy, you can gain happiness. The goal is always the joy of the Lord that's rooted in the reality of who he is. If we get these two things about the first 15 chapters, that God is working a plan, that plan is good, it's going to play out differently, and that he is self-defining, that "I Am Who I Am" is for us, then it helps us make sense of what is to come next.

With that said, let's look at this Exodus 19 passage. Maybe you pay attention, you're really type A, and you're like, "Wait a minute. Last time we were together you stopped at the end of Exodus 15, so why are you skipping 16, 17, and 18? Is there something there that you're nervous about?" No, not at all. In fact, next weekend we'll tackle 16 and 17 and the weekend after that we'll tackle 18 and 19.

What I think happens here is in these really tight three verses you get a picture of what's to come and what some of the major themes in the book of Exodus will be, as well as the rest of the Bible. I think by showing you four categories that are here in these three verses we can better prepare ourselves for the next four or five months. With that said, let's look at this together. Exodus 19, starting in verse 4.

**"You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."**

There are four things I want to draw out of this text, get your eyes on it, and say just a little bit, because we're going to be saying quite a bit about it over the course of the next four months. Let's look back in that first verse. **"You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings..."**

The category we can create from this sentence is the category of *remembrance*. What's true, not just in Exodus but throughout the Bible, what's true about Christians throughout Christian history, is we are terribly forgetful of how generous and kind God is to us. We are a people who forget quickly, and the Israelites in Exodus are us. We are them.

God here is reminding through Moses, "Hey, you saw with your own eyes what I did. You saw how I used my power, my 'I Am-ness' to deliver you out of the hands of the most powerful and profound human nation that has ever existed on earth, and I didn't sweat, and I didn't get a stitch in my side. I delivered you by the power of my might with no sweating, no 'going back to the drawing board because that plan didn't work' start-up."

We're seeing here the category of remembrance. This is one of those books of the Bible that if you had any aspirations to be God you'd realize you can't, because I would have killed everybody. (Oh, you're going to judge me. All right. It's going to be like *that* today. I'm fine with it. It's Super Bowl Sunday. Let's do it.) What happens now is God supernaturally delivers his people out of an impossible situation.

If you think back over what we covered, how God bent the natural order around his will and used a staggering amount of power to deliver his people... They crossed over the Red Sea. The sea parted and they walked on dry land to the other side. When they got to the other side, do you know what they said? "We're hungry. Did you bring us out here to die? Why couldn't we just stay in Egypt?" Do you know what God does? His response to that was to put sweet-tasting bread all over the ground.

His ignorant people pick it up and eat it, and they're like, "Now we're thirsty. Have you brought us out here to kill us? Why didn't you just leave us in Egypt, let us die in Egypt?" Then God makes water come out of a rock. Then they drink the water and they're like, "I want some meat. You brought us out here to kill us. Where are we supposed to get protein?" Then God puts quail on the ground for them to gather. It just doesn't stop.

I'm telling you, if I'm God, I'm killing everybody slowly and nastily, but I'm *not* God. *He's* God, and he's saying, "Don't forget." It's a whole other sermon to talk about the patience of God in the face of that, and it's a whole other sermon to talk about the fact that we are them. We like to read that and go, "Golly, what's wrong with them?" No, no. What's wrong with *us*? Another sermon.

What you see here is God calling his people to remembrance. "Remember. You saw with your own eyes." Maybe you're like, "Well, yeah, but I haven't seen with my own eyes God do this kind of eagles' wings thing." I would just say that you have if you're a Christian. This is a good way to position yourself in the presence of God. Spend some time meditating on and thinking about where you were when God saved you. What were you like?

Maybe you're in here and you're like, "Gosh, I don't know. I became a Christian when I was 7." Okay, this is why the Bible is so helpful. The Bible will let you know what you were when you were 6. You're like, "Oh, I was really cute." Yeah, and you were brought forth in iniquity and you rebelled against God and you thought you were smarter than God and you thought you were your own god as a 6-year-old.

That manifested itself in different ways than it manifests itself now, but that was present, and God saved you from yourself when you were saved. That's why the Bible is going to be so helpful, because the Bible lets you know what you were like. If you're like, "I don't really remember. I was a good kid. I sinned and rebelled against God by obeying all of the rules, not by breaking all of the rules." Well, you're still trying to be god. You're still trying to usurp him and become your own god.

Remember where you were when God saved you, and then (I know this is conjecture, but I found it personally to be so helpful) spend some time thinking about where you would be had he not. There's no way to know, right? But here's what I know. I knew my trajectory. I can look at my bloodline and see what the last 100 years of Chandler men were like. I knew what I was piddling around with, things that could ultimately kill me and destroy me.

Then I started to wonder what my marriage to Lauren would look like, what kind of father I would be, what my hobbies would be, what secrets would I be harboring, what private shame would I be wrestling through. In that simple act of remembrance, my heart is lifted and I'm reminded that truly he bore me up on eagles' wings.

It's an interesting use of language there, because we know that's not how he pulled them out. He didn't deliver his people by sending these giant eagles to land and the people of Israel climb up and fly out on. That's *Lord of the Rings*-ish, but it's not what happens in Exodus. What he's stressing in that language is the miracle of salvation. The Bible talks about it like this: we were dead and now are alive. It's a stunning thing when a person becomes a Christian, that they were spiritually dead and now they're alive. They've been resurrected.



The book of Colossians would say it like this: we were transferred out of the domain of darkness and into the kingdom of his beloved Son. It's a miracle. No man can accomplish it on his own. He's desperate for the Spirit of God to do these things. So a category that we'll be in over and over and over again this spring is the category of remembrance.

It's not just remembrance. Honestly, I think the next five words are, if I can use this phrase, kind of the secret sauce to a joy-filled Christian life. Look at what's next. **"You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself."** I want this to settle in. God saves us and draws us out for what purpose? To be with him.

The purpose of all of that maneuvering, the destruction of Egypt, and the drawing out of his people is so that we might be brought to him and that we might stay with him, and in remaining and being with him (the Bible uses a lot of words for this: *abiding, remaining, being with him*) we'll be transformed.

In fact, a great theme in the book of Exodus is that God will dwell with his people. In the building of the tabernacle, all of the elaborate details that go into the priestly garments and all of the stations of the tabernacle are all meant to communicate God's desire to be with his people and his people's need to be with their God. There is nothing more transformative than the presence of God. Nothing.

This presence, being in the presence of God, dwelling with God, which is a huge theme throughout this second part of Exodus... This abiding, this dwelling, this being with God invites us into this three-step dance. (I know we're Baptists, but it's fine, because God is playing the music.) You enter into this three-step dance of confession, repentance, and God moving toward you in grace.

It's important that we read what's next in this text based on those five words. We have been brought to God. **"...and brought you to myself."** Now listen to what he says next. **"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine..."**

If you read that verse before "and brought you to myself," you're going to have a terribly skewed view of what it means to be a Christian. If you are brought out of Egypt and "Here is the law, and here is my covenant, and if you want things to go well with you, you'll do those things," then you've

missed the whole point of what God has done in salvation. God says, "I have brought you to myself. Now..." And then he gets into the law.

You know the Ten Commandments are a big part of the law. Let me walk through this. The law does a couple of things. Let me say this. God is serious about the law. He means it. We're going to see that about God. God is holy. He hates sin. I'm using the right word. I know it's 2017 and God is more of a fluttery, lovey fairy, but he hates sin.

He's going to destroy it, decimate it, eradicate it from the face of the earth. He'll do that via the proclamation of the gospel and, ultimately, judgment. We'll see that with force in several parts of Exodus, and yet the law is meant to do two things as it woos us into this dance of grace that's the most transformative thing imaginable. Maybe I can unpack that for you.

The first thing the law does is it serves as a type of spiritual MRI. I know about the MRI because I have to get them quite a bit. An MRI can show you that you're sick, but it'll never heal you. Any doctors in the room? You know this. You're like, "Oh gosh, there's a tumor. Stick him in the MRI tube." No, no. The MRI tube is what showed you that there was a tumor. It has no power to heal. None. The MRI machine cannot heal anyone. It can just show people they're sick.

This is what the law does. For 14 years we've played this game. If we take the Ten Commandments, you fail. All ten of them. You don't pass one. Don't think I don't know that doesn't stress out you summa cum laude fools, you overachievers. "I've never failed anything in my life." No, you have significantly failed the only moral test that God gives. That's what's happening there. The MRI is showing us we're sick, in need of a savior.

The law doesn't just show us we're sick. It also invites us into life as God designed it to be. Again, every "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not" in the Scriptures is about God wooing us into what Jesus calls *life to the full*. God never wants to *take* from his people but *give* to his people a type of joy that brings him glory and gladness to them. God is not glorified in our begrudging "Man, he could destroy us; we'd better do what he says." No, God is saying, "This way to life and fullness thereof."

The law does both these things. It reveals to us that we're broken while laying down to us the path of life. What happens is when I become aware that I have broken the law... We do this all the time. We grumble like the people of Israel. Almost all of us are far more aware of what we *don't* have and what we *wish* God would do than we are of what we *do* have and what God has *already* done.

That's a universal principle that I've picked up on in 20 years of pastoring. Almost everybody I meet is far more dialed in to what they don't have and what they wish God would do than they are to what God has given them and what God has done.

We put pressure on our spouse to be things they cannot be as we turn them into an idol that's going to solve all that's broken in us. We want to get value out of our kids. We want them to reflect our value and worth back to us, putting an impossible weight on them. We pursue wealth, and wealth in and of itself is not a bad thing. It is the love of wealth above everything else that is damning. On and on I could go.

When this happens and we become aware of it, we confess, we repent, and God draws near. See, nothing is more transformative than relationships of grace, which is why the Christian life is a call to vulnerability...not transparency but vulnerability. More on that in a bit. It's one thing to be transparent; it's another thing to be vulnerable. Vulnerability is terrifying, because all of our defense mechanisms have to come down.

Do you know what I mean by "defense mechanism," where you always want to be the man or woman who's put together? It's like an Instagram life. You're just awesome. You never struggle. "I'm strong enough. I get this done. There's no weakness in me," which is a whole bunch of phooey. It's just not true. You're human. Give me a break. There's one Superman. It ain't you. It requires vulnerability.

In that vulnerable moment when God draws near, we experience grace. I want to say this to you. An intellectual concept of grace is not the same thing as a spiritual experience of grace. I know this is 2017 and this is not the time to say something like that, but an intellectual understanding of grace and a spiritual experience of grace are not the same things. To experience grace is to be transformed by it. That it's safe to be who we actually are and God loves who we *actually* are, not what we're pretending to be and fronting to be to everyone around us.

We have this phrase here we've used for over a decade. "It's okay to not be okay." We live in this constant pressure to just be okay, but notice that all of this law and covenant-keeping happens not *before* we're brought to God but *because* we're brought to God. Let's kind of daydream a bit of what it means to abide and remain and be with the Lord. What does that mean? If we're honest, we have some stuff to do. I don't know about you. I have some stuff I have to do.

So what does it mean to rest in the Lord, to stay with God, to abide in the presence of God, when I know I have some things I have to do? I have a job. I have a calling. I have a wife. I have kids. Those kids have activities, so we have this frenetic activity always going on. What does it mean to be centered in, rooted in, the presence of God, being brought to him, throughout the days of our lives? Let's talk about that for a second. Again, I always love when you're asking questions that are the next part of my sermon.

Let's talk about work for a second. What would it be like to trust God at work and rest in him? What would it be like to not have to scheme and manipulate and constantly worry and be stressed out about what's coming next or who's going to get this or how this is playing? What would it be like to work hard and trust the Lord? Promotions are promotions. You should want one, you should work hard for one, but you shouldn't just be overwhelmed.

I want you to succeed. I want you to be the CEO or the CFO or whatever else. I want you to climb the ladder. Just don't lose your soul or your family on the way up. What would it be like to just rest, work hard, and trust the Lord, and throughout the day center your heart around who God is, his presence, his pleasure concerning you? Or because of the makeup of our congregation, how about this one? Parents, what would it be like to just do the best we could and trust the Lord with it? What would that be like? There's a crazy amount of pressure put on moms and dads these days.

I'm going to throw this out here just for thought. Selah. There was no such thing as an organic goldfish when I was a kid. It was a Doritos/Dr Pepper world. I just felt like our parents weren't stressed about that. It was called Hamburger Helper. Nobody knows what's in that...except hamburger, maybe, depending on where you're from. Maybe you just had the helper. Now there's all this pressure. If we don't get it right, if we don't get them in the right schools, if they're not playing sports... They have to pick their sport when they're 2 or, God knows, they have no shot. At what? There's just constant pressure on us.

What would it be like to draw near to the Lord and trust him, to live in the peace that God has a plan and just rest? If we're abiding in him and we're able to rest, what we'll reflect to our children is the beauty of Jesus and not the stress and pressure that's heaped on us by whatever force is pressing on us in our day and age. All you really have is the best that you can anyway. What if you could just rest in that? "Well, I don't feel it's enough." Look at me. It's not. Breathe.

Here's what you can do. In your not being enough you can own your sin. Let me try to unpack for you the power of this moment. I don't know. Let's just make something crazy up that no one in here has done. Let's say that one day you snapped at one of your kids. Like, you *snapped*. Like the kind of thing that if other people saw you they might think you're crazy. They didn't see the 70 other things that happened that led to that moment of explosion.

This is a total hypothetical. Say you snapped at one of your children. When you're in this dance of confession, repentance, and the Lord drawing near, what happens in that moment is you become convicted. You feel guilt and shame. Do you know why? Because you're better than that. That's why you feel guilt and shame. You made a promise you're not doing that. Your dad did that. You're not doing that. Your mom did that. You're not doing that. You feel guilt and shame over that.

In the dance, the guilt and shame would have us confess and repent to God and then to our child. We walk up to our child and say, "Will you forgive me? That shouldn't have happened." Here's what happens. I'm trying to tie this together in a very tangible way for you. Do you know what the child feels when he or she gets snapped at? Guilt and shame. "I deserve it. What did I do?" They feel the same thing Mom and Dad feel: guilt and shame.

When Mom and Dad are in the dance and we can come to the child and say, "Will you forgive me? That was about me. That wasn't about you. I need Jesus. I need to get better. I'm going to stay in tune with the Lord, and I'm asking him to grow my heart," then the shame and guilt that was turned inward on the child now is no longer turned inward, and they can rest in the peace of Christ while *you* rest in the peace of Christ.

Here's all that I can say. Even if your children end up not loving Jesus, not being a Christian, they'll be able to point to you and say, "They believe some crazy stuff, but they believe it. They love Jesus. They oftentimes lived out for me what a life surrendered to Jesus means." You help children with guilt and shame, which, by the way, is the thing that so distorts and maligns and mangles all of us. This is the dance: confession, repentance, and God moving near. There's going to be a whole bunch of that idea of abiding and creating this dance in the back half of Exodus.

Lastly, look at verse 6. "**...and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**" We're going to get into quite a bit of the details of what it meant to be a priest, everything from the garments to what they actually did. Some of it is applicable, and other parts we have to take what's still true and leave what's not true.

Here's what I mean by that. One of the roles of the priest was to make atonement for the sins of others. We don't do that as priests any longer. God has done that in Christ. There is no longer any need for atonement for sins, because the Lamb of God has taken away the sins of the world for all who believe upon the name of Jesus. We can atone for no one's sins, but we *can* live sacrificially, pointing others to the Lamb of God.

Part of what it means to be the priest... Earlier, when I said the whole goal of the Christian life is to stay rooted, remain in, abide in the presence of God and that God brought you to himself so that you would stay there, and you thought, "Well, what does that mean for missions? What does that mean for evangelism?" This is what it means. By abiding, by remaining... By the way, isn't this what Jesus taught in John 15? "I am the vine; you are the branches. Abide in me and I'll abide in you."

Isn't this what we see in the first chapter of the gospel of John, where we read in the coming of Christ that "In him was life, and that life was the light of the world"? Do you want to be a light to the world? What happens? You need the life of Christ inside of you. How does that happen? Salvation, dwelling with God, being with him. That belonging, that abiding, that remaining spills over out of us into a life of sacrificial love to others that points back toward where we found life as an explanation of that light.

That's not all the priest did. On top of living sacrificially for others, the priest offered intercession for others. Again, I want to go back to this idea of abiding, this idea of being present with the Lord, this idea of remaining. In this remaining or steeping or marinating, that you just hang there, hover there, throughout your day... It's not a five-minute quiet time, although I think that's a great way to start, but an awareness throughout the day. There's a lot of teaching on this coming.

What happens is you begin to love the things that God loves. You find yourself more prayerful. You find yourself more bold. To be drawn in is to be sent out. It's an upside-down economy. You don't get sent out if you haven't drawn in. You're drawn in, and that drawing in simultaneously sends you out. The more you draw in, the more you go out.

How can I wrap this up? Well, there are two things. I just think it's so imperative that we root in or get really firm footing around the idea that God is working a plan that's good and that plan is going to play out a little bit differently than we think. Then I just think it's huge for us to acknowledge that

God is self-defining, that he is God, that he is holy and tremendous and, if we're honest, a bit scary. He just does whatever he wants.

If he wasn't for us but against us, who could stay his hand? Who are you going to call? What power could stand in his way? Who could stay his hand? What court would you appeal to? What authority would you judge him by? What could put him in prison? He is who he is or he be who he be. To get that is a part of transformation.

When we talk about where we're going, pressing in... What does it mean to abide? What does it mean to remain? What does it mean to be brought to and stay there? Well, part of it is a growing knowledge of who God is. I would point to our classes, I would point to opportunities to join aspects of the Institute, to grow in your knowledge of who God is. That shouldn't feel laborious. That should feel like, "Hey, I get to know my God, the God of my salvation, the one who on eagles' wings brought me to himself, loves me, delights in me. I get to draw near and learn more about him."

This is a good thing to give ourselves over to, but I also think that on top of growing in a knowledge of him you have to be willing to enter the dance we talked about. That means you have to be willing to step into community. When I'm talking about community, I'm not talking about Home Groups, although that's a mechanism by which we try to help you find it.

Biblically defining community... Again, you have to talk about vulnerability. Not transparency, but vulnerability. You can be transparent and still have all your walls up. You can be transparent and still have that faux "I'm a well put together man. I'm a well put together woman. I don't stress about those kinds of things. I'm strong. There's no weakness in me." You can still be transparent and have all of that front.

The more you keep that wall up, the more you'll never experience love. Do you know why? You can't experience the transformative power of grace if you're always lying and hiding what you really are. Look at me. You will never experience the transformative power of grace if you refuse to be vulnerable. You can't do it, because any love you receive is a faux love lavished upon the ideal self you're showing to the world, not the real you that's weak and broken and foolish and, if we're honest, dumb from time to time.

It's in that moment of vulnerability, when we lay that out there and the people of God respond with grace, that God himself moves toward us and not away from us. The transformation begins to

happen. What does it look like to abide? We have to grow in our knowledge of him. We have to be willing to step into the dance. That's community. That's vulnerability. That's commitment, because vulnerability is hard and scary.

Maybe you're in a season where it's not about absorbing, but maybe you're in a season in which to abide in the Lord is to give. This means we serve. We find a place to give of ourselves to others. Maybe we've gotten to the point where it's been so much about us and there's been so much intake that what we desperately need to flourish is to pour some out and to serve others and quit making ourselves the point of the universe. Again, a wildly unpopular idea, and yet a necessary one.

I don't know that I've been as eager and excited about covering chapter after chapter about the tabernacle and the incense and the altar and the courtyard. It's going to be a spectacular four or five months as we consider what it means to abide and remain in the presence and power of God in our lives. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for these men and women. As always, an opportunity just to be read by your Word. Help us remember. I pray that even in this moment we might recall where we were when you saved us, you'd give us just a small glimpse of what we might be had you not. Father, we confess that we're not quite sure how to abide in you, remain in you.

We understand what it means to be brought to you, but I'm fearful that so many of us know a lot about you rather than actually knowing you. So will you help us? Rather than a checklist of things to confess are true about you, will you help us dwell with you? We need you. Help us. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.