

EXODUS 1-18

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# OUT OF DARKNESS



8 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR  
SMALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS



INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES

# OUT OF DARKNESS

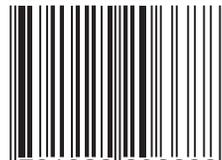


An oppressed people, a reluctant hero, a cruel and all-powerful dictator.

As the book of Exodus opens, we wonder how God is going to keep his ancient promises to his chosen people. But in his majestic power, God proves himself to be more than a match for Egypt's arrogant king. As God rescues his wayward people and gathers them to himself at Mount Sinai, we see a stunning picture of God's grace and faithfulness and power and truth. Despite the obstacles, despite the seeming hopelessness of the situation, despite even the sinfulness of those needing rescue, God brings his people out of darkness and into his wonderful light.

In this series of 8 studies on Exodus 1-18, Andrew Reid guides us through the extraordinary story of God's rescue of Israel, and shows us how this drama points to the work of Christ.

An ideal study book for individuals and small groups.



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## » HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THESE STUDIES

### 1. What is an Interactive Bible Study?

Interactive Bible Studies are a bit like a guided tour of a famous city. They take you through a particular part of the Bible, helping you to know where to start, pointing out things along the way, suggesting avenues for further exploration, and making sure that you know how to get home. Like any good tour, the real purpose is to allow you to go exploring for yourself—to dive in, have a good look around, and discover for yourself the riches that God’s word has in store.

In other words, these studies aim to provide stimulation and input and point you in the right direction, while leaving you to do plenty of the exploration and discovery yourself.

We hope that these studies will stimulate lots of ‘interaction’—interaction with the Bible, with the things we’ve written, with your own current thoughts and attitudes, with other people as you discuss them, and with God as you talk to him about it all.

## 2. The format

The studies contain five main components:

- sections of text that introduce, inform, summarize and challenge
- numbered questions that help you examine the passage and think through its meaning
- sidebars that provide extra bits of background or optional extra study ideas, especially regarding other relevant parts of the Bible
- ‘Implications’ sections that help you think about what the passage means for you and your life today
- suggestions for thanksgiving and prayer as you close.

## 3. How to use these studies on your own

- Before you begin, pray that God would open your eyes to what he is saying in the Bible, and give you the spiritual strength to do something about it.
- Work through the study, reading the text, answering the questions about the Bible passage, and exploring the sidebars as you have time.
- Resist the temptation to skip over the ‘Implications’ and ‘Give thanks and pray’ sections at the end. It is important that we not only hear and understand God’s word, but also respond to it. These closing sections help us do that.
- Take what opportunities you can to talk to others about what you’ve learnt.

## 4. How to use these studies in a small group

- Much of the above applies to group study as well. The studies are suitable for structured Bible study or cell groups, as well as for more informal pairs and triplets. Get together with a friend or friends and work through them at your own pace; use them as the basis for regular Bible study with your spouse. You don’t need the formal structure of a ‘group’ to gain maximum benefit.

- For small groups, it is *very useful* if group members can work through the study themselves *before* the group meets. The group discussion can take place comfortably in an hour (depending on how sidetracked you get!) if all the members have done some work in advance.
- The role of the group leader is to direct the course of the discussion and to try to draw the threads together at the end. This will mean a little extra preparation—underlining the sections of text to emphasize and read out loud, working out which questions are worth concentrating on, and being sure of the main thrust of the study. Leaders will also probably want to work out approximately how long they'd like to spend on each part.
- If your group members usually don't work through the study in advance, it's extra important that the leader prepares which parts to concentrate on, and which parts to glide past more quickly. In particular, the leader will need to select which of the 'Implications' to focus on.
- We haven't included an 'answer guide' to the questions in the studies. This is a deliberate move. We want to give you a guided tour of the Bible, not a lecture. There is more than enough in the text we have written and the questions we have asked to point you in what we think is the right direction. The rest is up to you.

## 5. Bible translation

Previous studies in our Interactive Bible Study series have assumed that most readers would be using the New International Version of the Bible. However, since the release of the English Standard Version in 2001, many have switched to the ESV for study purposes. For this reason, we have decided to quote from and refer to the ESV text, which we recommend.



## » STUDY 1

# BIRTH OF A NATION

[EXODUS 1-2]

### Foundational events

NEARLY EVERY NATION ON EARTH CAN look to foundational events that shape its history and sometimes even the character of its people. Sometimes these events have to do with when settlement began. Sometimes they have to do with something that happened within the life

of the country or its people—something that has somehow affected the national psyche or consciousness. The event may be something that people are proud of and glorify, or it may be something that they are ashamed of and are therefore defined in reaction to.

1. Think about your own home country and its people. Name one or two events that have shaped the national identity or consciousness of its people more than any other.

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2. In what way do you think these events shape your own attitudes and those of others?

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## The Exodus: a foundational event

FOR THE ANCIENT ISRAELITES, THERE is probably no event that shaped their identity and attitudes more than the events that we are going to look at in these studies. God's rescue of them out of Egypt, which has come to be known as 'The Exodus' (which means 'way out'), shaped the Israelites' national identity, the way they understood God, the way they viewed their relationship with God, and even the way in which they thought about how they ought to relate to each other. So much of their history looks back to this event and is couched in language reminiscent of the Exodus.

But the story of the Exodus is not just important for ancient (and modern) Israelites. It is also important for Christians. As we will see as we work our way through the first half of the book of Exodus, the events that happen here have also shaped much of Christian consciousness as well. Many aspects of our understanding of God, of ourselves,

and of how we should act as Christians have their foundation in the events that happened here and in the interpretation of those events that is given to us by God in his word.

## The book of Exodus in context

Before we begin to look at our passage in detail, it is helpful to get some perspective on where we are in the Bible and how the book of Exodus fits in. Viewed as a whole, the Bible is essentially a great history of God's dealings with his world and his people. It also tells us what God wants us to understand about him through that history.

This history is divided into two sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. Within each of these sections, there is a group of books that form the basis for the whole. In the New Testament, this is the four Gospels. In the Old Testament it is the first five books, which are known as the 'Pentateuch'. The overall picture of the Pentateuch could be represented by the diagram that follows:

---

## Foundations: Creation (Genesis 1-11)

God's promise:  
Stated and begun  
(Genesis 12-50)



God's promise:  
Fulfilled

- The Exodus  
(Exodus 1 to 18)
- The Covenant  
(Exodus 19 to Numbers 10)
- The Land  
(Joshua)



Delay!  
(Numbers 11 to  
Deuteronomy)



As you can see, Exodus 1-18 deals with the ongoing story of how God goes about fulfilling the promises he gave to Abraham in Genesis. With this in mind, it is helpful to refresh our minds about those promises.

### God's promises to Abraham

In Genesis 12:1-3, God makes a series of statements that indicate that he is about to act on behalf of Abram. God says:

- Go... to the land that I will show you.
- I will make of you...
- I will bless you...

The constant repetition of the word “I” tells us that what is about to happen is totally the gift of God. Within these statements, there are three principal elements to the promise. God is promising Abram that:

- he will have a land (the boundaries of which are defined in subsequent chapters)
- he will be made into a great nation (i.e. he will have a great number of progeny)
- he will be blessed (and be the source of blessing to the rest of the world).



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## The God of the disadvantaged

One of the things you sometimes notice with the narrative sections of the Bible is that God is not actually mentioned very often. Despite this, when the believer reads these sections they often notice just how profoundly God is

at work. Exodus 1 and 2 are a bit like this. God is not frequently mentioned; nevertheless, it is clear that he is active. Moreover, there is much that can be learnt about him and his character through these chapters.

---

### Read Exodus 2.

7. List the people that are in a disadvantaged or needy situation in this passage.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. How is their situation of disadvantage or need resolved?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. What, if any, is the cost involved in resolving their situation?

### Optional question

In chapter 2, there are two stories about people crying. In each case:

- Who cries out?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Who hears the cry?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What is their reaction?

---

## Anticipating the rest of the book

THIS CHAPTER IN EXODUS HAS MANY echoes in later events and themes. For example, here Moses is saved through water, and there is a reference to reeds. Later in Exodus we will hear that God rescues his people through water at the sea of reeds. Here, an Egyptian princess pays the mother of Moses to look after her own son. Later, we will hear how the Egyptians give great gifts to the Israelites when they finally leave the land of Egypt. Here, two Hebrews are fighting and their rescuer is not readily welcomed. Later, Moses' own people shun him and seek to return to Egypt.

But the main theme within this chapter is the one that will occupy centre stage for much of the book of Exodus. The stories of Exodus 2 are stories of people in need of rescuing, or people attempting to rescue others.

## The compassionate God

The stories of Exodus 2 lead to what happens in verses 23-25. The point is that if humans can rescue other humans who are caught in strife, then how much more will the God we know from Genesis—full of compassion and mercy, and who has an established covenant relationship with his people—rescue them? If the daughter of Pharaoh can hear cries and be merciful against the stated will of her father, how much more will God hear, given his stated obligation to Abraham and his descendants? If Moses can see his people's trouble and the trouble of a

group of daughters of a priest of Midian, then how much more so will God, whose nature is to have mercy? If a priest of Midian can take on board a lonely fugitive and give him a home, then how much more so will the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, do so? If humans can do it, how much more so will God? This is the point of this chapter—God hears their groaning, and he remembers his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. He sees the Israelites and he is “concerned” (as the NIV puts it). Where God ‘remembers’, ‘sees’ and ‘knows’ (or is concerned), we can expect to see action.

## Not just Israel

One of the reasons the Bible begins with creation is to demonstrate that God's goodness is not just intended for the nation of Israel. He has the whole world in mind. This is apparent in the promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, where we are told that through Abraham God's intention is to bless all peoples.

While the focus in Exodus 2 and throughout the book of Exodus is the ancient Jewish people of God, the rest of the Bible makes clear that what we see in Exodus 2 will eventually spread out to the entire world. In other words, God's purpose to come to the aid of all humanity and to meet its deepest need will be fulfilled. Of course, both the Old and the New Testaments are agreed that our deepest need is not so much for physical deliverance but for spiritual deliverance from sin and its consequences: alienation from God.

