Day #1: God's Heart

It took ten horrible plagues for Pharaoh to finally let the Israelites leave Egypt. Pharaoh even had to lose his own son before he would listen to God's instructions.

Did God need Pharaoh's permission to remove His people from Egypt? Of course not. God could have done anything He wanted to Pharaoh. In fact, God told Moses to send that exact message to Pharaoh:

“For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth.” - Exodus 9:15

If God had done that, the Israelites would certainly have been free from their slavery. It would have been quicker and easier for God to do it that way. So why did God choose to send the plagues as He did? Why did God come back to Pharaoh time and time again? Because God is full of mercy and grace and He wants each and every person to turn away from their sins and believe in Him.

*The Lord is not slow to keep His promise. He is not slow in the way some people understand it. He is patient with you. He doesn’t want anyone to be destroyed. Instead, He wants all people to turn away from their sins and believe in Him.* - 2 Peter 3:9

God foretold what He was going to do, and He did wonders so amazing that there was no other explanation other than the hand of God (Exodus 8:19). God wanted His own people, the Israelites, to see His power and might so they would be strong and believe in Him even when things were difficult (Deuteronomy 20:1). God wanted the Egyptians, who worshipped many false gods, to know that He is the one true God (Exodus 7:5). Their false gods could do nothing for them (Jeremiah 16:19)! God knew the Egyptians could never be truly satisfied and could never have eternal life until they believed in Him. And God wanted His name to be known throughout the world so that everyone who heard about Him would believe in Him (Exodus 9:16).

*Do not miss the heart of God in all of the wonders He performed. God wants all people to know Him. One reason is for Himself: God fully deserves all praise from all people (Luke 19:37-40). And the other reason is for us: no matter what we try to fill our life with, we will never have true life without God at the very center (John 6:33).*

Day #2: Leaving Egypt

The Israelites were finally released from Egypt. God was going to lead His people to the land of Canaan. This was the land God had promised to give to Abraham’s descendants. In Genesis 17:8, God told Abraham, “The whole land of Canaan...I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you.”

God gave specific instructions to Moses about leading the Israelites. It was very important that Moses followed God’s directions. God did not lead His people on the shortest route, because that was where the Philistines lived. God knew the Israelites would be afraid of the Philistines.

*The shortest road from Goshen to Canaan went through the Philistine country. But God didn’t lead them that way. God said, “If they have to go into battle, they might change their minds. They might return to Egypt.” So God led the people toward the Red Sea by taking them on a road through the desert. The Israelites were prepared for battle when they went up out of Egypt.* - Exodus 13:17-18

This was an amazing and exciting time for the Israelites, for God had taken them out of their slavery. But it was also an incredibly scary time, as they faced the unknown out in the desert. Would there be water to drink? Would there be enemies to face or wild animals to fend off? Would they get lost in the darkness? As the huge crowd of probably over three million people traveled, God led them in a miraculous way.

*By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.* - Exodus 13:21-22

This was God’s fulfillment of His promise to Moses. Remember when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush. God told Moses he was chosen to lead the Israelites out of their slavery, but Moses did not feel he was capable of such a big job. God promised Moses, “I will be with you” (Exodus 3:12). God ALWAYS keeps His promises.

Discuss times when it is hard to follow God’s instructions. What are some of the fears you have when you follow God? God appeared in front of the Israelites so they could see Him day and night. Remember, God promises to be with His people always (Matthew 28:20). God has given us His Word, the Bible, that we can look to day and night to be reassured of His presence and His promises.

Day #3: Helpless

God told Moses to lead the Israelites to camp at a place called Pi Hahiroth near the Red Sea. God told Moses that once again He would harden Pharaoh’s heart about the Israelites. Notice the two things God said would happen because of Pharaoh’s stubbornness.

*I will make Pharaoh’s heart stubborn. He will chase them. But I will gain glory for myself because of what will happen to Pharaoh and his whole army. And the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord.* So the Israelites camped by the Red Sea. - Exodus 14:4

Of course, it happened just as God said it would. Pharaoh led his army to chase after the Israelites.

*The king of Egypt was told that the people had gotten away. Then Pharaoh*
Day #3 continued:
and his officials changed their minds about them. They said, "What have
we done? We’ve let the people of Israel go! We’ve lost our slaves
and all of the work they used to do for us!" So he had his chariot made
ready. He took his army with him. He took 600 of the best chariots in
Egypt. He also took along all of the other chariots. Officers were in
charge of all of them. - Exodus 14:5-7

Pharaoh’s army caught up with the Israelites where they were camped
by the sea. When the Israelites saw Pharaoh and his army, they were
terrified! They cried out to God, and even told Moses it would have been
better if they had stayed slaves in Egypt than for them to die in the
desert (Exodus 14:12). The Israelites were scared and blamed Moses
for being trapped. They felt helpless to protect themselves. But, if you
remember, God led them to this exact spot! He knew Pharaoh would
chase them, and He knew His people would be trapped. God was about
to show the entire world His amazing power!

Consider this: If the Israelite army had been the strongest in the land,
and they could easily defeat Pharaoh and his army, they would not have
needed God’s help. And God would not have received the glory for
delivering His people.

What does the Bible say about our feeling helpless or weak? In 2
Chapters 14-15, God spoke to Moses. He told Moses, “I will harden
Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them. But they will not be able
to overtake them.” After this, God said, “I will display My glory in
this nation so that the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord God.”

Day #4 continued:
with the fear of the unknown. This was unlike anything anyone had ever
seen before! Hebrews 11:29 tells us, “By faith the people passed through
the Red Sea as on dry land.” They had to trust God’s provision and
actually step into the pathway He created. Just standing and watching
would not have saved anyone.

Tomorrow we will look at how God took care of Pharaoh once and for all.

Because the Israelites had faith in God’s provision, they were saved from
Pharaoh’s army. Faith is being sure of something, even though we cannot
see it (Hebrews 11:1). It was by faith that Noah built an ark to save his
family even though he had never seen rain before (Hebrews 11:7). It
was by faith that Abraham packed up and moved even though he didn’t
know where he was going (Hebrews 11:8). Hebrews 11:6 says, “Without
faith it is impossible to please God.” Abraham’s faith made him right
with God (Galatians 3:6). And it is by faith that we believe in God’s
provision for us - the blood of His Son Jesus. This faith makes us right
with God (Romans 5:1, Romans 3:25).

Day #5: Pharaoh, No More

Once the Israelites moved through the sea on the dry path God had
provided, Pharaoh and His army went in after them. This included all
the horses and over 600 chariots. If the chariots rode five across, with
only 10 feet between the back of one and the front of the next, the
chariots alone would have been over a half mile long. The whole army
probably spanned one to two miles in length. This was a fierce army,
but not a match for God Almighty!

The Egyptians chased them. All of Pharaoh’s horses and chariots and
horsemen followed them into the sea. Near the end of the night, the
Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud. He saw the Egyptian
army and threw it into a panic. He kept their chariot wheels from turning
freely. That made the chariots hard to drive. The Egyptians said, “Let’s
get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for Israel against Egypt.”

Then the Lord spoke to Moses. He said, “Reach your hand out over
the sea. The waters will flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and
horsemen.” So Moses reached his hand out over the sea. At sunrise the
sea went back to its place. The Egyptians tried to run away from the sea.
But the Lord swept them into it. The water flowed back and covered
the chariots and horsemen. It covered the entire army of Pharaoh that had
followed the people of Israel into the sea. Not one of the Egyptians was
left. - Exodus 14:23-28

Notice that even the hard-hearted army realized it was God who was
fighting for the Israelites. With their own mouths, they confessed the
power of God. This fulfilled God’s proclamation in Exodus 14:4-5, “But I
will gain glory for Myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the
Egyptians will know that I am the Lord.” The last words of the Egyptian
army were words declaring their fear of the Lord. And who was left of
the Egyptian army? No one. This included Pharaoh who led the march
(Exodus 14:6).

From the first time God called Moses to speak to Pharaoh, God claimed
He would make Himself known through the judgment He would pour out
on Egypt. He made a name for Himself that remains to this day.

But He saved (the Israelites) for the honor of his name. He did it to
make his mighty power known. - Psalm 106:8

You did miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh... But you made
a name for yourself. That name remains to this very day. - Nehemiah
9:10

Proverbs 9:10 tells us, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”
Proper respect and reverence for the power of God leads us to wise
decisions. This fear and respect came too late for the Egyptians. How
can you show your respect for God daily? (Read His Word, listen to His
teachings, memorize His Word, do not take His name in vain)

Day #4: Stepping Out in Faith

With the sea before them and Pharaoh and his army behind them, it
would take a miracle for the Israelites to escape. And a miracle was on
its way! Moses reassured the Israelites.

Moses answered the people. He said, "Don't be afraid. Stand firm. You
will see how the Lord will save you today. Do you see those Egyptians?
You will never see them again. The Lord will fight for you. Just be still." - Exodus 14:13-14

It would certainly be hard to be still in this situation! But the Israelites
had seen God’s power displayed in Egypt. God had brought them this
far and they had to have faith He would rescue them again. God told
Moses to raise his staff and stretch out his hand over the sea. He said
the water would divide so they could walk through the sea on dry ground!
God also told Moses that He would harden the hearts of the Egyptian
army so they would follow after the Israelites.

Then God moved the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire between the
Israelites and the Egyptian army. The cloud made darkness for the
Egyptians while the fire lit the night for the Israelites. Neither group
went near the other all night. Read what amazing thing happened next:

Then Moses reached his hand out over the Red Sea. All that night the
Lord pushed the sea back with a strong east wind. He turned the sea
into dry land. The waters were parted. The people of Israel went through
the sea on dry ground. There was a wall of water on their right side and
on their left. - Exodus 14:21-22

What a miracle this was! Can you imagine what it must have been like
to walk across the sand with a wall of water on each side? The wind
was blowing and the sea was roaring. Would those near the water wall
dare to touch it? Do you think they could see huge fish swimming
inside?

Once again, God’s people were in a time of extreme excitement mixed
with the fear of the unknown. This was unlike anything anyone had ever
seen before! Hebrews 11:29 tells us, “By faith the people passed through
the Red Sea as on dry land.” They had to trust God’s provision and
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