

the Royal

MAKING SENSE OF THE BIBLE

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." 1 Pet. 2:9

Week 4: "Basic Training"

This week Pastor Miles introduced us to how to do a daily devotion by examining Acts 12 as the text. As we read Scripture, Miles helps us to navigate through the context of a passage so we can properly understand the setting in which the author, Luke, was writing. Miles introduced us to the characters involved, the area in which it took place, and even the emotions of all involved in the story. But more than just a story, there is a message for us to grasp in our walk with Jesus Christ and we are challenged to pay attention.

What we will look at this week in our Small Groups is:

- ▶ How to properly examine context when reading any passage of Scripture.
- ▶ The contextual examination of Acts 12.
- ▶ An in-depth study of Monday's devotional exercise in Exodus 34, and how we can properly apply the text.
- ▶ Optional homework study assignments designed for personal enrichment.

The genre of Biblical Narrative reads much like a story, but when looking at a story in the Bible, we are required to do much more work than just reading it to understand the spiritual implications. Just as we looked at Acts 12 during our Sunday Sermon and first portion of our small group time, we will look at another example of Biblical Narrative from the Old Testament in Exodus 34.

Have fun in your studies and we pray that the Lord will bless you in your growth of His Word.

In Him,

Rock Church Small Group Team

Part 1: Opening/Recap Weekly Challenge/Small Group Sermon Discussion

Opening:

- Open in Prayer
- Worship (optional)
- Recap Week 3 Homework
- Small Group Sermon Discussion

Recap Week 3 Weekly Challenge:

- 1. Recite Matt. 13:44.**
- 2. Discuss experiences practicing the Discipline of Service.**

Small Group Sermon Discussion:

- 1. Discuss the contextual setting of Acts 12. Specifically, where did it occur? What was the time period of which it took place?**
 - ▶ Peter was arrested and thrown into prison in Jerusalem (12:4-5).
 - ▶ It took place during the days of Unleavened Bread (12:3).
 - ▶ References to the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread include Ex. 12:1-13; 23:15; 34:18-20, 25; Lev. 23:4-14; Num. 28:16-25; Deut. 16:1-8; and Josh. 4:19-23.
 - ▶ The Passover was the first of the three great festivals of the Israelite people. It referred to the sacrifice of a lamb in Egypt when the people of Israel were slaves. They smeared the blood of the lamb on their doorposts as a signal to God that He should "pass over" their houses when He destroyed all the firstborn of Egypt (Ex. 12:13).
 - ▶ Unleavened bread was used in the celebration because this showed that the people had no time to put leaven in their bread as they ate their final meal as slaves in Egypt.
- 2. Who were the key people involved in Acts 12? Specifically, who was the author that wrote it? Who was the audience it was written to? And who are the characters involved in the narrative?**
 - ▶ Luke was the author of the Book of Acts (cf. Acts 1:1; Luke 1:1-4).
 - ▶ The audience was Theophilus (cf. Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1), and was mainly directed toward a Gentile (non-Jewish) audience (Theophilus was traditionally a Roman convert, maybe even a Roman official. So his audience would naturally not have been Jewish, but rather Gentile.)

Part 2: Read, Reflect, and Respond – Exodus 34

Read Exodus 34:

In order to fully comprehend what is going on in Exodus 34, we have to understand what is going on in Exodus up to this point. The following points highlight the major events leading up to this point:

- ▶ Ex.1: Israel multiplies in Egypt, then becomes slaves under the new Egyptian Pharaoh who did not know Joseph.
- ▶ Ex. 2: Moses is born and escapes the Pharaoh's command to kill every firstborn in the land. He is raised in the Pharaoh's household by the Pharaoh's daughter.
- ▶ Ex. 3: God reveals Himself to Moses in the burning bush (3:2), and commands Moses to lead His people out of Egypt (3:10).
- ▶ Ex. 6: God establishes a covenant with Moses to free Israel from Egypt and the bondage of Pharaoh (6:2-9).
- ▶ Ex.7-10: God executes the plagues over Egypt, in order to free Israel from the Pharaoh.
- ▶ Ex. 11: The last plague is the slaughter of every firstborn in the land, otherwise known as the Passover (11:4-7).
- ▶ Ex. 12: The Passover and Unleavened Bread Feasts are established, and the commandment to observe this date for all of Israel's history.
- ▶ Ex. 13-18: God's provision is shown from the fleeing of Pharaoh through the Red Sea, to the provision of God by giving them water and manna supernaturally.
- ▶ Ex. 19-31: Moses is commanded up to Mt. Sinai and is given the law, including the 10 Commandments.
- ▶ Ex. 32: The people rebel against God while Moses is up on Mt. Sinai, and build a golden calf as a false god, thus leading them into idolatrous worship.

Moses was then filled with great anger because of the worship of the golden calf. Because of his anger, he threw the stone tablets with the Law on it against the foot of the mountain (32:19). He then led the Levites to slaughter 3,000 of their brothers because of their sin (32:27-28). But God's anger was still very heavy against Israel because of their sin, so Moses went up to intercede for them so that He did not destroy them. This leads to chapter 34 where God replaces the two tablets and renews the covenant that He established with Moses in Exodus 6.

- ▶ Read Exodus 34 as a group.

Reflect Exodus 34:

As we now reflect on the chain of events that led up to Exodus 34, we see a lot about the children of Israel, but more importantly the grace of God. The sin of Israel was very real and often times in quickly reading through this narrative we would ask the question "why?" Why would Israel abandon a God that made Himself very real over and over again? But if our eyes are open, we realize that we are really no different today. God's grace is very real if we are paying attention. This leads us to try and answer a few serious questions:

Part 2: Read, Reflect, and Respond – Exodus 34

(continued)

1. What was God's punishment for those that sinned against Him?
 - ▶ 34:6 states that God is compassionate and gracious but He would not leave the guilty unpunished.
2. Why was it so serious for them to never subject themselves to other gods?
 - ▶ Note: This is not limited to religious gods, but also exposes the group to other idolatrous things such as money, work, possessions, etc.
 - ▶ Examine 34:11-17 for more clarity.

Respond Exodus 34:

1. Although we are in Christ and are no longer under the wrath of God, He still disciplines us (cf. Heb. 12:7). How have you experienced the discipline of God in your life when you were in sin? How did you grow from it?
2. Which areas of your life are you lacking in obedience? What areas of your life do you need to completely surrender?
 - ▶ Ex. 34:18-28 was a reestablishment of the commands of the Lord for all Israel to observe and do. They were to be performed as an act of worship. Challenge the group to consider if what they do is routine or an act of worship.

Part 3: Weekly Challenge

- ▶ **Scripture Reading Guide:** Go through the devotions that correspond with each day. These are given to everyone in their lesson plan every week. (May 24-30)
- ▶ **Scripture Memory:** "Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth." **Exodus 34:6 (NASB)**
- ▶ **Bible Study Tool:** Navigate through www.biblestudytools.net and discover the great resources available for free for your personal gain.

Part 3: Weekly Challenge

(continued)

- ▶ **Spiritual Formation Practice:** Each week we will introduce a “spiritual discipline” that each person can try to adapt to their personal devotion. This week is the **Discipline of Worship.**

When you hear the worship, what is one word you would use to define it? Did you answer music? You are correct! However, worship is not only limited to music. We would also typically single out our Sunday service at church as worship as well. Again, this is correct but worship is far from limited to just our Sunday services. Matt. 4:10 states, “You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.” The word worship used here in the Greek is *proskuneo*, which means to kiss or pay homage and respect toward. The idea is like a dog when he licks his master’s hand. He loves his owner and wants to serve his owner and be close to him at all times. Christ is commanding the same thing from us. Whatever we do in our day to day lives we need to be worshipping and serving Him. We do this by obedience through how we serve others and how we represent Him. This starts in prayer and the study of His Word, and is followed through to the outside world.

Challenge yourself this week:

- ▶ How are you presenting yourself as one worshipping Christ in all you do?
- ▶ How are you not worshipping Him properly? What adjustments do you need to make?
- ▶ Is Christ the sole center of your worship? Or are you allowing the attention of other “gods” and “idols” to steal away His due worship?

We pray you grow in your understanding of worship and grow in your faith and adoration toward Christ!