

THE STORY

Men's Bible Study

Chapter 4

Equipped for the Call

God "Telegraphs" What He's Up To

Joseph/Jesus

- The favored son of his father
- His father sent him to his brothers who rejected him
- Robes taken from him
- Taken to Egypt to avoid being killed
- Sold for the price of a slave
- Tempted
- Falsely accused
- Condemned between two prisoners
- 30 years old at beginning of recognition
- Forgave those who wronged him
- His suffering eventually led him to a place of prominence and honor
- His suffering was to save the lives of those he loved
- His brothers bowed their knees to him at last

Moses/Jesus

- Called from a distant land
- Called to true heritage
- 400 years of silence precedes arrival
- Survived infanticide
- 40 days
- Prince of Egypt, Prince of Peace
- Rejected
- Delivered from bondage
- Series of miracles led up to final salvation
- Final victory: death of firstborn/one and only Son
- Victory over tormentors: Egypt & Satan
- Passover – blood on doorpost
- Even after deliverance, doubt, fear, rebellion, effects of sin still linger.

Principles

1. God does not _____ –
he _____.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

Revelation 2:17

2. God has a systematic way of dealing with _____.

- The god of _____
- The god of _____
- The god of _____
- The god of _____
- The god of _____
- The _____ god
- The _____ god

3. God's "_____" is our hope.

Today's Equipping Point

Put your _____

Discussion Questions

1. Can you recall a time when you undertook something for which you were totally unequipped?
2. What gods have you been stripped of?
3. How will you be a Deliverer today?

Teaching Script

“Don’t telegraph it!”

Basketball: don’t look in the direction you intend to drive, don’t telegraph where you’re going to pass. Used to know a guy who outsmarted himself and always looked away from his passes – still telegraphing, just didn’t know it.

It’s the same with contact sports: Martial artists, wrestling, boxing. You can unconsciously telegraph your intentions. Coaches tell wrestlers and boxers: don’t draw back before striking...don’t shift your stance...don’t move your eyes...don’t grimace or take a deep breath before going into motion.

In fact there are many professions where it’s critical to “read” the competition: skilled negotiators and military strategists keep their intentions less obvious to gain the advantage, and never lose the power of surprise.

In poker terminology, this is called a “tell.” A “tell” is any physical reaction, or behavior, or habit that gives (or tells) the other players information about your hand. Body language: facial expressions, eye movements, eye contact, breathing, verbal cues (words and tone).

My youngest daughter would be a lousy poker player. Cheryl and I learned early on that Tori could not keep a secret to save her life. We couldn’t tell her what we’d gotten the other for birthdays or Christmas because inevitably, she’d get that sparkle in her eyes, giggle, and oops, “let it slip.”

As we move into Chapter 4 of *The Story*, let’s first go back to Joseph briefly, because in poker terms, Joseph was a “tell.” In a manner of speaking, God “let it slip.”

The Upper Story of grace, forgiveness and redemption is unmistakable here. God’s ways are often mysterious and unfathomable, but in Joseph He telegraphs what He’s been up to. Joseph’s life story nearly gives the whole thing away. It’s almost like God can barely stand to keep the secret.

Joseph/Jesus

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If Joseph's life nearly gives the whole redemption thing away, then the story of Moses and the Exodus from Egypt removes all doubt; God doesn't just telegraph where he might be going, he shows his hand, lays his cards on the table, and makes his long-term plan – The Upper Story – as clear as day.

The two main events of the whole Bible are the Exodus and the Christ. The importance of either cannot be underestimated. The first event points directly to the second.

Moses/Jesus

- Called from a distant land (heaven)
- Called to true heritage (man made in His image – redeem His own)
- 400 years of silence precedes
- Survived infanticide
- 40 days
- The Prince of Egypt, the Prince of Peace
- Rejected
 - Who made you ruler and judge?
 - Despised and rejected of men
- Delivered their people from bondage
- Series of miracles led up to final salvation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nile turned to blood ▪ Frogs ▪ Gnats ▪ Flies ▪ Death of livestock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Boils ▪ Hail ▪ Locusts ▪ 3 Days of Darkness ▪ Death of Firstborn
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- Jesus' miracles
 - Made fig tree die
 - Hunger – feeding 5000
 - Cast out demons
 - Sickness
 - Raised the dead
- Final victory: death of firstborn/one and only Son
- Victory over tormentors: Egypt & Satan
- Passover – blood on doorpost...blood on doorpost to heaven: cross
- Even after deliverance:
 - Doubt, fear, rebellion, longed for bondage, old circumstances
 - Effects of sin still linger (post flood, deliverance, cross)

The similarities are stunning when you lay these stories side by side; God has shown his hand...this is where we're headed.

But God does more here than just telegraph Jesus – he telegraphs His character and modus operandi. How does God operate? How does he do His work in the world? How does he interact with His people? The story of the Exodus is critical because God also reveals a pattern of engagement:

Principles

1. God does not call the equipped – he equips the called.

Moses was an 80-year-old man with only “ex-prince” and “shepherd” listed on his resume. But as God is prone to do, he selects men from nowhere, without credentials or experience, to make sure people know Who is really behind the victories. He did it with a stammering Moses, and we'll see him do it over and over: with Joshua, with a reluctant Gideon, with a depressed Elijah, with a shepherd boy named David, with a scaredy-cat named Jonah, with a small-town carpenter from Nazareth, and with fishermen and tax collectors from Galilee.

You may be in the same boat and be thinking, my spiritual resume is *anorexic*. How am I supposed to lead my family? Where's the Cliffs Notes on how to be a husband and a dad? How am I supposed to step up to the plate?

Over and over, God demonstrates throughout Scripture that he doesn't hire a headhunter and conduct an executive search for men with advanced degrees, Masters of the Universe, or titans of business. God looks not at the resume but at the heart; not at the accomplishments, but at the potential.

And he does it backward for a reason: God equips the called so that each step we take, we take because of faith in him to provide, not because we have accurately wargamed each scenario. God equips the called because every day we need to hear from him – we need new manna to survive, because discipleship is a moment-by-moment decision. God equips the called because a heart is transformed when confronted with a summons to true greatness. God equips the called because, as Revelation puts it, our identity has changed:

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

Revelation 2:17

If you haven't gotten it all figured out yet, if you're still searching for the owner's manual, if you don't feel equipped for tomorrow, much less the entire journey, then God's got you right where he wants you. The challenge: “Embrace your cluelessness” –

because one step at a time, one meeting at a time, one plague at a time, one miracle at a time...God will equip those He calls – and He has called *you*.

2. God has a systematic way of dealing with *competition*.

There is a reason that the first of the Ten Commandments is, “You shall have no other gods before me.” God’s jealousy requires that he systematically mows down pretend gods just as a carnival patron mows down those plastic ducks all in a row.

You may not be aware, but the ten plagues on Egypt: water into blood, frogs, boils, hail, etc., were not just random strikes at Egypt, but a carefully choreographed defeat of their pagan gods. Now, this isn’t for the next fill-in section, but just catch how God dealt with his competition in Egypt:

Plague	Egyptian god defeated by plague
Nile turned to blood	Hapi & Isis, goddess of Nile
Frogs	Haget, goddess of fertility-frog head
Gnats	Set, god of the desert
Flies	Uatchit, represented by a fly
Death of livestock	Hathor/Apis, cow, bull
Boils	Sekhmet, goddess of disease
Hail	Nut, sky goddess
Locusts	Osiris, god of crops and fertility
Darkness	Re, the sun god
Death of firstborn	Min, god of reproduction

And just as God shot down the paper-mache props the Egyptians trusted in, so today he is careful to lovingly but deliberately bring us to our knees by defeating our gods:

(write down)

- The god of **work**, where everything is sacrificed on the altar of the next promotion, next rung on the ladder
- The god of **self-sufficiency**, that denies the need for new manna every day
- The god of **legalism** that demands to always be right
- The god of **pride** that requires I get what’s coming to me (“my boss owes me this, my wife owes me that, my kids *owe me*”)
- The god of **addictions** to alcohol, sex, gambling or work
- The **Vending Machine god** who exists only to cater to MY preferences
- The **9-1-1 god** who dispatches a wrecker when I get into trouble

The deliverance from Egypt teaches us to be careful of the gods we construct, because the One True God has demonstrated he has a rather harsh way of dealing with competition.

And third...

3. God's "tell" is our hope.

Could you imagine if God had not telegraphed how it all works out? Without the stories of Joseph and Moses, we wouldn't know that the Upper Story of God had been planned and prototyped centuries before. We wouldn't see that yes, in fact, in the end, God works *all things* for good for those *called* to his purpose. We wouldn't know that if we like Joseph were in a 22-year span of uncertainty, or like Moses in a 40-year span of waiting, that God in fact has an Upper Story – a great plan – in store for all of us.

Without the story of the Exodus, we would never be able to grasp the absurd, outlandish extent to which God will go to win us back. The sins he would forgive, the patience he would show, the pursuit that would never end.

And so this morning, each one of us needs to be asked this question:

“From what do you need to be delivered?”

Some of you may still be test-driving this whole Christianity thing – and what you need to be delivered from, for the first time, is your sins – your old way of life and to commit to a life of higher purpose and calling in Christ.

Some of us need to be delivered from those addictions that are literal *plagues* on our lives.

Some of us need to be delivered from a deep, still-scabbed *father wound* – abandonment, lack of affirmation or attention. We didn't have an example, a standard, to observe how to be a godly husband or father to our wives and children.

Some of us need to be delivered from our own past – from the sins of a previous marriage, from the demons of history that still taunt us with what we *used to be called*, rather than our *new name* carved on a white stone.

If you have not had a burning bush moment, a moment where your true identity changed, a moment that brought you out of hiding and denial into freedom and light, then *today* can be your deliverance.

Which leads to our **Equipping Point for today:**

Put your mask on first.

There's a reason they tell you to do this on an airplane. If you don't take care of yourself, you can't take care of those around you.

I'm so glad you're here – it means that you know *you* need to be filled before you can pour into others' lives. It means you know you need to put your own mask on first. It

means you know you need to deal with your own demons before you can lead others into the light – in other words, before you become a deliverer.

That's your charge today: Become a deliverer. Become the leader of your family that walks by faith through new territory. That trusts God to equip you because you've been called, not to call you because you're already so smart. Be a deliverer that has mowed down the false gods of his own life to be Jesus to others – to help deliver them from darkness and bondage.

You may not know how to relate to your wife on an emotional level. You may be clueless on how to deal with your strong-willed child. You may be unsure where to step professionally because of the economic climate.

Just remember, God equips the called. God goes before us just as He did Moses. Our marching orders are clear: first, admit what you need to be delivered from. Put your mask on first.

And then second, become a deliverer – equipped with daily manna, in a posture of prayer, one step at a time, as you lead your family and your marketplace “out of darkness and into His marvelous light.”