

*“Then Israel arrived in Egypt;
 Jacob lived as a foreigner in the land of Ham.
²⁴ And the Lord multiplied the people of Israel
 until they became too mighty for their enemies.
²⁵ Then he turned the Egyptians against the Israelites,
 and they plotted against the Lord’s servants.*

*²⁶ But the Lord sent his servant Moses,
 along with Aaron, whom he had chosen.
²⁷ They performed miraculous signs among the Egyptians,
 and wonders in the land of Ham.
²⁸ The Lord blanketed Egypt in darkness,
 for they had defied^[a] his commands to let his people go.
²⁹ He turned their water into blood,
 poisoning all the fish.
³⁰ Then frogs overran the land
 and even invaded the king’s bedrooms.
³¹ When the Lord spoke, flies descended on the Egyptians,
 and gnats swarmed across Egypt.
³² He sent them hail instead of rain,
 and lightning flashed over the land.
³³ He ruined their grapevines and fig trees
 and shattered all the trees.
³⁴ He spoke, and hordes of locusts came—
 young locusts beyond number.
³⁵ They ate up everything green in the land,
 destroying all the crops in their fields.
³⁶ Then he killed the oldest son in each Egyptian home,
 the pride and joy of each family.”*

Psalm 105:23-36 New Living Translation (NLT)

I am, I suppose at the core of my identity, a storyteller. And so, this ‘Campfire Series’ of stories in God’s Word is something I’m really going to enjoy, this summer. I learned to tell stories sitting around a campfire.

This message will be comprised of two parts:

1. The Storyline
2. The ‘So What?’

The Storyline: “The Ten Plagues of Egypt” found in Exodus chapter 3.

The book of Exodus in the Old Testament begins by recording that Jacob and his sons (including Joseph) all died in Egypt. But their families multiplied in number. A new king — and not the one who had shown such favor to Joseph and his family came to power. He feared the growing number of Israelites would become too great, and became a harsh ruler over them, forcing them into unspeakable bondage and servitude. The Bible says, in Exodus chapter 2 that ‘the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage,’ and God heard their groaning, and ‘remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.’ (Ex. 2:23-25)

God speaks to Moses, from a burning bush, and instructs him to go to Pharaoh, the ruler (and god) over all Egypt, and tell him that God says, “Let my people go.” Moses is skeptical about the reception he will receive from not only Pharaoh, but from the people of Israel, who have no clue about who Moses is. Moses says, “I don’t talk good.” So, God agrees to send along the brother of Moses, Aaron, who evidently does talk good, as a spokesperson. And ... God demonstrates in very specific ways, to Moses, His miraculous power, which will accompany Moses. A rod, the instrument God will use to bring Pharaoh to a place of releasing the Israelites.

Moses now returns to the land of Egypt, and ... 'Moses took the rod of God in his hand.' Upon his arrival, and without formal invitation or introduction, both he and Aaron walked into the presence of Pharaoh, and TOLD him, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.'" (Ex. 5:1)

Pharaoh not only says, "No." He makes the Israelites' lives even more miserable, demanding that they make the same amount of bricks as usual, but they must also gather their own straw with which to make those bricks. It is in the context of that miserable state the Israelites find themselves, that the stage is set for a series of encounters between Pharaoh, and Moses and Aaron, and ... God. God instructs Moses to confront Pharaoh, and demonstrate His power with the rod, which turns into a serpent when Aaron casts it down. But Pharaoh (who viewed himself as a god) has his own 'court magicians' drop their rods, which also turn into serpents. But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. And the Bible says, at the end of that encounter, that 'Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them as the Lord had said.'

THE DRAMA OF THE TEN PLAGUES

The First Plague: The Nile Turns to Blood (Ex. 7:15-25)

- God said, "By this shall you know that I am the Lord ..."
- The rod of Moses/Aaron strikes the water, and it turns to blood. (v. 7:20)
- The magicians 'did so with their enchantments'

Result of the First Plague: Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and unmoved. Went into his house.

The Second Plague: The Frogs (Ex. 8:1-15)

- God said, "Let my people go that they might serve me."
- Aaron stretched out the rod, and frogs came from everywhere.
- The magicians produced frogs, too! (Ex. 8:7)
- Pharaoh pleads: 'Ask God to take away the frogs, and I will let the people go ...'
- "Accept the honor of saying when ..." — and Pharaoh says, "Tomorrow."

Result of the Second Plague: Pharaoh hardened his heart, and did not 'heed them, as the Lord had said.' (8:15)

The Third Plague: Lice (or gnats) (Ex. 8:16-19)

- God said, 'Stretch out your rod and strike the dust of the land'
- Lice on man and beast
- The magicians couldn't make 'gnats' happen!
- Magicians see the 'Light!': 'This is the finger of God.'

Result of the Third Plague: Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them.

The Fourth Plague: Swarms of Flies (Ex. 8:20-32)

- God said, "Let my people go, that they may serve me or I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants, on your servants on your people, and into your houses."
- No flies in Goshen, where the Israelites are (a separation; a protected environment)
- God says, "I will make a difference between my people and your people"
- The land was 'corrupted' because of the flies
- Pharaoh relents, but on his own terms: "You can go, but not very far, and intercede for me."
- Stern warning from Moses: Don't deal deceitfully anymore. Tomorrow the flies will leave.

Result of the Fourth Plague: Pharaoh hardened his heart 'at this time, also; neither would he let the people go.' (v. 8:32)

The Fifth Plague: Disease of the Livestock of Egypt (Ex. 9:1-7)

- God said, "Let my people go, that they might serve me, or the hand of the Lord will be on your cattle in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the oxen, and on the sheep. There will be very severe pestilence."
- No animals from children of Israel die.

- All the livestock in Egypt died.

Result of the Fifth Plague: The heart of Pharaoh became hard and he did not let the people go. (v.7)

The Sixth Plague: Boils (Ex. 9:8-12)

- God said, “Take handfuls of ashes from the furnace and scatter it toward the heavens in the sight of Pharaoh.”
- Magicians couldn’t stand before Moses.
- Boils on man and beast.

Result of the Sixth Plague: The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not heed them, just as the Lord had spoken to Moses.

The Seventh Plague: Hail (Ex. 9:13-35)

- God said, “Let My people go, that they may serve me ...” (Ex. 9:13)
- God’s message/methods change, dramatically:
 - “At this time, I will send all my plagues to your very heart, and on your servants, and on your people, that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. Now, if I had stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, then you would have been cut off from the earth. But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show my power in you, and that my name may be declared in all the earth. As yet *you exalt yourself* against my people that you will not let them go.” (Ex. 9:14-17)
- Moses stretched out his rod: hail, and lightning unlike anything ever seen in Egypt before or since. None in Goshen, where the Israelites were.
- He who feared the word of the Lord among the servants made his servants and his livestock flee to the houses; he who did not regard the word of the Lord left his servants and his livestock in the field.
- Everything devastated!
- Pharaoh says, ‘I have sinned this time. The Lord is righteous, and my people and I are wicked. Entreat the Lord that there may be no more mighty thunder and hail. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.’
- “Let grace be shown to the wicked. Yet he will not learn righteousness. In the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord.” (Isa. 26:10)

Result of the Seventh Plague: When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder stopped, “he sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart, HE AND HIS SERVANTS.” So the heart of Pharaoh was hard.

The Eighth Plague: Swarms of Locusts (Ex. 10:1-20)

- God says, “Go in to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his servants, that I may show these signs of Mine before him, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and your son’s son the mighty things I have done in Egypt and my signs which I have done among them that you may know that I am the Lord.”
- God says, “How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let my people go, that they may serve me.” If not, a plague of locusts will eat what greenery is left in Egypt!
- Pharaoh’s servants plead with him.
- Pharaoh says the men can go; and throws Moses out!
- The locust swarms assault the land.
- Pharaoh calls for Moses and Aaron ‘in haste’ and says, “I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you. Now, therefore, please forgive my sin only this once, and entreat the Lord your God that He may take away from me this death only.”

Result of the Eighth Plague: Locusts were blown into the Red Sea, but the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart and he did not let the children of Israel go.

The Ninth Plague: Darkness Over All Egypt (Ex. 10:21-29)

- God says, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, darkness which may even be felt.”
- Three days of thick darkness in Egypt; the children of Israel had light.

- Pharaoh says, 'Go, but leave the livestock here.'
- Moses says, "We take our livestock, too."

Result of the Ninth Plague: The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not let them go. And he said to Moses, 'Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more. For in the day you see my face, you shall die. And Moses said, 'You have spoken well. I will never see your face again.'

The Tenth Plague: Angel of Death Destroys First-born in Every Household (Ex. 11:1-12:30)

- God says, "About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die."
- The Lord makes a difference between Egyptians and Israelites.
- Passover initiated...
 - A lamb, without blemish
 - Kill that lamb, and eat its roasted flesh, with bitter herbs and unleavened bread
 - Sprinkle the blood of that lamb on the lintel and doorposts of your house
 - "And when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you." (Ex. 12:23)

Result of the Tenth Plague: Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron by night and said, Rise and go out from among my people, both you, and the children of Israel. Go, serve the Lord as you have said. Also, take your flocks and your herds as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also." Even after all this, his heart was still hard. (12:30-32)

What's the 'So What?' of all of this?

1. *The cries of God's people never stop ... and God is listening.*
 "... I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, *for I know their sorrows*" (Ex. 3:7-8)
 • The crying never stops — Life, 101 — and the BEES!
 "For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies (Pharaohs!), but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places." (Eph. 6:12)
2. *God is sovereign. He works HIS way, for HIS purpose, and HIS glory.*
 "Even for this same purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be declared in all the earth." (Ex. 9:16)
 "For we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28)
3. *There's a REASON the 10th Plague stopped the discussion.*
 "... I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, *for I know their sorrows. So, I have come down to deliver them*" (Ex. 3:7-8)

The Lord Came Down ...

And the Lamb of God, who knew no sin walked among us.
 And we killed that innocent Lamb.
 That Crimson Stream flowed from His royal veins down, down, down
 Calvary's slope,
 And covered the doorpost of my sorry life.
 I did eat that Bread of Life; I did drink that sorrow-filled cup.
 Yes, the Lord came down and delivered me from that dark and dreary place.

And I will never stop praising Him.

Never ...
 Never...
 Never ...