



God wanted his people to live out his salvation in everyday life, to demonstrate morality, justice, and compassion in such a way that the whole world would see it and know that the God of Israel is the one true God.

God's greater story began when he created the universe out of a watery chaos (which he also had created). God's creation culminated in his formation of two humans, Adam and Eve, who were to live in relationship with him, one another and partner with him in caring for his world. However, they rebelled against the terms of their partnership with God and reintroduced chaos to the harmony of God's creation, relationship with one another and ultimately in relationship with God.

God began a long process of restoring harmony (the Bible calls it shalom) to his creation. What is truly amazing is that he chose to accomplish this process in partnership with people—the same created beings who had ruined it in the first place. He commands his created human beings to live lives that bring harmony to his creation and forbids whatever causes brokenness or prevents the restoration he desires. Into this story he invites the Hebrews, the descendants of the patriarchs, to partner with him so that through them the whole world will know of God's restoration of shalom.

## Sept. 6 **"Promised Land"** (Labor Day Weekend) **"Communion"**

*The Word:* Exodus 1:1-7

*Feel:* The landscape of Egypt, dominated by the Nile River, provides striking contrasts of lush, fertile farmland and vast, barren desert. How would God move them to the land he had chosen for them?

*Know:* Like the Israelites, have we forgotten that the mission of God's people has always been to live so that the world would know that their God was the true God? We too experience Egypt in our lives in the way of comfort, success, security, and pleasure. God is always at work all around you!

*Desired Outcome:* Who am I? Where did I come from? Where do I fit in? Where is my niche in life?

The answer: You are in Christ. My past is past, my future is bright, God's promises are true, and His Word is sure. With God as my helper, I will be all he wants me to be, do all he wants me to do, and receive all he wants me to receive. Ask God to open your spiritual eyes to recognize what he is doing.

## Sept. 13 **"Days of Darkness"**

*The Word:* Exodus 1: 8-22

*Feel:* The Egyptians made Israel into slaves and used them ruthlessly. Pharaoh brought about a genocide: the murder of the children. Why does God let this happen? Doesn't he see what is happening?

*Know:* All believers go through periods of spiritual dryness where they struggle with feelings of God's absence. Our present circumstances nor our perceptions of God's absence determine reality.

*Desired Outcome:* We doubt, and we struggle, but we trust God. Things are not the way they ought to be, but we rest in God's promise that he is always at work around us. How are you developing a God-centered perspective?

## Sept. 20 “God Heard Their Cry”

*The Word:* Exodus 2:1-25

*Feel:* Chaos is something God never desired for his creation. He always intended his creation to exist in perfect harmony and order, and he has a plan to restore that shalom to individuals and to creation itself.

*Know:* God used a cruel Pharaoh who treated the Hebrews brutally. The people cried out for help. God heard their cry and initiated his plan to deliver them not only from slavery to Pharaoh but from their bondage to Egypt’s story (culture & influence). God pursues a continuing love relationship with us that is real and personal.

*Desired Outcome:* When those who suffer under the brutal evil of “kingdom of chaos” cry out, God notices and moves his church to act. The question is, will we also hear the cries of those who are suffering? Will we join with God in his story and be his partners in bringing healing, hope, and shalom to people in chaos?

## Sept. 27 “God Chose a Partner”

*The Word:* Exodus 3: 1-22

*Feel:* The theme of Exodus is *deliverance*, and you can’t have deliverance without a deliverer. That is where Moses comes in, the great liberator, legislator, and mediator.

*Know:* We often focus our attention on the work of the people whom God chooses as his partners in accomplishing his plan rather than on the work God is doing. But God is always working alongside his partners to fulfill his plan. God chose Moses to be his messenger as well as bring his message.

*Desired Outcome:* God invites you to become involved with him in his work. God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal himself, his purposes, and his ways.

## Oct. 4 “A Crisis of Belief” World Communion Sunday

*The Word:* Exodus 4:1-31

*Feel:* God wants a watching world to come to know who he truly is, even the Egyptians & Pharaoh.

*Know:* God’s invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action. Many people miss out on experiencing God’s mighty power working through them. If they can’t understand exactly how everything’s going to happen, they won’t proceed.

*Desired Outcome:* Faith is more than just belief. Biblical faith always requires action. God doesn’t want you to merely believe what he says. He wants you to obey what he commands. Where is God stretching you to act?

## Oct. 11 “Let My People Go”

*The Word:* Exodus 5-6:27

*Feel:* In Egypt, Pharaoh, in cooperation with the gods, kept order so that life would be pleasant and free from the destruction of chaos.

*Know:* You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what he is doing. God’s two ambassadors, Moses and Aaron, had one message from the Lord to inform Pharaoh: “Let My people go—or else!” Pharaoh’s responses to Moses and Aaron were predictable: he rejected God’s command, disdained the miracles Moses and Aaron performed, and deliberately hardened his heart against the Lord.

*Desired Outcome:* Worldview matters because it shapes a society. It defines morality, determines values, and describes proper behavior. What are the stories that shape the culture and society in which we live? Review Luke 12:22-34 In what ways could you personally and as part of a faith community, express and live out a worldview that is consistent with God’s story?

## Oct. 18 “Revelations of God’s Power”

*The Word:* Exodus 7- 10 (8:19-this is the finger of God)

*Feel:* Why did God chose to use ten different plagues to communicate his message? Were they simply random displays of his power?

*Know:* Through Moses, God acted so powerfully and dramatically that there could be no mistake about who he was. Both the Israelites and the Egyptians discovered that God was greater than Egypt’s gods. Our difficulty in following God isn’t that we don’t know his will. Our discomfort comes from the fact that we do know his will, but we don’t want to do it. You come to know God by experience as you obey him. Sometimes God leads you to do things you won’t fully understand until you’ve done them.

*Desired Outcome:* You experience God’s mighty power at work in and through you, when you walk by faith, make major adjustments, and obey whatever God tells you to do. What does it look like in your life to be a part of something really big & join in God’s redemptive plan to bring shalom into the lives of people around you?

## Oct. 25 Reformation Day “Preparing to Leave Egypt Behind”

*The Word:* Exodus 11-12:13

*Feel:* Did you know the animals normally sacrificed to God by the descendants of Abraham included sheep and cows, both of which were sacred to the Egyptians?

*Know:* Through the exodus experience, God was creating something new with his people. This was a fundamental change in belief, worldview, and way of life.

*Desired Outcome:* As Christians, our identity is based on the death and resurrection of Jesus. His sacrifice as the Lamb of God, which actually took place on Passover, is the redemptive “exodus” that led to our freedom from bondage to sin and chaos. As a follower of Jesus, in what ways might you live more passionately, obediently, and gratefully if you focused on the great beginning that led you into a new identity in partnership with God?

## Nov. 1 “A Night of Watching” Communion

*The Word:* Exodus 12:14-36

*Feel:* With the tenth plague, it was time for the Israelites to become active participants and not just observers. God gave them an active role that required them to take steps of faith.

*Know:* God instituted Passover laws and commanded the Hebrews to relive the Passover ritual every year. He wanted future generations to remember that first Passover in Egypt, that great moment of redemption, when God rescued his people from the chaos of Egypt and led them toward a new life of shalom in the Promised Land.

*Desired Outcome:* We too face difficult challenges and “long nights” when we must choose whether or not to trust the God who watches over everyone who obediently trusts him. In which area(s) of life do you face a difficult challenge for which you need God to watch over you and act powerfully on your behalf?

## Nov. 8 (Prayer for the Persecuted Church) “God Delivered His People”

*The Word:* Exodus 12:37-14:4

*Feel:* They were no longer slaves, but the Egyptians were driving them out of the only land, culture, and occupations they has ever known. What did the future hold for them?

*Know:* God chose a longer and more difficult route to the Promised Land in order to build faith and flee fear.

*Desired Outcome:* It’s far to easy for Christians to make mental commitments to God and yet not know him as he desires to be known and trust him fully in response to his redemptive acts. Consider what trust in God meant for the Israelites and what it means in your world. How deeply rooted is your faith and trust in God and his Word evidenced by your thoughts and actions toward him?

## Nov. 15 **“Trapped Against the Sea”**

*The Word:* Exodus 14:5-21a

*Feel:* Once again the Israelites had to choose whether or not they would trust in their God to be with them as he had promised.

*Know:* Where would God’s people turn for help? Last time they were crying out and the LORD heard their cry. Once again they had to choose whether or not they would trust in their God to be with them as he had promised. *“They were terrified and cried out to the LORD!”* v10 Compare to Exodus 2:23 where they cried out.

*Desired Outcome:* God still molds and shapes his people. He knows what he desires his people to become, and he knows what it will take to train them in his ways. Whether the circumstances he uses to accomplish his purposes are comfortable, uncomfortable, or even painful, he remains loving, patient, and faithful.

## Nov. 22 (Thanksgiving on Thur, 26<sup>th</sup>) **“God’s Sovereign Power on Display”**

*The Word:* Exodus 14:19-31

*Feel:* The Israelites had been immersed in Egypt’s culture for so long that it seems they needed a “refresher course” in knowing their God.

*Know:* It’s hard for us to imagine the power of ancient Egypt. We see ruins of amazing temples, pyramids, and other evidence of a great civilization. Try to imagine the reverence, fear, and awe that people felt toward Pharaoh, who was viewed as the one person who kept Egypt safe, fed, and prosperous. How about Pharaoh himself? God demonstrated his sovereign power against Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt for the last time as they once again refused to accept him as the one, true, all-powerful, Creator God.

*Desired Outcome:* Think of how patient and compassionate God was in showing himself to Pharaoh and the Egyptians through the plagues, when he could have totally destroyed them at the beginning. How does what God did that night apply to your understanding of faith and your view of God’s character?

## Nov. 29 **“The LORD Reigns”**

*The Word:* Exodus 15:1-21

*Feel:* Imagine what it would have been like to stand on the eastern shore of the Red Sea with the ancient Hebrews and celebrate God’s spectacular deliverance and proclaim his reign as Lord.

*Know:* What God had accomplished in the Hebrew’s hearts and minds was as dramatic and powerful as his redeeming acts in the crossing of the Red Sea and the Hebrews knew it. In Eastern fashion, they danced and sang a praise-filled song about their sovereign, all-powerful, one-and-only God who had watched over them and redeemed them from Egypt.

*Desired Outcome:* If we stand with the Israelites and seek to understand and celebrate their deliverance as they experienced it, we will appreciate more fully the grace-filled message and work of Jesus the Messiah. We also will be more responsive to the challenges, responsibilities, and privileges of being disciples of Jesus who are eager participants in God’s amazing story and are committed to obey his will (Revelation 4:11).