

MY Exodus

A PRAYER COMPANION FOR A SEASON OF **TRANSITION**, DEATH TO SELF, OR TRUSTING GOD THROUGH **NUMBERS, EXODUS, AND DEUTERONOMY.**

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- Take about a week to work through these pages!

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- Designed for two pages per two days, but go at your own pace!
- Depending on your pace, you can spend 35-60 days here

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Welcome.

Welcome to the desert.

Allow me to begin by telling you my story. On my twenty-ninth birthday, I looked at myself in the mirror with a bit of disappointment. I was out of style, overweight, drinking sugar-loaded coffees twice a morning to maintain energy to care for my baby, and addicted to social media. I spent evenings binging Netflix when I didn't have immediate chores to do. The passion projects I had been working on for months didn't come to fruition, and I felt stalled.

It was time to change. My husband knew it. I knew it. Together, we took tentative steps towards a workout plan, downloaded calorie counting apps, and falteringly took a week of 'being intentional about our habits'. It did very little. Then, one morning, in prayer, I felt a strong conviction to go to the book of Exodus. I had been teaching the Old Testament for a few years at this point, and I was familiar with the story of the Exodus. That morning, God spoke to me that he was taking me on an *exodus of my own*. I, like my ancestors in faith before me, worshipped false idols, sacrificed to the "god" of Comfort, and was enslaved by bad habits. It was *God's word* that moved me to more serious action. My husband and I got to work, and truly committed. We started to change. We started to feel freedom. And with it, I started to feel the weight of my little failures. The Israelites in the desert also stumbled and fell, and each morning in my prayer, I felt the Lord show me their story as consolation to my humiliated heart. This season was not the most pleasant. I confronted my own selfish and indulgent heart again and again. But eventually, I grew. Just like the Israelites, I followed God through the desert.

I am still working. But now, I am confident that I'm out of the 'desert' and into the Promised Land. I'm still fighting battles, but I'm not in Egypt anymore.

Maybe this is why you're here. *Do you recognize your own slavery, and do you longing for freedom?* Trust me, God longs for your freedom too. He wants to lead you out. For me, my idols were surrounding physical health and self-control. For you, your idols might be different. Maybe it's not snoozing the alarm and overeating but anxiety and gossip, or discouragement and laziness. Whatever it is, this prayer companion is here to guide you through the desert, chapter by chapter with the Lord. Welcome to your own personal exodus.

Jesus Christ will set us free.



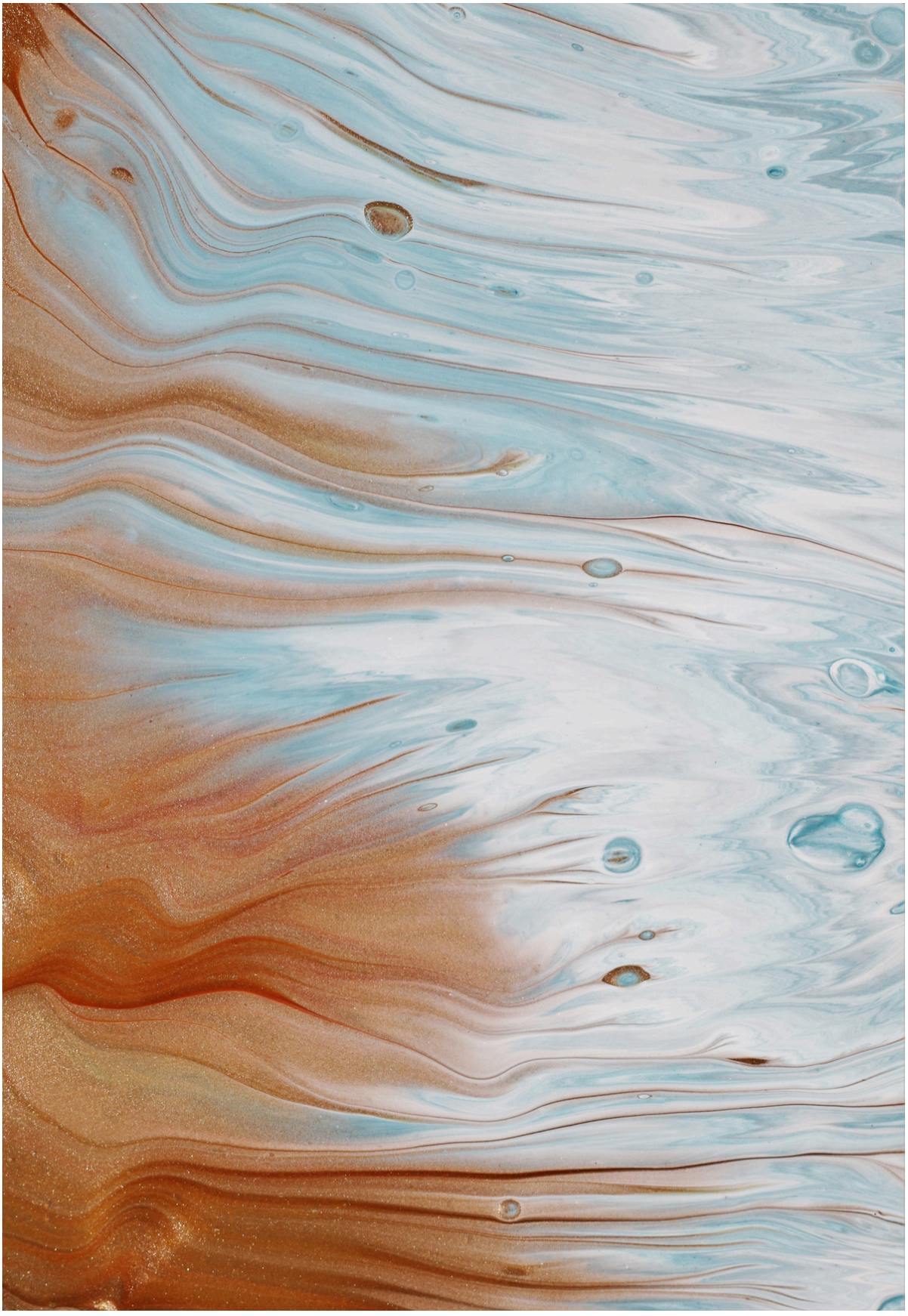
The Original Exodus

The story of the Exodus appears - as you would imagine - in the book Exodus. The first five books of the Bible are (probably) written by Moses, and the books Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy are all about the events of Moses' life. More specifically, they're about one event: God setting his people free from slavery. This is called "The Exodus."

If you've never read or heard this story before, allow me to recommend the classic movie The Prince of Egypt to give you a fantastic visual (though not always Biblically accurate) portrayal of Moses' life. You can also start reading at the very beginning of Exodus to catch up on the details of his life as a baby, an adopted Egyptian prince, and a murderer. He was called by God through a mystical burning bush when he was a shepherd in the desert, to come back to Egypt and to petition the pharaoh to let the Israelite slaves go free.

The Israelites were enslaved in the first place because they had left their Promised Land, their beloved homeland. A famine had struck the land, and they had journeyed to Egypt in order to find food. When they arrived, they found to their amazement that the very brother that they had sold into slavery - and presumed dead - years earlier was second in command in Egypt. He gave them land and moved the whole family down to Egypt. In time, the Israelite population grew and threatened the Pharaoh, who had them enslaved and oppressed for 400 years. (Joseph's story is found in Genesis 37-50 and is totally worth the read!)

So, Exodus opens with the Israelite people in slavery. They don't even know God anymore. They barely remember their national identity. They half-heartedly cry out to him, not really ever expecting him to answer. But he *does*. He sends Moses to set them free, and through a series of 10 plagues, each of which correspond to a specific false Egyptian god, the Pharaoh finally lets them go. They cross the Red Sea and start their journey through the desert to the Promised Land. God has done it! He has gotten the people out of Egypt! But, what you'll find in this Prayer Companion as we slowly walk through these books alongside the Israelites is that there is another task to do: to get Egypt *out* of the people.



New Exodus

Jesus came to lead a *New Exodus*. He acts as the New Moses, leading his people out of slavery to sin through the waters of Baptism, through the blood of the Lamb (himself). In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul explains the typology in detail. He concludes, “Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.” (1 Cor 10:14). That’s our starting point.

What started my personal Exodus was this verse from Ezekiel 36:26:

“A new heart I will give you, a new spirit I will put within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”

That verse is a prophetic promise from God to his people. It’s to you and me. See, I have been baptized. I was baptized almost thirty years ago, when I was a baby. That was my ‘Red Sea’, technically. But I never took the “Exodus” personally. Let’s go back. Claim the freedom Jesus won for you. Follow Jesus through the Red Sea, into the desert. Flee from idolatry. Let him set you free from all those disguised idols like Comfort and Screen Time and Food and Using Humor to Deflect.

When I started, I made a vision board page with this verse. In the next page, I invite you to do that. Write Ezekiel’s words BIG across the page. Decorate it. Add imagery. Use words to describe where you are right now, what your ‘heart of stone’ looks like. This is your starting point; you must believe that this is what God intends for you: to set you free.

Mission Statement

Before we go into the daily routine of diving into Scripture, let's ask the Lord to help us craft a mission statement. As Simon Sinek instructs us, let's *start with why.*

Take these questions to prayer. Journal. Process with the Lord. And when you come back, fill out the mission statement at the bottom of this page.

1. What are the things I'm spending the most time and energy on in life right now?
2. Make a chronological timeline of your high's and low's of this past month. Look for patterns.
3. What kind of behaviors am I repeatedly doing that are not life-giving, holy, or healthy?
4. What 'false idols' do I 'worship'? Another way of asking this is, 'What do I care most about in life right now? What do I prioritize above everything else, even God?'
5. What are you 'enslaved' to? Another way of asking this is, 'What habits control my life, steal my time, and leave me feeling like I don't have any time or choices?' Do I have a legitimate addiction to something?
6. How do I envision my best, holiest, happiest, healthiest self looking, talking, and acting? Describe him/her. Describe freedom.

Mission Statement: God is leading me out of slavery to _____ into freedom in the Promised Land of _____.

Use this page if you need more space to brain dump.

Ask the Lord

Now you have a mission statement! Now, we need to check in with the Lord.

Jesus says to his disciples, “Apart from me, you can do nothing.” A great temptation of the Christian life is to DIY ourselves into holiness. You and I can look at our imperfections and write our own course of action to remedy our flaws, but this won’t lead us to sanctity. Our faith is about relationship with God. We have to trust him to lead.

When I began my exodus, I looked at all the things I didn’t like about myself and listed my temper as the top problem. Anger, after all, is one of the seven deadly sins. I need to work on gentleness, I decided.

But, I paused to ask the Lord. It was a double-check, really. Surely, he’d agree with my that my horrendous temper was at the top of my list. But no. I felt a very simple nudge from the Lord, “I want you to be joyful.”

Joyful?!

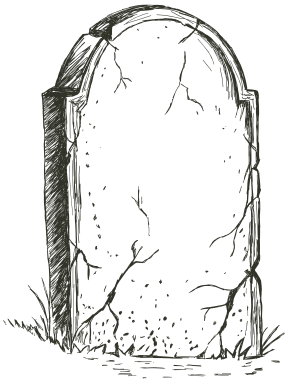
I used to be joyful. But I outgrew it. I felt like it was childish and unrealistic. I needed to be sharp, honest, and quick. The girls who were joyful weren’t great leaders or thinkers. They were just...pleasant.

I had idols I didn’t even know about. Idols of capability, reputation, accomplishment, and intelligence. The Lord’s dream for you isn’t always what your dream is for yourself. Sometimes, we have to detach from even our ‘dream self’ to let God lead us. He knows our hearts, and he knows what we need. It took an entire exodus season for me to even arrive at a season of intentionally working on joy, but I needed to see that long-term dream God had for me: to be joyful again.

So before you go on, ask God: *What is your dream for my freedom? Who do you want me to become?* Edit your mission statement accordingly.

The Idols' Graveyard

This is a page to draw your idols. Draw them however you see them in your mind's eye. Throughout our exodus, we will come back here and ask God to go to war with these idols for our freedom. The first step is admitting what they are.



Psalm 18

About God going to war for you to set you free;
Begin with meditating on this, and return to it whenever you need.
In the space below, write down the passages from the psalm that stick out to you most.

Part 2: Getting into Scripture

Exodus 12

About This Passage

This chapter is about the Passover event that God instructed the Israelites to do in order to be safe from the 10th plague. Some things to note:

- Each of the 10 plagues corresponded directly to an Egyptian god/idol. You can think of the 10 plagues as God's "exorcism" of Egypt.
- God didn't actually originally ask for the Pharaoh to release the slaves to freedom, only to release them for 3 days to be able to worship him in the wilderness. His demand changed when the Pharaoh refused.
- This 10th plague of killing the firstborn matches with the Pharaoh's command to kill the firstborn Hebrews (the massacre that Moses was born into).
- This Passover meal is the original event, but it becomes an annual feast for the Jews to remember God's power. Jesus grew up celebrating the Passover. In fact, he celebrated the Passover with his disciples at the Last Supper - and he turned it into the First Mass. There are many roots of the Catholic Mass in the Passover.
- Jesus is the New Passover Lamb. Note the similarities between him and the lamb in 12:5 + onward (male, without blemish, not a bone broken).
- Part of the Passover is eating the flesh of the lamb, which is what we do in the Eucharist today.
- . Notice in 12:35 that they actually take Egyptian jewels as they go!
- The blood of the lamb is a powerful symbol of salvation, because it's literally the thing that saved the Jews at Passover, and the blood of the Lamb, Jesus, shed on the cross, saved us. 12:13 details how they are to put blood over their doorposts.

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

This whole process of praying through these books of the Bible hinge on the right perspective: that the original Exodus mirrors the Exodus in our hearts. God, through Moses, leads the people to freedom from slavery in Egypt. This starts with the Passover. You and I are led to freedom from slavery to our idols too, and our Passover is the Mass. The Mass is the Last Supper & the Cross combined. It's the event by which God sets his people free. You and I have salvation accessible to us because of the blood of the Passover Lamb Jesus, and because of his death and resurrection. That's the Passover for us. (It's MUCH better than the Passover for the Israelites.)

If you haven't taken much time to meditate on the crucifixion and death of Jesus, and how he died so that you wouldn't have to, then start there. That's the heart of this. We can be free, because *he died to set us free.*

Attending Mass more often during this period of your exodus can be so powerful, if you're able. I recommend diving into how the Mass & Passover are so closely linked, through books like The Lamb's Supper by Dr. Scott Hahn. I recommend https://masscominfo.tumblr.com/ for great graphics on the Mass, and there's a Teaching Mass on Formed.Org that can walk you through the meaning. In my experience, this is when I disliked going to Mass the most. It felt like anything that could inconvenience me did so. Every Sunday, I felt too tired, too busy, too late, too annoyed to go. I showed up anyways, and I encourage you to do the same. Incorporate praying with the Sunday readings into your weekly prayer, so you're prepared. Add in a weekly daily mass into your schedule, if possible. Listen to homilies about the Sunday Gospel in the days after it (Fr. Mike puts his homilies on the Ascension App, but there's a handful of amazing Catholic priests who put their homilies up as well. I recommend 'Holiness for the Working Day' by Fr. James Searby and 'Slaking Thirsts' by Fr. Pat Schultz.) **In your first day in the exodus, build a plan that centers you around your Passover - the Mass.**

Exodus 13

About This Passage

Here, we see the very first things the Israelites do when they leave Egypt.

- The are told immediately to remember what God did through the feast of Unleavened Bread. (This is a theme of this entire section: REMEMBER.)
- They are instructed to consecrate the firstborn (again to remember what God did.) This is why Jesus is brought to the temple to be presented; he is Mary's first-born (and only) child.
- The pillars of cloud and fire accompany the people throughout their time in the desert. You can see cross-references about them in Exodus 40:34-38, Numbers 9:15-23, 1 Kings 8:10-11.
- Exodus 13:11 + onward talks about the consecration of the firstborn to the Lord. Each firstborn belonged to the Lord, and the family had to 'redeem' him back. The Holy Family brought Jesus to the Temple after his birth and they did the ritual offering of the doves for Mary & her purification after birth, but they never paid the five shekels to redeem Jesus. He was consecrated to the Lord and never "bought back" from the Lord.
- Exodus 13:19 specifies that they take the bones of Joseph! Joseph made them promise to do this in the end of Genesis (Genesis 50:24-26). [Just think that someone's job was to carry the bones of Joseph this whole time!]

Different Directions to Take It:

- Can you set up a daily habit or system to **remember** what God has done for you?
- Maybe it's time to map it out. Write out where God has led you in the past, and how he has protected & provided for you. Make a timeline of your life, or perhaps just your past year. What are the highs and lows? Can you really make it detailed, so you can see where you have been?

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

At the very beginning here, God makes this interesting decision in Exodus 13:17-18. He is leading them out of Egypt and he chooses to take them a longer route to avoid enemies because *he does not want his people to be scared.* "If the people face war, they may change their minds and return to Egypt," he says. It's ***day one*** of leaving slavery, and God knows his people are vulnerable and scared and not ready to trust him fully. He doesn't seem bothered by this. He just makes good choices for them. Will they probably complain that they're going "the long way"? Yes. Will they not see what he's doing? Probably. But he's making a decision to care for and **protect** his people. Your journey here - your exodus - is challenging. God knows it. He is leading you, and he is aware of what you can and cannot do. Trust him to set the pace and set the course you will be able to go.

I also love the pillar of cloud & fire mentioned here. We may not be able to see God present so clearly in our lives. I, for one, do not have a pillar of fire traveling with me about my day. But, I started to ask for eyes to see the pillar of cloud and fire in my day. Where were the places I noticed his presence? Some people call them "God winks" - little ways God shows up. One of my friends says God speaks to her in sending ladybugs. My sister and I find God speaks to us through humor. Another friend of mine says whenever he sees light filtering through tree branches, he thinks God did that for him. As you go into this desert, look for the presence of God with you.

Exodus 14

About This Passage

This is the iconic story of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea!

- After every single plague came, the Pharaoh momentarily told Moses the people could go, but changed his mind. Here, he does it again. He gathers his armies and chases the Israelites.
- The staff that God gave to Moses is the instrument to part the Red Sea. This is different than the staff of Aaron, which turns into a snake and which is kept in the Ark of the Covenant.
- The Egyptians who pursued the Israelites across the Red Sea were drowned.
- Though it's not in the Bible explicitly, Hebrew tradition holds that Nahshon, the leader of the tribe of Judah who is in the bloodline of Jesus, was the first one to step into the sea once it was parted, as an act of leadership and faith!

Different Directions to Take It:

- The Red Sea represents Baptism. We go through the waters to freedom. Pull up the Baptismal Promises & pray with those! Pray with your own Baptism - when and where was it? Do you know your Godparents? Do you have your Baptismal Candle?
- What is your Red Sea?
- Have you witnessed moments in your life of God making a way?
- Pray with the song 'Waymaker' by Leeland .
- Pray with the song 'No Longer Slaves' by Bethel.

Your Turn!

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Moni's Thoughts

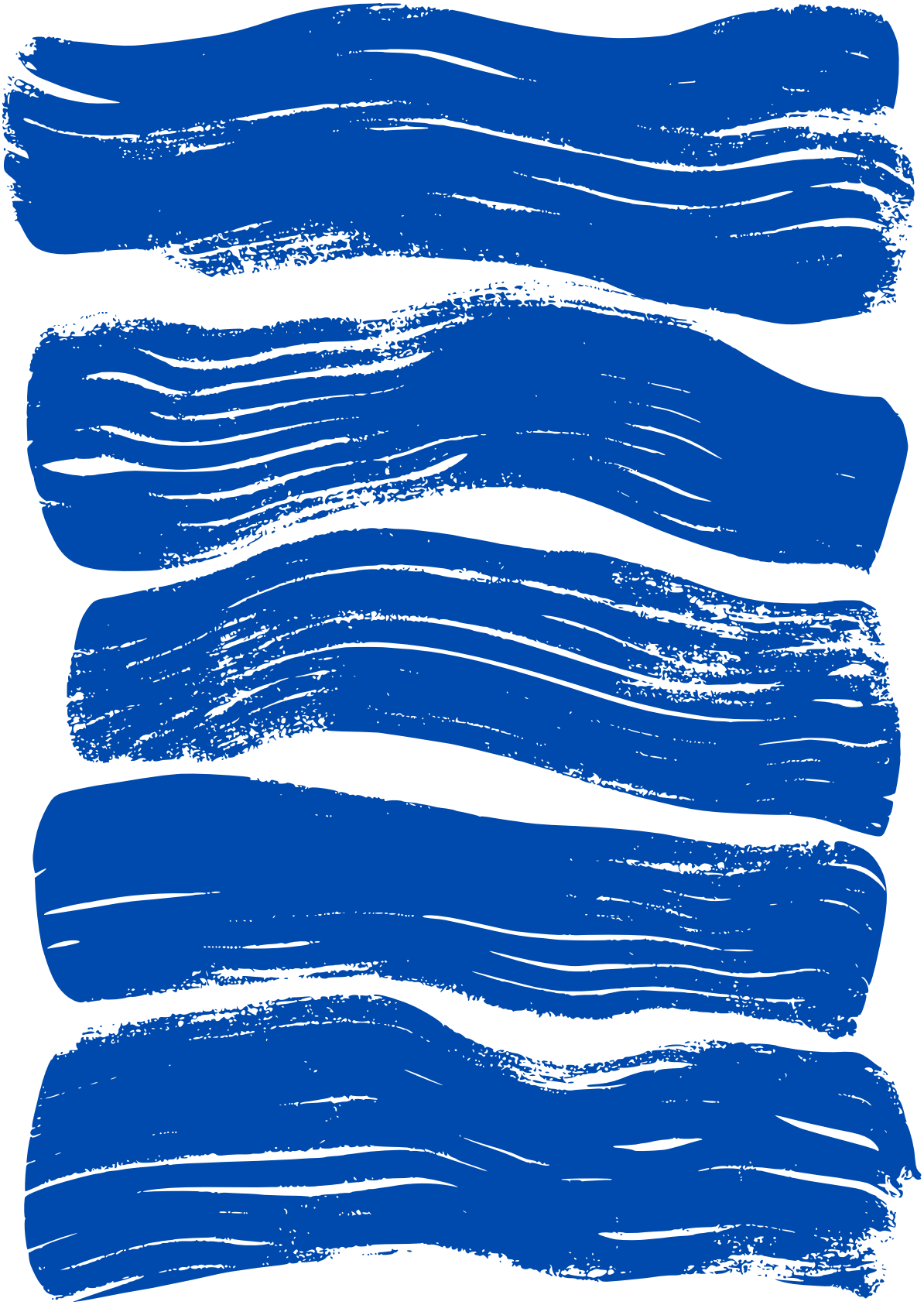
Verse 17 shows that God intentionally hardens the hearts of the Egyptians; he wants the enemy to be defeated in front of the Israelites. He wants to show the Israelites that they are safe with him, and that he is stronger than their Egyptian masters. In verse 25, the Egyptians realize this truth. "The Egyptians said, 'Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them.'" This is a truth I hold when I'm afraid. Evil flees from the children of God, for God fights for us.

Exodus 14:14 is a tender verse as well. "The Lord will fight for you. You only have to keep still." It reminds me of Psalm 46:10, "Be still and know that I am God." It led me to ask where in my life am I fighting or resisting God's movements? Where am I refusing to be 'still'?

Verse 11 is really relatable to me. The people panic. Change is hard. At the beginning of my exodus, I'm forming habits. I'm 'starting to push the flywheel' in Jim Collin's analogy. It has no momentum. It's hard. It's heavy. I'm trying new disciplines. This doesn't feel like a time to "be still". It makes me want to panic!

But remember, just a moment after being told to keep still, the Red Sea opens. Then, it's no longer time to be still - it's time to run hard across the sea to get to safety.

I've done workout programs, diets, and New Years' Resolutions before. Those were all guided by me, myself, and I. This exodus season is different. It's guided by God, and it doesn't always make sense. He isn't just delivering you from your idols. He's bringing you into relationship with him. Lean into his pace.



YOUR SEA



The Red Sea is a big deal. In fact, water is a big deal in Scripture. Water is a scary thing for humans. We can die in it pretty rapidly. It covers most of our planet, makes up most of our bodies, is necessary for our survival, and comes in wild forms like hurricanes and tsunamis to rip our land apart.

Let's take a day or two to move through the Bible with water on our minds.

- Exodus 14:22 - God parts the Red Sea for the Israelites
- Joshua 1:16 - God parts the Jordan River for the Israelites
- Matthew 3:13 - Jesus is baptized in the Jordan River
- Matthew 14:22 - Jesus walks on the water
- Mark 4:35 - Jesus calms the storm
- John 2:1 - Jesus turns water into wine
- John 4:7 - Jesus asks for water

What if, for a moment, we imagine that the water is a *part of us*. We have a Sea within us, representing our fear or doubt or distrust. Look at God's interaction with water. He isn't afraid of it. He walks on it, parts it, calms it, changes it, and asks for it.

Take some time, using the visual of water, to draw out your fears, insecurities, false beliefs, doubts, sins, feelings of shame, etc. Let them all be one deep and dangerous sea.

Then turn back again to these passages.

- Read Exodus 14 again, with the eyes of God parting your sea.
- Read about Peter sinking into the sea and Jesus saving him and teaching him to walk on top of it (Matthew 14:30).
- Read the Samaritan woman's accusation of Jesus, "You have no bucket, and the well is deep." How are you going to get into the depths of my water, Jesus? *You don't even have a bucket*. How do you think you're going to set me free when I have this deep deep well of doubt and fear?

Exodus 15

About This Passage

This is the song of Moses!

- This is repeated in Deuteronomy 32. Compare and contrast the slight differences in account!
- There are other places in scripture where people respond to God's goodness with songs of praise. Notably, Hannah gives thanks for her son Samuel in 1 Samuel 1, and Mary gives her Magnificat in thanks for her son Jesus in Luke 1!
- After the song, the people arrive in Marah, and God works his first "desert miracle" for them - he makes the bitter water turn sweet.

Different Directions to Take It:

- Don't skip over this song of Moses. Sing it aloud, choosing a tune for yourself!
- Write your own song - "The Song of You", recounting God's amazing actions in your life and thanking him for them! Notice that they thank him before he's finished setting them free. They're not in the Promised Land yet, but they praise him on the way.
- Pray with the songs 'Hard Fought Hallelujah' and 'Praise You Anywhere' by Brandon Lake if you don't feel like praising God.
- In the movie The Prince of Egypt, the Song of Moses is portrayed in a victorious amazing song 'When You Believe'. The movie places it before the Red Sea, and it paraphrases the words (the part sung in Hebrew is the Song of Moses part) but it captures the joy and gratitude and is worth praying with !

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

Exodus 15:25 - "and the water became *sweet."* Here at the beginning of changing, I feel bitter. I feel like the early mornings and workouts and meal prepping and strict choices I'm making at bitter. I long for the sweetness of indulgence. I'm pining for my idols of Comfort and Desserts. Being out in the desert is bitter, and I know I have a long way to go. Maybe you feel the same.

Look at what the Lord does here. He doesn't make new water appear (though he could), or turn the bitter water into wine (though he could), or surprise them with an oasis (though he could!) He takes what's already there, what they have already wrinkled their noses at - *ew, God that water is bitter!* - and he makes *that* sweet. I can testify from the 'other side' that God made my bitter choices sweet. Discipline, routine, rhythm, healthy swaps, early mornings - these eventually didn't feel so bitter. They felt sweet. They felt good. They will for you as well. Today, ask God for supernatural sweetness in the bitterness of your new choices. He has done it before; he can make your bitter water sweet.

Pay attention to this declaration he makes and this name he gives himself right after this miracle. Verse 26 ends with, **"I am the Lord who heals you."** This exodus journey is a healing of the disordered parts of our hearts. I know - seems like a strong word. But whenever we get attached to something that isn't God, and we treat it like an idol, and we can't part from it, and we use it to comfort ourselves - it's disordered. The exodus is about God re-ordering the hearts of his people to himself, where true fulfillment comes from. God, do it again in us!

Exodus 16

About This Passage

This is about manna.

- Manna is the bread that miraculously fell from Heaven to feed the people in the desert. It points forward to the Eucharist, Jesus, the True Bread from Heaven. Jesus talks about this at length in John 6.
- Notice how the instructions about the manna are detailed. The people cannot save it or ration it; they cannot rely on themselves. They have to trust that God will give it each day.
- Notice how they did not obey Moses' command to only take what they needed, and the disobedient ones got worms in their bread.
- This is where the idea of "daily bread" comes from in the Our Father.

Different Directions to Take It:

- Pray with the words of the Our Father slowly, meditating on the trust it takes to ask for daily bread.
- Pray with the song 'Daily Bread' by Elyssa Figueroa.
- Pray with the 'Be Satisfied with Me' prayer by Anthony of Padua.
- Pray with the Litany of Trust.

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

Exodus 16:19: "And Moses said to them 'Let no one leave any of it over until morning', but they did not listen to Moses."

Some gathered more manna, and some gathered less. Some people overestimated their need. I can picture them scooping up manna desperately, packing into their baskets as much as they could, in the fear that this was their only opportunity to ensure they would eat in awhile. Despite the promise of daily provision, despite the instruction of trust, they hid their manna. They kept it overnight. They thought Moses wouldn't know. They thought to themselves, 'When everyone else is hungry tomorrow, I'll still have my manna!' They believed nobody was going to look out for them; they had to look out for themselves. On the Sabbath, they were told there would be no manna. They sneaked out anyways, just to be sure. They wanted to double check. In other areas of life, sure, they could trust Moses' leadership. But here? No. This was something they felt they could control, and they were not going to give up that feeling.

Oh, dang.

That sounds a lot like my heart.

Where do you not trust that God will show up? Where do you take care of yourself?

Exodus 17: 1-7

About This Passage

This is about Massah and Meribah.

- Massah means to complain.
- Meribah means to fight bitterly.
- This was not a pleasant stop on the journey. The people complained and feared for their lives. They were thirsty, and they didn't know how or when God would provide.
- Moses' response was to turn to God in his need. In a similar story in Numbers 20, Moses again is confronted with the people thirsting. In Numbers 20, we do not see Moses crying out to God so quickly. In the end, in Numbers, Moses makes an executive decision that disobeys God's order. He does what he knows: he hits the rock. That's when he is punished and not allowed to enter the Promised Land. That story harkens back to this event, when God told Moses to hit the rock. This event, in which Moses was obedient, gave him false confidence that he could provide for the people instead of rely on God.

Different Directions to Take It:

- Read Numbers 20 and compare. Numbers 20 is a difficult story, because we see Moses - the friend of God, the mighty prophet - punished for a seemingly minor sin.
- Go to where Jesus thirsts in John 19, and pray with the idea of thirst. What do you thirst for?
- Pray with the "I Thirst" prayer of Mother Teresa.

Your Turn!

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Moni's Thoughts

Exodus 17:4: So Moses cried out to the Lord. This passage struck me, because Moses immediately brings his frustrations to God. I, too get frustrated by life. My child, my daily duties, little circumstances in my day - these things sometimes draw even rage out of me. I want the heart Moses demonstrates here: a heart that turns to God immediately. It's his first reaction. It's his instinct. He is walking so closely and leaning so heavily on God that when trial hits, he says, "God, what do we do?"

In contrast, in the story of Numbers 20, when Moses is at that same rock again with several decades of desert leadership under his belt, his heart has changed. Yes, he asks God what to do. But it's different. He and Aaron depart from the people and go visit God in the tabernacle. In my opinion, it feels like a duty. It feels like Moses is rolling his eyes, and Aaron is saying, "Let's get over to that tent, yeah?" Because as soon as they leave the tent, Moses disobeys anyways. I imagine that in his heart, he already said, "I've been here before. I know what to do. I'll just hit the darn thing. I've done this before." So when God tells him to speak to the rock, Moses doesn't.

I wrestle with this concept, that God can allow things to *work* even if it's not what he commanded. Water still comes from the rock in Numbers 20 just like it did here in Exodus 17. Why did God let that happen? Why did he bless the self-reliance and disobedience of Moses? I'm not sure, but it's a word of warning to my heart. I do not want to 'make it work' outside of God's command. Perhaps the people celebrated that Moses got them water, but he suffered damage in the most important relationship he had. He 'gained the world' but lost his 'soul'.

Exodus 17: 8-14

About This Passage

This is about when the Amalek people attack the Israelites and God gives them victory.

- The Amaleks attack the Israelites when they are barely out of Eygpt. They haven't been in the desert even three months when they have to go to war. Because of this, they are cursed for many generations.
- Verse 16 says, "The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."
    - In 1 Samuel 15, King Saul is told to utterly destroy the Amaleks, but he doesn't. This is one of the major sins of Saul.
    - Haman, the bad guy in Esther, is an Amalek descendent.

Different Directions to Take It:

- Pray with the song 'Surrounded (Fight My Battles)'.
- Moses got two friends to help him do God's will, because he was too tired to do it on his own. Who are two friends you can rely on to do the same? If you don't have any, is there anyone you can invite to help support you more specifically? Or, can you ask two spiritual friends to come alongside you in this season and have a patron saint?
- This is the first of many times that in the desert, God provides for the people in unexpected ways. His providence often surprises the people. In your life, has God ever surprised you (and sometimes annoyed you in the process) by providing for you in a way different than what you wanted or expected?

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

Exodus 17:8 - Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim.

Israel is still brand-new to this whole freedom thing when they are attacked brutally by the Amaleks. You and I are brand-new to our freedom thing too. When I reached this passage, I was barely two weeks into my new routine, eating, working out, discipline, etc. I was still sore and unsure of it all.

Do you think the devil is going to take it easy on you?

Amalek certainly didn't.

You're new to this. You're vulnerable. You're trying to figure it out. You look like fresh meat to the devil. Expect resistance. Expect discouragement. You're doing something holy. You're letting God free you from slavery. The devil hates that. Saint Peter writes, **"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as if strange things were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed."**

It's much easier to fight an enemy you were expecting. Keep your mind alert. If you hear lies throughout your day like, "You'll never make it," or "This is all a waste of time," or "I'm not strong enough", react with crying out to God. Call on your two friends to help hold your arms up. But mostly, be at peace. If you're meeting resistance, you're probably on the way to freedom.

Exodus 18

About This Passage

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, gives Moses advice.

- Father in law is Jethro (which means "Your Excellency") and his real name is Ruel
- Moses, following the advice, delegates some of his judging leadership to the twelve tribes.
- You can see this event of delegating leadership recounted in Deuteronomy 1:9-18.
- It's interesting to note that Moses' sons and wife were not with him in the plagues and the parting of the Red Sea. I like to imagine what that would have been like.

Different Directions to Take It:

- How joyful it must have been for Moses to recount the whole story to someone who knew him! He goes into the tent with Jethro and tells the whole story. Do you have a 'Jethro' in your life you can share the story of your exodus with? If not, journal, voice record, or make a video of yourself. We need to remember what God is doing in our lives! Recount how far you've come already!
- Jethro helps Moses avoid burnout and take some things off his plate. Sometimes, we may be tempted to "do everything ourselves" to best serve God, but that's not what Moses is modeling here. He knows he has to serve God for the long haul. He needs to be able to last years of this, so he has no problem delegating. We can follow his example.

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

Exodus 17:18: "Moses' father-in-law said to him, 'What you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you.'

Whew! What a relevant and difficult verse for us as we are starting to get into the new routine of our exodus. It's a perfect place to pause and check-in. Check-in with yourself. Take an audit. Is your schedule reasonable? Are your goals achievable? Are you pushing too hard? Are you resting? Are you able to be patient and kind with the people around you, even as you push yourself to better health? Does anything need to shift? God calls you to freedom. That doesn't mean that the first way you attempt to reorient your life will be the right one. Allow yourself to adjust, if necessary.

Do you have a friend who can be your Jethro? A health coach, advisor, mentor, family member, spouse, or just a friend with a good head on their shoulders? Even Moses, in his prophetic glory and all his giftings, needed a reasonable friend to say, 'Hey, there's a different way.'

Here's a mindset challenge I'll invite you to bring to a friend to discuss: *'Am I trying to go back to an older version of myself?'* I certainly was, and that's not possible. We can't go back. But we can go forward to better versions of ourselves. Let God show you who he is helping you become, and shake off any temptation to try to turn back the wheel of time.

Exodus 19

About This Passage

The people finally arrive at Mt. Sinai!

- Mount Sinai is the same place as Mount Horeb. This is the mountain where Moses originally met God in the burning bush. It took the people 3 months to get here. Keep in mind, there are 600,000 of them traveling in tents with animals and possessions. It's slow-going.
- The prophet Elijah later meets God at Mt. Horeb as well!
- God is beginning the preparation for making a covenant with his people. This will happen in Exodus 24. Here, he renews his promises and assures them that he will care for them. This is a really hopeful chapter!

Different Directions to Take It:

- Recall God's words of hope to you and his promises for you. You're on this "exodus" journey because of his leadership. Do you remember how he 'called' you to change? Don't be like the Israelites who are quick to forget.
- Declarations are a practice of repeating to ourselves and 'speaking over' ourselves the promises and truths of God. Consider writing some declarations ("I am God's beloved", "I will not be alone", etc) and keep it as an anchor page in your journal.
- Consider a consecration day - choosing to do a Marian consecration as part of your exodus, or choosing to memorialize the day you began (celebrate every Tuesday, or monthly, etc).

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

Exodus 19:10: Have [the people] wash their clothes.

Laundry day, anyone? No but seriously, this is wild that part of God's command to Moses is to have the people wash themselves and their clothes in preparation of their consecration. Later, with the institution of the Levite priests, there will be washing rules in the tradition of the people. But right now, this is new. God, telling the people to wash? God, caring about their hygiene?

You can take this many ways, but the way I took it was that God actually cares about how I dress myself. What I wear, how I dignify my body (the GIFT he gave me), how I present myself to my neighbor and my family...it matters. (Especially at Mass.) I had been treating it for years like it didn't matter, and that humility necessitated me not thinking of my appearance. I had swung the pendulum from vanity to neglect, completely bypassing modest love for my body. In my exodus, I felt God's nudge to *care for my hair.* To blowdry. To initiate a simple skincare routine. To invest in a few pieces of closet staples to feel confident in my clothes. To dress nicely each day, even if only my husband and baby saw me. As a comfort-loving sweatpants kind of girl, this was challenging. It didn't feel "holy" either. But for me, it was part of my exodus. Perhaps, God may speak similarly to you.

Exodus 20-23

About This Passage

The Ten Commandments + More!

- The part of Exodus that simply lists laws is difficult to read. I recommend reading it in one chunk and 'zooming out' rather than trying to draw meaning from each line. The reality is, we don't follow all of these laws anymore.
- The purpose of the laws was threefold: (1)civil, (2)ceremonial, and (3) moral. The civil and ceremonial laws no longer apply to us, according to Thomas Aquinas, so it's natural to leave them to their time and place. The moral laws, Jesus himself amended and adjusted in his Sermon on the Mount.
- The 10 Commandments are often called the 'Declaration of Independence' from Egypt, and, as Dr. Scott Hahn points out, they are the Declaration of Dependence on God!

Different Directions to Take It:

- Take some time to pray with and observe God's character here. This is sometimes the part of the Bible where readers begin to assume that God is 'mean' or 'strict' or 'wrathful'. And yes, the laws are a bit intense. But consider the difference between parenting young children and young adults. With young children, strict rules with direct consequences are necessary. With older children, there is more room for conversation and a petition of the heart rather than black-and-white consequences for choices. In the New Testament, Jesus introduces a more mature way of disciplining his children. In the Old Testament, we don't get to see the full picture of God. That's revealed in Jesus.
- Consider taking time to examine your conscience according to the Ten Commandments and put monthly confession on the schedule for the next few months.
- Consider implementing a nightly Examen (a prayer of St. Ignatius) into your evening routine.

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

Exodus 23:20,22 : I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. ... If you listen attentively to his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes.

I hate to say it, but the people don't obey this one either. They don't obey. They can't trust. The thing they want most is kept from them *by their very own stubbornness.* When you see this, and how they are trapped in their own fear and self-reliance, then you can see from the perspective of God. Laws are needed. These people need to be trained. They have only known slavery. They have only known violent communication, beatings, and unfair treatment. When they're told to trust God to lead them, they don't even know where to start. So, he starts building family rules. 'In this family, we treat each other we respect. In this family, we don't punch each other in the face when we get mad.' His rules were a mercy for a people in desperate need of structure.

Keep in mind too that the strict rules of the desert were meant for a particular time and a particular people. You may be imposing some strict rules on yourself right now that *aren't meant to last forever*. Lent is not year-round. I found my calorie deficit very overwhelming until I realized that it's a temporary thing. It serves a purpose. Try to see God's Fatherly heart through the rules he provides his people. If you need to, give God another chance to reveal himself to you here.



Exodus 23:29

I will not drive them out before you in one year; or the land would become desolate and the wild animals would multiply against you. ***Little by little****, I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and possess the land.*

This instruction and promise of God is so revealing. He has a plan and strategy for how the get the Israelites to conquer the Promised Land. And he's not interested in impressing them with a one-and-done glorious victory. He wants them to actually live in verdant pastures. He is thinking of a long-term life in the Promised Land.

We need to adopt the mind of God here. We will not conquer all of our passions at once. Little by little, we will decrease and God will increase in our lives. Little by little, daily habit by daily habit, we will reclaim possession of ourselves from wherever we gave ourselves away - to comparison, to gluttony, to envy, to malice, to vice. If we are tempted by a "get rich fast" or "lose 10 pounds in one week" scheme, then we are fooling ourselves into believing that we can have it all at once.

Do you have a timeline in your own heart, for how you want your life to play out? Your healing? Your exodus?

It's time to bring that timeline to the Lord, and hear what his strategy is.

- 2 Peter 3:8
- Isaiah 55:8-9



Jesus, I surrender the
pace — *I will follow you.*

Exodus 24

About This Passage

This is the Mosaic Covenant!

- There is more here than meets the eye. The Mosaic Covenant is actually a Wedding Covenant.
- The “flesh and blood” imagery of people having blood thrown on them means
  - (1) that they accept bloodshed if they disobey the covenant and
  - (2) they are “flesh and blood” - family - of God
- There is a Heavenly banquet served to Moses and the elders in the presence of God after the ceremony - just like a wedding feast!
- From now on, according to the prophets, Israel is the “bride” of God, and when she is faithless, she’s like a harlot wife.

Different Directions to Take It:

- Check out bridal imagery of the prophets.
  - Jeremiah 2:1-2
  - Ezekiel 16:8
  - Hosea 2:14-15
- If you’re married, review your wedding vows and pray with the covenant that you have entered into.
- Flip ahead to the Golden Calf story of Exodus 32, and notice how much buildup and intentionality there was in this covenant. The people couldn’t have missed the fact that a covenant was happening. It was a huge deal, and they agreed to it. Then, pages later, they fall to idolatry.

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

It isn't about duty. It's about love.

I started my exodus with the rules of my life at the forefront. 10,000 steps a day. Strength training 4x/week. Calorie deficit. 6am wakeup. Fiber supplement. 8 hours of sleep. Water before coffee. 140g protein daily, especially 30 min after a workout. Get outside every day. No screens 1 hour before bed. Daily stretches. Daily examen. Daily prayer. Daily skincare.

And when I hit this reading, it struck me that freedom isn't about *duty.* It's about *love.*

I started with no love for this type of work. No love for my body, or my past choices, or my past self who got me into this late-night-scrolling, junk-food-loving, sweet-tooth, excuse-riddled mess. I figured I would increase in lovability as I broke free.

That was wrong.

God chose to love his people in their unworthiness, right at the beginning of their messy journey of trust. He did the same for me. The same for you. The turning of my heart from doing-the-work-to-make-myself-better to doing-the-work-in-response-to-God's-love-for-me was internal and quiet, but everything changed. You are already loved and chosen. You are not working to **earn that.** You're working to fully live it out.

Exodus 25-30

About This Passage

These are some of the chapters that describe the building of God's tabernacle. I know they seem dry, but don't skip them. There's good stuff here!

- The tabernacle God instructed them to build was a portable tent structure that would house the Ark of the Covenant.
- The tabernacle looked VERY similar to a portable tent structure that Egyptian Pharaohs used to use in times of warfare. In fact, the way that the whole camp was set up was like a military encampment, with the leader (the tabernacle) in the middle, surrounded by the Levite priests (they come in a few chapters), then the rest of the tribes. The Israelites must have thought, "HUH...looks like we're going to war!" God was speaking their language, showing them something they already understood.
- 25:22 talks about the mercy seat, where God will speak to Moses from now on. This is another phenomenon; the tabernacle and temple structure is like other pagan cultural structures of the time. The difference is that in the 'Holy of Holies', there is usually a large icon or statue of the idol being worshipped. But the mercy seat is empty. God is not visible; there are no idols made of him. It was a clear message to the Israelites: I am not like other gods.
- The curtain described in 26:31 is the early version of the curtain that would hang in the temple to separate the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. That curtain tore - top to bottom, Heaven to Earth - when Jesus died. The Holy of Holies is not accessible to people in the Old Testament, but to us, we have access to God.
- The story of Aaron and his sons being ordained the high priests is found in Exodus 29 and in Leviticus 8:1-36. Later, in Numbers 17, there is a story of Aaron's rod budding almonds to prove that he's God's choice.
- The altar of incense described in Exodus 30 is what Zechariah - father of John the Baptist - centuries later was tending when the Angel Gabriel appeared to him (Luke 1). Of course, he was in the temple, not the tabernacle, but the templed mirrored the tabernacle.

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

In the desert, God set up a place to encounter Him.

When I first read all these details about the building of all the things: the bronze basin, the lampstand, the breastplate, the Ark, on and on...I thought, "Why all this fuss?" If they're going to be in the desert temporarily, why go through all the effort of making this so precise and perfect? Aren't they going to be in a big temple in the Promised Land soon?

It was worth it to God. Spending time and resources on making a place to meet Him was worth it. He had just married this people. He wanted a place to meet them. That was what the tabernacle was.

In this desert season, I want to set up a place to meet God too. I don't want to assume "I'll get to my destination soon and meet God there." Here in the desert, I want to offer my sacrifices and have my tent of meeting. God speaks from the "mercy seat" of the Ark. I want him to speak mercifully to my heart every morning. I want to set up a "Holy of Holies" that nobody has access to except me and my Beloved, God.

John writes in his first chapter, 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.' That 'dwelt' means literally 'pitched tents' and 'tabernacled' among us. He is not waiting for us at the finish line. He is pitching his tent with us, present to us every step of the way.

Exodus 31

About This Passage

This is about the Ark of the Covenant builders and the Sabbath.

- Bezalel and Oholiab were the men who built the Ark of the Covenant, and though their story is very short, the impact of their work cannot be overstated.
- The Sabbath here is designed after the six days of creation and the day of rest (verse 17).
- Also in these verses, God gives Moses the two stone tablets (first edition, shall we say? Since he breaks them in another few verses.)

Different Directions to Take It:

- Pray with the concept that God appointed men to assist Moses. He gave him a team, and told him to delegate. Do you have a team around you? Do you have anyone who knows what you're doing? Is it time?
    - A team can look different in this day and age - a meal prep service, gym or online workout program membership, babysitting swap, etc can be part of your team. Ask God for ideas.
- Go after the idea of Sabbath for a bit. In our culture today, there is no such thing. If you want to have a Sabbath, you need to go against the culture and make intentional choices. Now might be a good time to consider ideas.
    - A technology Sabbath where phones are put away...
    - A screen Sabbath...
    - A chore Sabbath where meals are prepped and the house is cleaned Saturday so that Sunday there can be no work to do...
    - What most steals your peace and ability to be present in the moment? Perhaps that's the thing you can put aside for one day a week.

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

Bezalel got me. His story struck my heart as I was reading through. The Ark of the Covenant is famous. It's legendary. It's almost a main character of the Bible itself. Then, it's lost (thanks Prophet Jeremiah) and has been treated like the Fountain of Youth or the Holy Grail ever since - a legendary ancient artifact of power.

But it was man-made. Specifically, it was Bezalel-made. He has "knowledge of every kind of craft, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, in carrying wood, in every kind of craft." He's an artist and craftsman. This guy must have been an adult man, which implies that he grew up in slavery. An artistic man, growing up pulling ropes and heaving bricks and being lashed and falling into bed exhausted at the end of each night. Did he steal a few fatigued moments at the end of his day to sketch or whittle? Did he have dreams at night of working with jewels and wood, which he never thought would come true? Did he look with awe at the architecture of Egypt and wonder if he would ever see his designs come to life? Did other people - his parents, perhaps, or his wife - tell him that his artistic skills were useless for his life of slavery? To stop sketching little ornate designs and help cook some bread for the children? His gifts were completely mismatched for his life.

Until one day, they weren't. They were very, very needed. It says God has called him "by name." Was there a theophany moment for Bezalel in his tent in the desert? Did God give him artistic skills on the spot which he had never had before, in order to carry out this work?

Imagine him working in the desert, directing a team of men who had no idea what he was doing with gold and acadia wood. His artistic skills were finally at use, but his workshop was a desert tent. It may have been easy to imagine that nobody would ever see his work.

I'm not sure why Bezalel struck my heart so much. I found such consolation in the fact that God supplies us with what we need when he commissions us. He tells Moses to make an Ark? Then he gives him a guy who can do the job. If he's calling you to do something that seems impossible, start to look around for Bezalel. He must not be too far behind.



Exodus 31:18: *When God finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant, tablets of stone,* ***written with the finger of God.***

The finger of God writes these laws on stone.

Jeremiah 31:31-33: *The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.* 32 *It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord.* 33 *But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and* ***I will write it on their hearts****, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

Ezekiel 36:26: *A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the* ***stony heart*** *out of your flesh, and I will give you a* ***heart of flesh.***

Pray with and let God speak to you in these Bible verses. To me, it seems God is promising to change my stony heart to a heart of flesh, and, like he wrote on the stone tablets before, he will write on my heart of flesh now. It's a promise of softening. It's a promise of restoration. Release of stone-heartedness. Forgiveness. Melting. Molding. Being changed. Becoming new.

What does He write on your heart?



Lord Jesus Let my heart never rest until it finds You, who are its center, its love, and its happiness. By the wound in Your heart pardon the sins that I have committed whether out of malice or out of evil desires. Place my weak heart in Your own divine Heart, continually under Your protection and guidance, so that I may persevere in doing good and in fleeing evil until my last breath. Amen.

- St. Margaret Mary Alacoque

Exodus 32

About This Passage

This is about the Golden Calf Incident.

- When Moses is on the mountain with God, the people build a golden calf and start to worship it.
- Keep in mind, the cow god was a powerful idol in Egypt. They must have grown up worshipping it. It must have felt familiar in a scary land.
- The worship of the cow god (Hathor) in Egypt was done through orgy.
- Notice that Aaron really tries to weasel his way out of blame (21-24).
- Moses' response is twofold:
    - He melts the cow, puts it into water, and makes the people drink it.
    - He calls for a moment of repentance and change of heart, and asks anyone to come be on his side. Only the Levites (his own tribe) come to his aid. He has the Levites slay the sinners, and 3,000 men die that day.
- One theory about these strange events is that the drinking of the gold made the sinners sick, thus identifying them as the ones to slay. Out of 600,000 people, how did the Levites find the 3,000 guilty? According to other Hebrew custom, a way to know if a woman is guilty of infidelity is to have her drink water mixed with dust from the tabernacle. If she falls sick, she's guilty. This same principle may be applied here, that drinking the gold identified the sin.
- This is where the book of Leviticus (a law book for the Levite priests, mostly) comes in. The Levites by their loyalty to Moses set themselves apart and Moses makes them priests that day. Instead of having their own tribal land, now they will live among the people and be priests for them. This right used to belong to the first-born son, but it is stripped of them and given to one tribe now. Moses receives the book of Leviticus in a series of instructions from God in the tabernacle and writes them down here in the desert.
- Look up "You are the Lord" by Chroma Worship.

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

This annoying Golden Calf! This is not the only place this idol plagues the people and makes them turn from God. In 1 Kings, a character named Jeroboam who is given authority by God to take leadership of 10 of the 12 tribes goes to Egypt. And what does he come home with? Two golden cows. He sets them up for the people to worship in place of God. This idol must have been so attractive. It was the goddess of love and fertility, almost like an Egyptian 'Aphrodite'. The people kept returning to it.

But before we judge them too harshly, **let's go visit our idols on page 9**. Today, spend time bringing the Lord into that graveyard of idols and letting him speak to you about them.

What brought on the golden calf incident, anyways? *The people saw that Moses was delayed.* The plan changed. They lost confidence in their leader. They felt like they were abandoned. They had to fend for themselves now. They got impatient. Before them, their ancestor Abraham had been in this situation and had grasped for his idol: a child. He had Ishmael. Now, the Israelites grasp for their idol: the cow.

What about me? I know that the most powerful idol in my life is food. On days I'm upset or frustrated, it's my first place to turn. Before I ever think of turning to God for comfort, I am headed to the kitchen to make myself a snack. *It doesn't even feel like an idol*, you may protest. *That's innocent.* But that's what idols do. They convince us it's no big deal when we quietly replace trust of God with trust in them. I got to the point where I felt like I couldn't be a kind person on days I couldn't snack. I had allowed these things to have such a place of priority in my life that I could easily skip daily prayer, but never daily coffee. I don't say this to shame you or me; I say it to set us free.

What's your golden cow?

Exodus 33-34

About This Passage

This is a rare glimpse at Old Testament intimacy & mercy with God.

- Moses and God have a tent of meeting, where God speaks to Moses face to face (33:11).
- Moses intercedes on behalf of his people, and in his conversation with God, we see his honesty with the Lord. He admits weakness and begs for God to be with him.
- They renew the covenant that they just broke, showing God's mercy.
- In Exodus 34:29-35, Moses' face glows from his time of meeting with the Lord.

Different Directions to Take It:

- Check through Scripture to see all the places God has promised that he will be with his people. (Exodus 3:12, 14:14, 23:20, 33:14. Deuteronomy 4:29, 31:6-8. Joshua 1:5-9. Isaiah 41:10, 58:9. Haggai 1:13, 2:4.)
- Consider the physical change Moses underwent (his face glowing) in Exodus 34. Does your face glow after talking to God? Do you look any different?
- Notice that the tent of meeting is outside the camp. Moses has to make effort to get there. Do you need to increase your effort to get to prayer, Mass, sacraments, or time with God in some way?
- Imitate Moses' intercession in 34:9, and focus on your own intercessions. Perhaps work on a prayer list in the back of your journal? Set alarms throughout your day to pray for people? Search patron saints to correspond with your intentions, schedule novenas, order prayer cards, stick reminder notes places...anything to get yourself in the groove of interceding for others.

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

When Moses asked to see God, God seemed pleased at this request. He couldn't fully grant the request - Moses wouldn't have been able to handle seeing God - but the longing Moses had to be near God was good. God honored it. God left a glow on Moses as response. This required Moses to hide his face from the world, so that God was the only one who got to see it.

In prayer, we often petition and share with God, but do we make space to let God share with us? Can we ask today, "Jesus, what's on your mind?" Or as Moses said, *"Show me your ways."* You already know my ways, God. What are yours?

Moses says, "If your presence will not go, do not let us go up from here." I only want to be with you, God. I just want to love *you.* I don't want to face any threat or make any accomplishment without you. Moses started out by resisting the call God had for him, but in the call, he has grown intimate with God.

Can we bring our goals and ambitions of this season to the altar today and offer them to the Lord? "If you aren't in these goals, God, I don't want them. If you aren't going with me through this transformation and change, then I don't want to go. I want to be **with you**."

Pray with the lyrics of *I Just Love You* and *After You* by *UPPERROOM .*

Exodus 35-36

About This Passage

We are back to the tabernacle. Now it's time to build it.

- Bezalel and Oholiab take up an offering for the materials needed to build, and the people respond generously. (This is a bit of a surprise, considering the character the people have displayed so far!)
- They follow the instructions God laid out, and they build.
- It took the people 3 months to arrive at Sinai from Egypt, and they stay at Sinai for the entire duration of the year, building. This is a long project. When they are done, they set out from Sinai towards the Promised Land.

Different Directions to Take It:

- Look up images of the tabernacle and how it would have looked. The temple, later, is based on it with the same kind of "anatomy." The tabernacle and temple actually correspond closely to the anatomy of a woman. There is an inmost place (the womb), and inner courts, and outer courts. The high priest enters there to bring a seed offering. Later, Jesus' death (the bridegroom giving his body for the bride) rips the veil of the temple. There is a lot of intricate analogy here - check it out further with Brant Pitre's Jesus the Bridegroom or Fr. Pat Schultz's talk below.
- Since we won't be praying with the temple directly out here in the 'exodus', continue down this temple imagery. You are God's temple. You are the place that God meets man. How does that affect how you treat your body and see yourself? Click or scan the QR codes below for two amazing talks from Fr. Pat Schultz of the Diocese of Cleveland.

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

Look at all the places that the word "heart" is used here. "Everyone whose heart was stirred and whose spirit was willing" (21), "all who were with a willing heart" (22), "all of the women whose hearts moved them" (26), "All the men and women whose hearts made them willing" (29), and "everyone whose heart was stirred to come to do the work," (36:2). The people are doing good deeds and giving generously out of a movement of their hearts. They aren't acting out of duty or necessity, rigor, or a sense of earning love. They are moved. And look at the result: 36:5, "The people are bringing much more than enough for doing the work that the LORD has commanded us to do."

There is more than enough. There is surplus!

This inspires my heart. If we follow God's inspirations and let him move our hearts, he will draw out of us more than enough. The people are not weary and bone-dry, as if the gifts had been bullied out of them. They gave freely. They let their hearts be moved.

In Song of Songs, the bride cries out one line to the bridegroom that could be our prayer for the rest of our lives, "Draw me." *Draw me after you, let us run.*

God, I don't want to do this on my own effort or duty. Draw me. Pull me after you. Beckon me. Take me by the hand and lead me out of this desert. Move my heart to give generously, like you moved the Israelites. ***Draw me.***

Exodus 37-40

About This Passage

Another large chunk of building details finishes off the book of Exodus.

- The materials for the tabernacle cost the modern-day equivalent of $200 million dollars. This was costly!
- In Exodus 40:2, the Lord gives Moses instructions to set up a dedication ceremony for the tabernacle o*n the first day of the first month.* He is using (and continues to use throughout the next books) the new calendar he set up in Exodus 12 at Passover. Exodus 12:2, he said, 'This month shall mark the beginning of months for you.' He started a new year at Passover, and now they've been in the desert for a full year (at Mount Sinai for all but 3 months of that year.)
- The 'glory cloud' that shows God's presence is established here as the 'normal' way by which the Israelites travel. When the cloud is taken up, they move. When it is settled down over the tabernacle, they stay.
- The word in Exodus 40:35 for how the glory cloud filled the temple was the word "overshadowed". This same word is used in Luke 1:35 when the Angel Gabriel tells Mary that the Spirit of the Lord will "overshadow" her and that's how she will miraculously conceive Jesus.
- Mary is the New Ark of the Covenant. It was an ornate perfectly-designed vessel made to hold the presence of God. Mary was conceived without sin, perfectly designed to hold the presence of God inside her womb. In a later story in Scripture, 2 Samuel 6, there is a massive comparison in how the Ark of the Covenant stays in the hill country of Judea, is received by King David jumping for joy, and he proclaims, "How is it that the ark of my Lord should come to me?" We see this repeated in Luke when he describes the Visitation, when Mary stays in the hill country of Judea, is received into the home of Zechariahs with John the Baptist's leap for joy and Elizabeth's words, "how is it that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Look it up for yourselves! So cool!

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

1 Corinthians 3:16: *Do you not know that you are God's temple, and God's spirit dwells within you?*

Mary may be the technical theological New Ark of the Covenant. But, in the reality of God's presence being in us as well, we can borrow the metaphor. Just like the Ark carried the presence of God, we too carry the presence of God. We don't get the unique privilege of being pregnant with Jesus physically in our womb for nine months, but we do get the honor of receiving him in the Eucharist physically into our stomach every day of the week, if we choose. Since Baptism, He dwells in us.

I carry God's presence. Me! So do you!

It's an empowering and shocking thought. I found myself reflecting on this as I worked to beat my body into submission with thoughts like, 'Get it together, Monica!' and 'I just have to get over myself.' *The two didn't go together.* I couldn't undergo a transformation and an exodus from my idols with the mindset of 'I can't wait until I'm not like *this* anymore'. I have to *know* I'm a temple. I have to know I'm loved and dignified. Then, I can fight for my freedom.

Check your heart today. Is there any part of you that's resentful, ashamed, or hateful towards yourself, your choices, or your body? God says to the prophet Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you." He made us how we are intentionally. While we can abuse our bodies with our choices, our bodies themselves are gifts. A huge mindset shift for me in my exodus was to see my strong body and be so grateful that it worked. I'm grateful I can move, and lift, and run, and work hard. I'm grateful for a body that serves me well, and I cannot wait to improve it to receive it as a better gift.



The Israelites have been at this for a year at this point. It's time to check-in.

Take today to ask yourself the following questions, process with the Lord your progress so far. Adjust and recommit as necessary.

- What am I proud of that I've done well so far?
- What has been the most challenging area of my growth so far?
- Where can I lean in more (any areas that I have not been fighting for freedom?)
- Who am I becoming - can I describe her?
- What is one thing I know the Lord has been speaking?
- Can I remember why I started, turn back to my mission statement, and re-commit?
- Audit these areas of life honestly & see how I'm doing. Discuss with the Lord. See if my exodus plan needs any adjusting.
    - Physical strength
    - Physical rest
    - Nourishment
    - Clothes & hygiene
    - Chores & stewardship
    - Work
    - Silence & margin
    - Beginning & end of day
    - Prayer
    - The worst part of my day & how I handle it
    - Leisure
    - Relationships

Timeline of Exodus

Where you started — Today

Quick Note

In **Exodus,** we largely traveled through every chapter. But moving forward, that's not the case anymore.

Leviticus is the law book that Moses received from the Lord in 37 different 'sermons'. While there is always merit in reading God's word, we are going to move after the storyline of the Israelites. We aren't going to pause in Leviticus. If you would like to pause and take some time to pray through Leviticus, simply resume here when you're finished. Bear in mind that most of the laws (the ceremonial and civil) no longer apply to us today.

In **Numbers,** we will skip through some chapters. Numbers is a chaotically organized book. It repeats details from Exodus. Its name comes from the array of censuses that happen, most of which include a long list of names to count the people. Numbers also has laws that get added to the people when they disobey (which is frequent). Because of this, we will skip through certain chapters and highlight others. Of course, as with Leviticus, if you want to cover every chapter in Numbers, absolutely go for it!

In **Deuteronomy,** will be where we end, on the edge of the Promised Land. I'll give you some tools and set you free to run in one of the most empowering books in the Bible, in my opinion!



Numbers 9-10

About This Passage

We skipped 8 chapters! These chapters repeated Exodus stories, and now in chapters 9-10, we are back at the end of Exodus, leaving Sinai for the Promised Land! Now Numbers (mostly) picks up a chronological story right where Exodus left off.

- The Passover is celebrated at Sinai. This is the first annual celebration of Passover, one year after the original event.
- 9:6 and on talks about the issue of "unclean" people who have touched a corpse. The idea of "clean" and "unclean" is big in this time. The book of Leviticus focuses largely on it, and Numbers 5 goes into it too. The emphasis is because they are about to go into the Promised Land. The people there worship idols. God wants to keep his people from that. They are still fresh from idol-worshipping Egypt, and he's training them to be his people, set apart, holy, and different from their neighbors.
- The glory cloud leads the people. Notice how it sets the pace, and they stop when it stops and go when it goes.

Different Directions to Take It:

- Pray with the Glory Cloud's pace and the people's obedience to it. Even if they want to, they don't rush ahead.
- Look up the article "The Theology of Waiting Around" by Msgr. Mark Shea in Crisis Magazine.
- Focus on the daily morning and night routine of Moses; he had a prayer he would pray every time they set out and stopped to rest (10:35-36). Maybe you can make your own morning and evening offering prayer.

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

Slow is steady, and steady is fast. Have you heard that? Ugh, it drives me nuts. I'm a fast gal. I like speed. I like efficiency. I like multi-tasking. I think following God's pacing in the desert would have driven me *bonkers.* I would have been up there haggling Moses, saying, "Come ON, we can make it a few more miles! The sun isn't even setting let! Let's get a move on!" But God's ways are not my ways, and he usually is playing a longer game than I realize. He is moving at his pace for a reason, and usually the reason is to love me. I may think we're sprinting a mile, but God sees the 26.2 miles ahead of us, and he goes slow.

We live in a world of insta-results. And in an exodus journey, we have to resist that. God isn't about making us look different on the outside. He's not interested in quick fixes. We can see evidence of hundreds of saints whose lives were not linear, whose failures drew them closer to God, and who would never have planned for their life to be the way God made it.

Without spending enough time on it in this little paragraph, I want to recommend that you check out 'HeartSync Ministries'. They have an understanding of inner healing the heart through the concept that the heart has various roles. "Function" is the doer. "Emotion" is the feeler. And "Guardian" is the protector. When we are hurt, these three roles can get mixed up and step into the wrong lanes. I had a really powerful inner healing experience in my early twenties that showed me that in my own heart, I had let Function run the show and essentially reduced Feeling and Guardian to whispers. I wanted to get things done. I wanted to be efficient and effective. And while I know that isn't bad in and of itself, I will tell you from the 'other side' that it can be destructive. The solution is simple. Yield to God's pace. Don't rush ahead of him. He knows what you need.

Numbers 11

About This Passage

This chapter is about the people complaining in the desert. Moses gets irritated, and the Lord responds by sending quails and appointing elders to assist Moses.

- Bear in mind the people have been in the desert for 1 year, and they are on their way now to the Promised Land. They probably got comfortable in their Sinai encampment, and moving is much more difficult!
- Notice that Moses shows his imperfections. He also is the author of these books (Genesis - Deuteronomy) [at least, he is traditionally believed to be the author. There is some debate], but he doesn't try to hide his candid conversations with God.
- In Luke 10, Jesus sends out 70 disciples to work on his behalf. This harkens back to this instance of Moses having 70 elders appointed to assist him.

Different Directions to Take It:

- Complaining in a *theme* in these books. The people are not comfortable or happy with what's going on. It's okay to feel that way, but it it completely discounts God's provision when we complain. Spend some time with your complaints; process them, write them out, and turn them to prayers of trust instead! We don't want to leave those bottled up.
- It's hard to read stories of God sending plagues among the people to punish them, but it's fairly common in this book. Address this with the Lord before it eats away at you; ask him to show himself to you, and to dispute any lies that he is a wrathful or vindictive God. Remember, he disciplines his children in the Old Testament as if they are young children, and in the New, he transitions to treating his followers like older children with more maturity and capability to choose good.

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

Exodus 11:6: *There is nothing at all but this manna to look at!*

Need I remind you, the manna is the thing that they prayed for last year, when they were starving. Manna - the life-saving miracle bread that once astonished them - now is just a background noise to them. They're so bored of it.

Oof, haven't I been there before?

This house for which I prayed...now I complain that I have to clean. This husband for whom I prayed...now I complain that I have to feed. This child, this job, this food, this chore... see? We are very quick to forget that everything is a gift. Complaints are contagious; they love company, and they will wrap around you. I like to draw them like thorns around myself, and I like to label them. Maybe draw yourself, surrounded by complaints, entrapped in thorns. They will steal your joy if you let them. Instead, practice war-like gratitude to combat the complaints in your heart. Get on the offense here, and intentionally remember what God has done for you, so that you will not forget and fall to complaint like these Israelites. Honor God's work in your life. Don't forget.

Notice too, how Moses turns to God, weary, and exhausted, saying, "I am not able to carry all this people alone, for they are too heavy for me." Yes, he's dramatic. Yes, he adds on how horrible he feels. (Moses, I feel you.) But he does the right thing; he asks God to help him. "Come to me, those that are weary. My yoke is easy. My burden is light." God isn't super tender or sweet with Moses here, but he does come alongside his prophet and assist him. He does the heavy lifting. He says, "Now you will see." Moses, you've come to me. Now, you will see what I can do. *The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still. (Exodus 14:14).*

Numbers 12

About This Passage

Miriam becomes a leper for a week! Did you know that??

- This is the sister of Moses, and she is punished harshly for mocking Moses.
- Moses intercedes for his sister, but God says no - *she needs to be punished to learn how to treat you.*
- Leviticus 13 outlines how to handle a leper in the community, and the seven day sentence of being outside the camp was standard protocol for an infected leper to quarantine.
- It's interesting that Miriam is punished by becoming a leper, and Aaron is not. Standard protocol for leprosy involves the priest (Aaron) examining the leper every seven days and discerning whether or not the person could re-enter society. Miriam seems to have taken the harder hit for the sin, but Aaron has the job of condemning her.
- Look at one of Monica's favorite verses in the Bible, for fun: Numbers 12:3. And keep in mind that Moses wrote this book.

Different Directions to Take It:

- If you have siblings, this might be the direction to take. Do you treat your siblings poorly? (I know I do sometimes.) God takes disrespect of his prophet seriously, and he won't even let his own sister treat him poorly. Maybe it's time to evaluate your relationships, offer forgiveness, or apology.
- Moses is defended by God because Moses is God's chosen man. He is the leader, the priest, the prophet, the king, in a sense. He is the one with the covenant. Sometimes, we find it easier to disrespect church authority - our clergy, for example - and talk poorly about them. Perhaps today, it's time to repent or turn away from casual sins of talking poorly about our priests.
- Pray with Defender by Rita Springer.

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

What if we look at Miriam as if she's the voices in our heads, mocking us?

Take a different perspective on the story for a moment. What if Miriam is a metaphor for the inner parts of us that mock, envy, and ridicule us? We all have that voice in our head, that part of our heart that whispers, "You're nothing special. That girl over there is better than you. You're so stupid. You're wasting your life. You can't even get yourself together." [Insert whatever lies your voice tells you.]

Your *self* can be critical and disrespectful. She can tear you to pieces inside your own mind.

And what is God's response?

Hey, you can't talk to my kid like that.

"I will contend with those who contend with you." (Isaiah 49:25).

He banishes her for a week. He teaches her to hold her tongue. He will do the same for you, when you are persecuted, misunderstood, lied to, and envied. Keep going, friend. God is your defender.

Numbers 13-14

About This Passage

This story is crucial in the plot of the Bible. The people rebel and earn themselves 40 years of wandering in the desert.

- Moses sends 12 spies into the Promised Land to scout and report back for strategic takeover purposes. Notice that the tribe of Levi doesn't send a scout; they are the priests. The tribe of Joseph is split into two for his two sons: Ephraim and Manasseh.
- The first grapes were ripe, so it was the late summer / early fall.
- Caleb (one of the good spies) is from the tribe of Judah, but he's not directly in the bloodline of Jesus.
- Notice that Moses changes the name of a guy named Hosea to Joshua (13:16). Joshua is his right-hand-man and the next leader of the people. A name change signifies a big deal in the Bible. (Think of Saul to Paul, Simon to Peter, and Abram to Abraham.)
- Because of Caleb and Joshua's faithfulness to God, only they are allowed to go into Promised Land.

Different Directions to Take It:

- Not trusting God's promises is a big deal. Do you know God's promises for your life? Do you trust them? (All over Scripture, he makes promises like he will be with you, he will give you everything you need and provide, etc. If you're unfamiliar with this, start with John 14-15.)
- Notice that in 14:26 + on, the people try to walk back their rebellion and go get the Promised Land anyways. But it's too late. Obedience to God isn't whenever we feel like it. It's when he says to do it. Are there any things God has been nudging or telling you to do that you've neglected recently?

Your Turn!

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Moni's Thoughts

Numbers 13:24: *But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me wholeheartedly, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it.*

As a teen, I was really enamored with the idea of Caleb in the Bible. A spy, in the Bible? A hero spy? One that stands out from the others?

As an adults, I still love his story. There's a sadness to it, though. He and Joshua are the only ones from their generation to go into the Promised Land. They're a generation older than the others who go in with them. They watch their friends, spouses, peers - everyone - die off in the wilderness. But they hold onto the hope that they will see the Promised Land. There's another spy story in Joshua, where two more spies go into the Promised Land to scout it out. The spies are unnammed, but I like to think it's Caleb and Salmon. Caleb, the old man, the only experienced spy they've got, back at it. (I think it's Salmon, because the spies sneak in and out of Rahab's window and she ends up marrying Salmon...so like, some serious Rapunzel action happening.)

But as an adult, one word sticks out to me here that didn't when I was younger. God calls Caleb wholehearted. He has followed God **wholeheartedly,** and that honors God. In this exodus, I want to be wholehearted. I want to follow God into habits, discipline, routine, fasting, giving things up, accepting new rules, etc. Anything God leads me to do for my freedom, I want to wholeheartedly follow. I find that I begrudgingly follow sometimes. I do it, but I don't do it cheerfully. God, please give me grace today to be like Caleb, and to get rid of any half-hearted attempts to be "holy". I want to be wholeheartedly after relationship with you and the freedom you bring.

Numbers 15-16

About This Passage

This chapter is about laws and systems set up by the Lord and Moses when the people are in the desert & a rebellion that breaks out.

- The tassels that the people wear on their garments are supposed to be a sign to remember God. This is fresh on the heels of the people fearing that God cannot help them take the Promised Land; they have already forgotten the Red Sea.
- Notice in the rebellion that happens how God is just, and Moses intercedes for him to be merciful as well, *and he listens.*

Different Directions to Take It:

- God spends the next forty years training his people. In other words, teaching them to trust him. In other words, wooing them. Reintroducing himself. As Hosea 2:14 says, "I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her." Try to keep this perspective as you go through these stories. Sometimes, the idea of stoning a man for disobedience or requiring a tithe feels like 'angry God' is running the show. But he's keeping family law. He's teaching his children to obey him. He's teaching his bride to trust him. He could wipe them all out with another flood and start over, but he doesn't.
- If you come across a verse or story that you don't understand, don't sit in it alone. Ask for help. Look up commentaries and Catholic articles about it. Ask a priest for perspective. The devil will try to use the Bible against you, and reading ancient documents without a guide can be deceiving.
    - For example, in Numbers 5, it describes the way by which they test if a woman has been adulterous is to make her drink a certain mixture, and if she does not get sick, she's innocent. That might seem to you and me reading in the 21st century like a totally unfair and horrible way to discount a woman's testimony. But in ancient times, this was shockingly dignifying to a woman. Other cultures would have killed her at the accusation of a man without any trial at all. There are things we need to learn before we can make snap judgements about if God is 'mean' or not. If the story in Numbers 15:32 or 16 challenges you, begin with the assumption that God is good, and do some research.

Your Turn!

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Moni's Thoughts

The tassels on the garments.

If you're like me, you may be more familiar with what Jesus says about the tassels than what God originally said about the tassels here in Numbers. Jesus in Matthew 23:5 has some harsh words for the priests who are more focused on 'lengthening their fringes' and 'doing all their deeds to be seen' rather than actually honoring God. But originally, this was not so. These tassels were given as a command from the Lord to *wear in order to remember.*

Keep in mind, Jesus wore tassels too. Every Jewish man wore fringe on the four corners of his garment. This tassel is what the bleeding woman touched when she reached out for healing.

Sometimes, we need to get really practical in how we remember God throughout out day. He knew the humanity of the people. He knew how little they'd remember, and so he gave them something tangible. Consider today your clothes.

- First - do they honor God, in modesty and dignifying your body?
- Do they make you feel beautiful and beloved, like you are?
- Can you add any small token to your outfit (a tassel or fringe is small!) to remember God? Consider the sacramentals that Our Lady has given us - the miraculous medal, brown scapular, etc.

Numbers 17-19

About This Passage

This chapter is about the priests, and how God makes a sign that Aaron will be the leader, and the ceremony of the Red Heifer.

- The staff of Aaron sprouts and buds overnight.
- There is a legend (not in the Bible) that the staff of Joseph, father of Jesus, also sprouted and bloomed. There are often depictions of the staff of Joseph budding a lily (for his purity). According to tradition, this is how he was selected to be the fiance of Mary.
- The sacrifice of the red heifer is done primarily to cleanse the people who have become unclean. Though they obviously have to be unclean in order to bury the dead, this really emphasizes that God is not like other gods. 'Other gods' demanded human sacrifice, and the neighboring lands practiced worship through death. Not the Lord. He emphasized staying away from corpses.
- The red heifer is sacrificed outside of camp, not at the altar, and its blood consecrates the people to God and cleanses them. When the temple was built, this ceremony was repeated to the East of Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives, where the Garden of Gethsemene would have been at the time of Jesus. There, Jesus sweat blood. Red blood. Red heifer. Jesus becomes the red heifer, sacrificed for his people. The red heifer is a female, but Jesus' death had a female perspective of birthing new life (blood and water): the church, out of his side. I know, lots of layers here! But the Epistle of Barnabas and St. Augustine claim that this is so!

Different Directions to Take It:

- Hebrews 9:13-14
- What systems has God instituted in the Church to bring us back to him when we have become unclean? Maybe it's time to go to confession again.

Your Turn!

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Moni's Thoughts

Numbers 17: 12-13: *The Israelites said to Moses, 'We are perishing; we are lost! All of us are lost! Everyone who approaches the tabernacle of the Lord will die! Are we all to perish?"*

They're panicking.

They disobeyed God, they witnessed God's justice. God - as he promised he would - shed blood in response to infidelity. In Exodus 24, all the people stood up at the covenant and had the blood thrown on them as a sign that if they disobeyed covenant, their blood would be shed...and here they are, experiencing it. And they're panicking.

I can relate.

They come to Moses and they say, "We're going to die here!" The lies and insecurities can layer on. "God led us out here to this wilderness, and he has no idea what he's doing! We can't survive! This whole freedom idea was stupid!" Maybe further, in my own heart, "I sinned, and now there's no possible way of getting back into God's graces. I feel the condemnation and I feel angry at myself, and I want to give up! I messed up, and now it's game over. I'm going to just die here. There's no way of picking back up. I'm done."

But in the next chapter, God provides solution. The red heifer. For us, confession. Or, if not a sin, then just a fresh start. God is merciful, even when he is just. You can start over. You're not going to die.

Numbers 20

About This Passage

- This story may sound familiar because we heard something similar in Exodus 17, but it is not the same story. This event happens a year later, when they are leaving Sinai. Miriam dies in Numbers 20, but in Exodus she still is around for several stories.
- They are back at Meribah, the same place where Moses hit the rock and the water came forth for the thirsty people, but this time God tells Moses to *speak* to the rock instead.
- Moses disobeys; he hits the rock instead, and water does come forth.
- God punishes Moses (and Aaron), and tells them that neither of them will go into the Promised Land.
- This is the reason that Deuteronomy exists. Deuteronomy is a series of speeches that Moses gives the people as they are preparing the enter the Promised Land. He knows he cannot go in anymore.

Different Directions to Take It:

- God cares about obedience. It's the most sure way to love him wholeheartedly, to obey his commandments. And, on the flip side, disobedience has consequences. Even a close friend of God is not exempt from obedience. Just because you or I come to prayer every day (the "tent of meeting"), work in ministry, serve our parishes, etc - that doesn't mean we can disobey God anymore than the rest. This is a sobering heart check.
- Pray with the question, "What is my Meribah? What do I keep in my control, because I don't want to do it God's way?"

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

Numbers 20:10 - *Moses and Aaron [said], 'Listen, you rebels, shall we bring water for you out of this rock?'*

Shall ***we*** bring water out?

Oh, Moses. My heart recognizes this because I've done it too. Moses is taking too much ownership. *'Call Moses, he can do it.' 'Remember when Moses led you out of the Red Sea?' 'Moses knows what to do!'* He's got a direct command from the Lord to do something, and he doesn't do it. He thinks he can handle it. He's seen this rock before, and the last time he was here, he hit it. So, he concludes, he will hit it again and water will come out. Notice, he has to hit it *twice*. It doesn't work immediately. In frustration, panic, desperation, ego - whatever drove him - he hit it again. *You will obey me, Rock. I'm Moses.*

Years later, St. Paul writes, "I will boast gladly of my weakness, for when I am weak, you are strong." St. Paul made space for God to be the hero. He accepted his own inability. He didn't try to provide for people out of himself; he constantly went where God asked. I think if Paul were there at Meribah, he might put a hand on Moses' shoulder and say, *"Friend, I know you want these people to respect you. I know they are all shouting, 'Hit it, Moses. That's what you did last time! Do you want me to hit it for you?' They're making you feel little. But it's not worth it. God gave you instructions already. Don't do this."* I think if St. Paul came to me in my life - a toddler mom on a health journey - he would say, *"I know you want to lose five more pounds by Thanksgiving. I know you want your family to see the work you've been doing. You've been here before, and you can crash diet and make it work. But Monica, it's not worth it. God gave you instructions already. Don't do this on your own."*

When God first called Moses at the Burning Bush, Moses resisted it. He said he wasn't strong or capable enough. And God's response wasn't "Moses, you are awesome! You can totally do it!" He replied (to paraphrase), "You don't need to be capable. I am going to be with you." Today, in our hype-each-other-up culture, let's take a reality check. The strength doesn't come from us. We don't need to be capable and 'crush it' and 'lock in'. We need to come daily to our God and rely on his grace.

2 Corinthians 12:9. Lean in to God when you want to prove to the world that *you can do it.*

Numbers 21

About This Passage

This is the story of the Bronze Serpent.

- In response to the people's complaining, God allows serpents to come among them and poison them. When they call for help, he gives them a strange solution: a bronze serpent.
- God does all sorts of 'weird' things in the desert to show them that he doesn't work how they do. He surprises them constantly to win their trust. This story is one example of that. He could have healed them any way.
    - The bronze serpent is a type of Jesus, hanging on the cross. Jesus himself explains this in John 3.

Different Directions to Take It:

- Pray with Samatha Ebert's "Flowers" song. The people are probably feeling restless that they're still in the desert after all this time. Her line "Lord, why are you keeping me here?" is so relatable. If you also feel like you've been here a long time, don't reach back for your idols. Reach forward, like Samantha, to God for comfort.
- Make a map of your life so far, with little wandering dotted lines if you want. Maybe it feels you've been wandering in the desert, but can you see where God has led you at all? Have you grown, through his leadership?
- Lean into the truth that God is provider. Here are a couple of places to start:
    - Luke 18:7-8 & 29-30
    - Luke 12: 22-35
    - Luke 11:9-13
    - Luke 1:45
    - Matthew 6:25-33
    - Matthew 11:20-24
    - Mark 4:39-40
- Pray with 'Hard Fought Hallelujah' by Brandon Lake
- Pray with 'Desert Song' by Hillsong Worship
- Pray with 'You're Not Finished Yet' by the Belonging Co

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

Numbers 21:4 *- But the people became impatient on the way.*

God delivered them a military victory JUST ONE VERSE PRIOR. They are on the heels of seeing God's might...and they begin complaining again. Why is it taking them so *long* to *get anywhere* in this stupid *desert*?! They want to be there already!

This is the moment that we can offer a gift to God that is only available to us on this side of Heaven. Faith in Him. Trusting God honors him so much. In Heaven, we will see Him. We will know what He's doing. But here on earth, when we can't see why he would lead us through a desert? Our trust has to be a choice. This is how we can love him. Obey him, and trust him when we don't see what he's about. Paul writes in Corinthians 13:12 that we see dimly right now, as if through a glass. But one day, we will see why he let our story happen the way it did. When Jesus' apostle Thomas doubted that he rose from the dead, Jesus obliged his doubt. He gave him proof. He let Thomas touch his wounds. But, he added, in John 20, "Blessed are those who believe without seeing."

Blessed are you, wandering in your desert exodus, if you can believe that God knows what he's doing without seeing it. Blessed means happy. Happy are you who trust in God. Happy are you who don't open your mouth to complain, but to praise.

Numbers 22-24

About This Passage

This is the story of Balaam, a prophet-for-hire who is commissioned to curse the Israelites. It's actually quite comical!

- It's interesting to see that Balak, the king, is afraid of the people. (I love 22:5) The people in the Promised Land are not oblivious to the massive nation of people living in the desert, defeating any opposition in battle.
- The prophet tries to curse Israel four times, and each time he instead gave a blessing over Israel.
- Each time, the King, Balak, tries to get him to move to a different mountain - maybe a change of scenery will help him to curse the people better - but God protects his people.
- Balaam even prophecies about Jesus the savior coming (24:17).

Different Directions to Take It:

- Psalm 18 - take it, read it, write it in little pieces around your house on sticky notes, commit it to memory!
- Ephesians 6 - pray with the suit of armor that Paul says to "put on". Draw yourself in the armor. Label each piece of armor with a truth and declaration that you know from your Father!
- Try to identify any "curses" or words of destruction you say to yourself commonly. Every time you say it to yourself, repeat it aloud. That way, you'll hear how horrible it sounds to your own ears. Or, every time you say it to yourself, do a pushup.

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

Let's pretend Balaam is the little voice in your head.

Oof, right?

That little voice tries to get up there on that mountaintop and curse you – and GOD. WILL. NOT. LET. HIM. DO. IT.

You have King of the Universe as your protector. He does not want to see you bruised, cursed, and bullied by *even* yourself. I know, sometimes we still DO say horrible things to ourselves. God might not physically stop it, the way he stopped Balaam. But *you* have the mind of Christ. You are a child of God. You can imitate your Father and not let Balaam get a word of curse out. If it helps, call that little voice Balaam. If you hear yourself start to say, "Ugh, just get over yourself, Monica." You reply, "Shut up, Balaam. I'm a child of God, and I don't want to hear it."

I think the lie that "I have to take care of myself, nobody else will," is pervasive and destructive. God wants to be your shelter. Go to Psalm 18 today and pray with each line. Declare God as your protector. And the next time Balaam tries to mess with you, call on the name of the Lord and recite Psalm 18. Keep going, friend. Onward to freedom!

Numbers 25

About This Passage

This story takes place near the end of their 40-year sentence. They're camped out on the plains of Moab, in eyesight of the Promised Land. And here, after years of training, they still fail to trust God.

- They allow the Moabites to seduce them, and, as result, they worshipped false gods.
- "Israel yoked itself to Baal of Peor" - this line is very telling. It isn't just a few guys being naughty. This is a big movement on the people's part to be unfaithful, and God's response makes sense in light of it. He demands justice and punishment.
- If it's not clear what happens in verses 6-8, let me break it down: an Israelite man (Zimri) takes a Midianite woman (Cozbi) into his tent to sleep with her in the presence of the whole community [think: super defiant], and Phineas goes in after them and shish-ka-bobs them together. He kills them both with one spear as they are in the act. Because of this, God stops the plague had just started as punishment. Phineas acting on God's behalf actually honors God.
- Chapter 26 is a census again (remember the name Numbers!) because they have to count the people now that a bunch have died from the beginnings of the plague God sent and redacted.

Different Directions to Take It:

- Pray with "Lead me to the Cross" by Hillsong United
- Pray with "The Struggle" by Tenth Avenue North

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

They are so close to the end.

It's frustrating! Because they have lost sight of the prize. They've lost hope that they'll make it to the Promised Land, so they start acting out and settling for cheap substitutes. *If I can't have happiness in a land flowing with milk and honey, I guess I'll take a prostitute & temporary pleasure.*

I like Phineas' response. He says, 'Not today, buddy.' He goes in and enacts the shish-ka-bob of justice. Aggressive? Yes. Messy? Yes. But does it stop the plague? YES.

As we near the 'end' of the exodus, temptations increase. If you're making progress, the devil would looooove to trip you up. Notice in 25:16, God identifies this to Moses as a direct attack. It wasn't that Israel went looking to play the harlot with Midian. It was that Midian came looking to weaken these people and their scary God. Follow Phineas. Shish-ka-bob any desires to disobey now, any feelings of, "Well, it doesn't really matter..." or "Who's gonna know?"

Freedom is a life-long walk with Jesus. You don't "arrive" at it, but you do *live in it.* Yes, we can mess up and get back up again. Yes, setbacks do not cancel all of our progression. We don't want an unhealthy mindset of 'I can never mess up!' But we do want to *fight for ourselves and for our freedom*, and refuse to turn belly-up at the first sight of temptation. Don't flirt with temptation. Don't put yourself in the near occasion of sin. If "Midianite women" come chatting with you, *turn them away.*

Numbers 27

About This Passage

In this chapter, Joshua is appointed to be the next leader of the people.

- They go. up to the Abarim mountain range, which is near the Jordan River and provides a vantage point of the Promised Land. This is where Mount Nebo is, and where Moses later dies and is buried.
- Joshua is appointed and given "some" of Moses' authority, but he is not yet the leader. Moses likely trains him more intentionally now to lead.
- Like David after him, Joshua is appointed and then has to return to "normal life" while he waits for his time.

Different Directions to Take It:

- Go to Chapter 1 of Joshua to see the empowering words of courage given to him at the beginning of his reign.
- Go to Joshua 24 to read the stirring speech Joshua makes when the people renew their covenant. This is where his famous line, "Decide today whom you will serve!" comes in.
- Notice that in Joshua 5, he has to circumcise the whole community of men. This means that Moses didn't enforce covenant law under his command. Moses also didn't circumcise his own son; his wife had to do it in Exodus 4. Moses was a good leader, but he was not perfect, and he let things slip. Imagine what it must have been like for Joshua to watch Moses, and yet wait patiently for his turn to lead. Was he impatient? Was he itching to be in charge? When a new Pope is elected, he is led first to a room specifically to have a moment of emotional reaction (and to pray of course). It's called the Room of Tears. Did Joshua have a Room of Tears moment?
- In Joshua 3, he leads the people across the Jordan River, and in Joshua 4, he has the people set up a large stack of stones to act as a marking place, to remind anyone who looked at it that God made the waters part for them there. Read about it, and draw your own "memory stones" with the Lord.

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

Allow me to introduce you to the **Board of Directors i**n your own heart. This is a great day of the exodus to talk about leadership. Who is in charge of you?

Just as every company has a board of directors that votes, makes decisions, offers insights, approves choices etc, you and I also have a metaphorical 'board'. I like to draw an oval table, like a large conference room, and try to identify who is on my board. Whose opinion am I caring about in life? Who am I trying to please? Am I worried excessively about one person's perception of me? Am I making choices with a particular person in mind, trying to calculate how they'll respond to my decisions? If so, those are the people on your board. Draw them seated around your conference room.

When I first did this exercise, I had two problems. First, I had wayyyy too many people on my board. I sincerely believe my board of directors should be small. God, my husband, and a few other hand-picked friends who want me to be holy and healthy and happy. The few that I choose to ask real advice, and who I trust will love me even when I disappoint. The second problem was that I found I had "old" people on my board. I had a friend I hadn't talked to in almost five years who was still impacting my daily decisions! I wondered if she would approve of my lifestyle choices. I thought she was so cool, that I hoped when I returned from college on breaks, I'd run into her and she'd think I was doing amazing things. I made choices - even subconsciously- that would make me look better to her. I'm serious! When I realized that, I kicked her off my board. I can still like and admire her, but she can't be a deciding vote on how I live my life. (Plus, she probably doesn't WANT to be on my board. I had put here there myself.)

Who is on your **board of directors**? Is it time for a change in leadership?

Numbers 28

About This Passage

This chapter is another set of laws/instructions nestled between storyline. Numbers is a little bit of this and a little bit of that!

- Notice that as they end their forty years in the desert, new rules of daily offerings are enacted to prepare them for the life ahead. Discipline and structure is needed when a big change is happening!

Different Directions to Take It:

- Find a Morning Offering (or write one!) that you can adopt into your morning.
- Try incorporating a nightly Ignatian Examen (try the Reimagining the Examen app or book by Fr. Thibodeaux).
- Pray with the song ‘On the Altar’ by UPPERROOM.

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

This is a chapter I would normally skip over. It simply details the daily offering requirements for the people of Israel. It's one of those civil/ceremonial laws that don't apply to us anymore. But - look closer. Daily offerings and routines are what keep the Israelites consistent.

Sound familiar?

Let's do a deep dive into our daily routines and daily offerings.

- What do I do each morning - step by step - from when I wakeup till I get out the door or 'started' with my day? Include 'time wasters' like snoozing or scrolling.
- What do I do each night?
- What's my ideal morning routine & night routine that can leave me refreshed and ready to serve?
- What are the "pain points" of my day? The worst parts? The afternoon slump, or post-work traffic, or dinner prep, or workout? Can I reframe these to be my daily offerings to the Lord?
- Monthly, can I establish a life-giving habit like the Israelites do their monthly sacrifice? Maybe a deep clean, planning session, grocery shop, confession, coffee date with a friend, etc.
- The offerings the Israelites made cost them something. Let me evaluate my time and my finances - or the old triple T "time, talent, treasure". Am I giving any of this away? Can I give any of it away more? I can be creative here if financially I can't stretch, or I have no more time to give.
- Finally, after your brain dump, take this whole thing to the Lord and ask him what offerings - daily, monthly, morning, night, annual, financial, time, etc - he wants you to give in this season.

Numbers 29

About This Passage

This chapter mentions the Festival of Booths, which I want to cross-reference in Leviticus.

- Leviticus 23:33-34 details the beginnings of the Festival of Booths (or Tabernacles, or 'Sukkot'). The people all live in tents for a week, to commemorate the years that the desert people spent in the tents in the desert. (Of course, as Moses writes this, they currently still are in booths/tents in the desert.)
- When the Temple is built under Solomon & the people are established in the Promised Land, this festival takes on new traditions. They dedicate the temple during Sukkot in 1 Kings 8 in a huge celebration. After that, annually n the Court of Women in the Tabernacle, they light four huge menorahs that light up the whole city. "There is no shadow in Jerusalem during Sukkot!"
    - Around this time is when Jesus steps up in John 8 and says, "I am the light of the world!"
- On the last day of Sukkot, a high priest goes into the Pool of Siloam to get a bowl of water, and pours it on the Temple steps to symbolize the prophecy of the new temple, out of which's right side water will pour.
    - On this very day, Jesus says "Come to me, those who thirst, and I will give you drink!"
- Jesus shocks the Jews with these words; he is claiming to be greater than the Temple! (And he is!)

Book Recommendation: Jesus Shock by Peter Kreeft!

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

John 8:12- *Jesus again spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."*

There's another place where Jesus talks about light too.

Matthew 5:24: *"You are the light of the world. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under a bushel basket, but on the lampstand and it gives light to all in your house. In the same way, let your light so shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in Heaven."*

He is the light of the world AND we are the light of the world. We are His body! We are his hands and feet in the world. And we are meant to shine.

Do you know the good gifts God has given you to share with the world? Do you know how you're supposed to 'shine' in your work, home, community, etc? This exodus period has been personal. It's been an interior freedom, a time of you letting God rebuild you, lead you, purify you, woo you. But you aren't meant to just be free by yourself. You're meant to share that.

- Take a charisms test and find out what you have to offer.
- Ask people around you what gifts they see in you, so you can discern where to shine them.
- Ask the Lord and take inventory of your own life; where do you thrive and shine? How can you use that for the service and freedom of others, not just for yourself?

Galatians 5:1 "For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."

Numbers 31-32

About This Passage

This passage is about warfare against Midian, the people who intentionally seduced the Israelites to weaken them.

- This is the beginning of a whole book (Joshua) of conquest and warfare, and it's important to have a decent understanding of ancient warfare, in order to not be shocked.
- "Herem" warfare is how the Israelites usually operated; it involved not just winning the battle but destroying the city as well. This was because the cities were all pagan, and the Israelites were too ready to worship false gods. They had to be destroyed and leveled.
- While the words of the Bible often describe wiping out every last inhabitant, the reality of the warfare actually included quite a bit of time for citizens to evacuate the city, and there's some common hyperbole involved in the description of killing 'every last person' etc.

Different Directions to Take It:

- For a better explanation of herem warfare, if you need to set your heart at ease to understand this practice better, check out a podcast episode where Dr. Swafford explains it deeper. It's called "Biblical Warfare: How Was it OK?" on the Bible Timeline show.
- Remember that God used the plagues in Egypt to exorcise the land of Egypt, go to war against the false idols, and free his people. He is serious about his people having freedom, and he is willing to fight to make it happen. We should take the same attitude against sin. Hebrew 12:4 says, "You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood." The author is calling us on to get more serious about going to war against sin and idols in our lives. If we've grown comfortable with the patterns of sin, laziness, pride, or anything in our lives - let's 'herem warfare' and utterly destroy any place that sin can live in our lives. Examine your conscience not just for sins, but for allowing yourself into near occasions of sin as well.

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

Thinking of spiritual warfare can be intimidating, and there is definitely something to be said for not 'overspiritualizing' every little inconvenience of your day. Still, we know spiritual warfare is real. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6 that we do not fight an enemy of flesh and blood, but a spiritual enemy. Sometimes, it can be helpful to practice taking the perspective of warfare and battles in our spiritual lives.

I like to think about the past places the Lord has led me to victory as past "battles". I like to label them with the name "Monica vs. _____" to both claim that it was a battle and to keep it lighthearted. For example, I can identify "Monica vs. Anxiety", "Monica vs. Comparison", "Monica vs. Freshmen Year", "Monica vs. Jealousy of X Friend", "Monica vs. X Sin" as parts of my story. If I can see them through the lens of warfare, I'm able to see that God allowed struggle and suffering as part of me overcoming with him. I used to struggle with patterns of sin that I no longer do. That' freedom! That's victory! I used to struggle with comparison and relentless crushing on guys & desire for affirmation in others. I don't anymore. That's victory! I used to be controlled by fear of my future being boring and small. I'm not anymore. That's victory!

Where has God fought and won battles for you in your life? Where can you claim victory? That gives you hope for the coming battles in life; there is always something the devil will use to try to stop you. He simply won't make getting closer to Jesus easy for us, and that's just part of the Christian life.

Numbers 33-34

About This Passage

The book of Numbers is almost over. This book is the plot, and the following book, Deuteronomy, is a series of speeches Moses gives. This means that these last few chapters chronologically precede the first few chapters of Joshua. The 40 year sentence is almost up, and what do we see? A remembering of the stages of the exodus.

- Chapter 33 is a retelling of What God Did For Us.
- Chapter 34 is instructions about the boundaries the people will need in the future.
- I don't think either of these are by accident.

Different Directions to Take It:

- 33:4: The Lord executed judgement even against their [the Egyptian's] gods. Go visit the Graveyard of Your Idols page at the front of this prayer companion. Sit at the graves, if you must. Talk to Jesus about each of your fallen foes. In my graveyard were things like, 'daily 50g of sugar coffee', 'self-hatred', 'eating 3000 calories a day', 'sleeping in', 'me time until midnight', 'snacks', 'victim mentality', etc. I had to sit at the grave of my coffee for a long time, I recall. It was hard to give up, and it was hard to not dig it up and re-install it in my life. For over a year, it felt like the one thing that could make me feel put together and happy in my day. Then, it was gone. Maybe that sounds silly, but give yourself space to grieve the loss of old habits and things that kept you from relying on God. Just, be sure to go there with Jesus and let him speak truth to you.
- Read the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4). Pray with the call to remember.

Your Turn!

Before skipping ahead... take your own Bible & journal and (if you need to, set a timer), pray with it. Dive into it. Then, return for more insights below. Don't skip this! Scoot - go do it!

Moni's Thoughts

It's time for you to write a Chapter 33 and a Chapter 34.

Chapter 33 is a brief retelling of the story. In Deuteronomy, Moses gives a more lengthy and involved retelling. But here, it's just a summary. You're wrapping up a season of exodus. I don't know your timeling with the Lord; he might keep you in the desert longer. But, while you're here at Chapter 33, take some time to write a summary of the stages of your journey from Egypt. Write it as a few short paragraphs, or expand it into a short story or personal anecdote. Write it as a letter to your future self, or a voice memo story. But one thing is sure; if we don't take time to commemorate what God has done, in a few months' or years' time, we will forget. The years blend together in our memory, but God has been doing something important in you. Remember.

Chapter 34 is an interestingly-placed conversation about boundaries. It's talking about the borders of the Promised Land. Unfortunately (spoiler alert), the people do not conquer all of the land out to the borders. They are too disobedient, too doubtful, too hard to handle. Joshua dies with regret in his heart that he couldn't do it. But King David later finishes the job. (That's beside the point.) Going forward into whatever new season of life you're in, what boundaries do you need to hold? I fully believe that boundaries can be taken too far, and I don't think cutting people out of your life is ever a good idea. (That's just me.) But when you have something sacred and precious, you protect it. Your intimacy with God, your growth, your new baby freedom - it needs protection. Set up boundaries. Draw lines. Keep it safe.

Part 3: Deuteronomy Plan & Resources

Deuteronomy at a Glance

It's time for you to pray without a guide! Get into the book of Deuteronomy at your pace. Let the Lord speak to you without my influence! Trust me, the book is encouraging and full of good promises. You'll love it. Refer to the next pages for insights & information about Deuteronomy to refer to.

How to Structure Prayer?

I recommend:

1. You start at Deuteronomy 1:1 and, each day, read until something catches your eye. Stop there, and explore it. Ask the Lord about it. Refer to the Lectio Divina Guide at the back of this Prayer Companion for more ideas. (Yes, you have permission to skip and skim chapters!! It's okay to say 'nothing in that whole chapter stuck out to me!')
2. Highlight in your Bible any promises or words of reassurance God gives in this book; you'll train your eye to look for them!
3. Keep returning to your Mission Statement, Idols Graveyard, and the other pages 3-13 here to remind yourself that you're still in your Exodus!

About This Book:

- The name Deuteronomy comes from "duo", or "two". It means "Second Law."
- This is a series of speeches Moses gives the people to encourage them in their conquest of the Promised Land; he already knows he is not going in with them.
- The people listening to him are the generation that have grown up in the desert. Their parents have all died in the wilderness.
- You can think of this book as an epic homily Moses gives.

Structure of the Book:

- Chapters 1-5 are stories recapping where they've been. They aren't happening again; this book is not a story book, it's a series of speeches.
- Chapter 6 is the "Shema" - the really significant Jewish prayer that tells them to remember what God has done!
- Chapters 7-9 are warnings & encouragements.
- Chapter 10 is a retelling of a story again.
- Chapters 11-26 are various instructions, reminders, laws, etc.
- Chapter 27 is a specific instruction to renew the covenant once they arrive, which Joshua does in Joshua 24.
- Chapter 28 is more instruction.
- Chapter 29 -31 are more "current events" - the recent covenant renewal and appointing Joshua to be the successor, recalling these stories and going into more depth than Numbers provided.
- Chapter 32 is another song of Moses. Good to compare and contrast with the Song of Moses/ "Song of the Sea" in Exodus 15.
- Chapter 33 is Moses' final blessing. (I like to rewrite it in my own words to be a blessing from Moses to me!)
- Chapter 34 is the bit of narrative to finish the book and explain Moses' death.

Different Directions to Take It:

- As you read, keep the perspective that Moses (despite his sin) knows God, and knows God's "love language" is obedience and faithfulness. Look at him as a man trying to teach his people how to love God well. Take a tally of how many times he tells them to be obedient, and try to apply that to your life.
- "Cherry pick" all the encouraging verses from Deuteronomy to make yourself a condensed 'Pep Talk'.
- The Bible Timeline Show Podcast has a great episode called "How to Survive a Spiritual Desert with Melissa Overmyer"
- 'Desert themed' and 'Exodus themed' songsI love to recommend:
    - Desert Places by Worship Initiative
    - Take Courage by Kristene DiMarco
    - Yes I Will by Worship Initiative
    - Never Once by Matt Redman
    - Living Years by Vertical Worship
    - Whate'er My God Ordains is Right by Sovereign Grace Music
    - The Valley by Sam and Josh
    - Jesus Paid It All by Austin Stone Worship
    - Don't You Give Up on Me by Brandon Lake
    - Abide by Dwell Songs, Aaron Williams

LECTIO DIVINA

The Four Steps & The Suitcase

I like to think about praying with Scripture like *looking for a specific item in a suitcase*. There may be lots of different items to sort through, but ultimately, you know that what you're looking for is in there. Perhaps I'm looking for my favorite chapstick, which is lost somewhere in my suitcase. What do I do?

1. **Read: Open the suitcase & start to pull things out.**
    a. I approach praying with Scripture (and opening my suitcase) with the total trust that my chapstick is in fact in here, if I look hard enough. I don't approach praying with Scripture in doubt... "I *hope* God might say something to me..." No, I know he has something. Maybe it's huge shocking and life-changing! Maybe it's very small. But I know it's in there. In this stage, I simply open it up.
    b. This stage is messy. It feels like we're going a bunch of different directions. Pulling out very neatly-packed items.
2. **Reflect: Pull things out**
    a. This stage is the "messiest". There's lots of things neatly packed in here that I've tugged out. I've started exploring different places, asking different questions, journaling or flipping to other passages... But I still don't see my chapstick. Sometimes I have to shake out every article of clothing, empty my toiletry bag, inside-out my socks, etc. It takes *"work"* to pray.
    b. Don't be discouraged in praying with Scripture if "nothing comes to you right away". You're learning to speak a new language here. You may be hunting for a very small chapstick in a very large bag. Keep hope! Eventually, you will find the chapstick.
3. **Respond: Use the chapstick!**
    a. Now, you've found your chapstick! You've found something in God's word that has struck you! Now, what do you do? Use it! Put it on! Take a moment to enjoy it. Encounter God. Savor it.
    b. Repack your bag. Part of "repacking the bag" is applying it to your life, putting things in order. It's not enough to say "*cool! God spoke*!" Now, what can you do in reply? How can you *use what he said*? What practical steps might he be giving you? You can't chase down every single "item in the suitcase" every time you pray, but you can choose the one thing that sticks out to work with. Return to it tomorrow.

READ

Step 1: Read / Understand: What Does the Text Say?
Introducing the "Literal" Hermeneutic Lens

The goal: Understand what you're reading. You can't ready the Bible in isolation. It's part of a whole 73-book library. There's word to be done in *laying a strong foundation of understanding* before you start to build layers on top.

1. What book am I reading from?
2. What is the genre of this book?
3. Who is the book written TO or FOR, if known?
4. Who is the author of this book, if known? What do I know about this author? Was the author an eyewitness of these events? If not - who was the author's source?
5. Are there any words in this passage that I don't know, and need to define?
    a. Are there units of measurement, money etc that I don't understand? I can look them up to get modern-day equivalent.
6. Are there any uses of literary devices in this passage - metaphors, idioms, slang, etc?
7. Are there any words or images in this passage that remind me of other places in the Bible?
8. What is happening in the story that I'm reading? What is the plot?
9. What happened directly preceding this story - where was the main character?
10. Can I imagine the story in my mind's eye and understand it through my senses? What do I see, feel, smell, etc?
11. Are there any places in this passage that rub me the wrong way or challenge me - why? Can I get a better understanding of what the author means here? Can I challenge my first assumptions?
    a. Can I look up articles, homilies, or commentaries on this that may explain what is challenging me? (Don't feel the pressure to interpret all this on your own! Ask Mother Church!)
12. Are there any places in this passage that stick out to me, though I may not know why? Take note of these to move into the "reflect" stage.
13. If there is dialogue, can I re-write it colloquially so that I can understand it a bit better?
14. What do I know about this time period - is there any historic context that can assist me?
    a. What world events are contemporary with this?
    b. Is this "normal" for the characters of this time period, or unusual?
15. The location - where is this, and is that significant? Can I check on a map or look up images of present-day to see it?

REFLECT

Step 2: Reflect: What Does the Text Say to ME?
Introducing the Spiritual Senses of Scripture: Allegorical, Moral, and Anagogical

The Goal: "Gather". You're still in the messy stage of Lectio, where you're 'pulling the threads' to get it to unravel, or making a mess in your living room when packing your suitcase. Maybe what God is trying to say to you isn't quite connecting yet. You're starting to ask the question: "WHY?"
Here is a great time to flip through to other places in Scripture and find connection points. Here is a great time to listen to worship songs, connect lyrics to the passage you're reading, and ultimately ask God, '*What are you speaking to me right now through this passage?*'

1. Does anything initially stick out to me in this scene, and if so - why? What does it tug in my heart or remind me of? Always follow *intuition* like this first.
2. Ask God, "What do you want to say to me in this passage?"
3. For stories: If I was here in the story, what would I say, do, think, or feel? Would it be the same as the character I'm reading about, or different?
4. For poetry books or letters: Can you rewrite the words to sound more like your voice, to see if you can uncover deeper meaning? Be careful - don't stray far off what Scripture says. Do this only to allow God to show you something you hadn't seen before.
5. Does this passage relate to my life in any way?
    a. Current events in my life?
    b. My past? A specific memory or period of time?
    c. My future - dreams, desires, fears?
6. If this passages causes me to feel emotional in any way - angry, relieved, sorrowful, etc - why?
7. Does anything in this passage relate to somewhere else in the Bible - pointing forward to Jesus to back to an Old Testament story? Reflect on that to gain further insights. There is double meaning - for now and later. (This is the Allegorical Sense of Scripture!)
    a. Isaac's sacrifice and Jesus' sacrifice
8. Does anything in this passage show a moral lesson of right/wrong? What is it? (This is the Moral Sense of Scripture!)
9. Does anything in this passage relate to Heaven or point forward to end times? Reflect on how there can be a double meaning, for here and also for later. (This is the Anagogical Sense of Scripture.)
10. All your memory to tug you to relevant "extrabiblical" methods of prayer. If this passage reminds you of a hymn or worship song, a poem, a prayer, a saint's story or quote, go there. God can speak outside Scripture too with 'supplemental materials'.

RESPOND

Step 3: Respond: What Do I Say to the Lord?

Responding to God's words to you is so personal that it's hard to suggest "best practices". This is where prayer is intimate, and everyone prays differently. My intention on this page is to give you a library of ideas, instead of a checklist. I want to show you that YES - it "counts" - whatever you are doing to pray, to respond to God, to be intimate with him. It doesn't have to look like your neighbor!!

1. Journal like John Henry Newman & Gemma Galgani
2. Sing like David
3. Write your own songs & prayers like St. Patrick & Mary
4. Imagine the scene in your mind & have conversations with God there like Ignatius
5. Meditate on Jesus wounds like Faustina
6. Talk to God very bluntly like Therese
7. Silent Contemplation like John of the Cross or Mary (pondering in heart)
8. Guided Meditations like Francis de Sales
9. Pray with your body like St. Dominic in the Nine Ways of Prayer
10. Pray with images ""Visio Divina" like St Luke or Fra Angelico
11. Pray thanksgiving like St. Paul
12. Pray intercession like St Gertrude & Moses

No matter how to choose to respond to God, one thing is central here: God is continually working in your heart for further conversion and further deepening of his love. What is He asking you to do in response to Him? **What is he asking you to do?**

Step 4: Rest: Conversation with the Lord

After the "work" of prayer and pursuing God has passed, take a moment to linger with the Lord. Sit in his presence. Let him have space if he wants to say anything else. Listen.

Sometimes, sitting with your eyes closed or your hands open is a helpful way to tell your body: *relax. We are resting. We are waiting.*

Offer small words of affection or praise to the Lord, but don't put pressure on this time to produce anything. This is just time together.

Thank You!

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