

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP STUDY IN THE BOOK OF
EXODUS –

PART FIVE – THE PRINCIPLES FOR LIVING

God had saved his people from slavery as He promised. Through ‘death and resurrection’ in the Red Sea they had left their old life in Egypt and begun a new life, but almost immediately they had struggled. They became hungry, thirsty and defeated so God miraculously gave them food, water and victory as He gives us His word, His Spirit and His power over sin, when we trust Him, beginning always at the cross.(15-17) Moses was too busy and in danger of ‘burn-out’, so God gave him wisdom through Jethro.(18) Would they always have to lurch from one crisis to another?

Very shortly the Lord would be giving Moses a document which would change the world, the Ten Commandments, but even this He knew we would quickly misunderstand and misuse. In chapter 19 God revealed His plan for Christian living which was so much better than a list of rules which we would pass or fail. What He wanted for us was a relationship. It would be a relationship based on His promises and our acceptance which would mean that we would belong to Him. We would be ‘a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’. Priests are people who have the privilege of relating to God and ‘holy’ means that we belong to Him for His exclusive use. We are to be His instruments of communication in His world, letting the world know Who He is.(I Pet.2:9,10) Moses put God’s proposal to the Israelites and they accepted.(19:1-8)

The relationship was to grow for Moses by getting to know God better, learning to talk with Him and resulting in a deepening relationship of trust by the people towards him. First however they had to learn that they were different from God. We need to acknowledge that because of our sin we are not like God and must first be made clean. Ignoring this first step would result in death. Moses’ relationship with God now made it possible for him to bring others into that same relationship. They too would have to begin by realizing what separated them from God.(19:9-25)

The rest of the Bible develops this theme of relationship with God in 4 ways. First He is the Creator, the Potter patiently working on the clay.(Isa.29:16; 45:9; 64:8; Jer.18:1-6; Rom.9:19-21) Then He is our heavenly Father whose sons and daughters we are.(Matt.6:9; Rom.8:14-18) Next He is our friend who shares His secrets with us.(Jn.15:15; Jas.2:23) Finally He is our bridegroom Who jealously loves His bride.(Eph.5:22-33; Rev.21:2)

In chapter 20, God described to Moses what the relationship was to look like in real life. The Ten Commandments would not create the relationship but they would express it. They are in effect chapter headings for the rest of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

The first four commandments describe our relationship with God. He is a God who gives but we need to know and accept His terms.

1. He is to be our only God, like a husband to a wife.
2. We are to make no images of Him which would only be our view of Him, not His revelation of Himself.

3. We are not to use His name, which represents His authority, in vain. He, not we, is in charge.
4. The Sabbath, which means 'rest', was a time to rest and relax in Christ, to learn to trust Him and get to know Him better. In The Old Testament it was to be one day a week. In the New Testament, (Heb.4:3-12) it was to be the secret of every day.(20:1-11)

The last 6 commandments describe how our relationship with God will look in our dealings with others. We will not take from them.

5. We will not take honour from parents. They are meant to be a child's first glimpse of how God is.
6. We will not take life from others. God gave it to them and they are precious to Him.
7. We will not take a present or future spouse from others, as God does not want His bride taken from Him.
8. We will not take what belongs to others. All they have was given by God.
9. We will not take reputation from others by lying about them. God's relationship with us is based on truth.
10. We will not even want to take anything from others. Because of our relationship with God who gives we will only want to give to others.(20:12-17)

When the Israelites saw the power and awesomeness of God they feared Him and wanted to hear what He had said to Moses, but it would be second hand. The first message was the one they would very soon be ignoring in chapter 32. They did not yet have their own relationship with God.(20:18-26)

SOME QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. What is it which brings us to the point of really wanting a relationship with God? Discuss the different relationships we have in our lives each of which pictures an aspect of the relationship God wants with us. How did God use the successes and failures of those relationships in our lives to make us aware of what He offered us? Do we have to go to a remote place like Mt Sinai to meet God?(chapter 19)
2. What common misunderstandings do people have about the Ten Commandments? What have those who say they live by the Ten Commandments usually missed about Exodus 20? How did Jesus sum up the Ten Commandments?(Mark 12:28-31) Do they still apply today to Christians?(Matt.5:17-20) What eleventh commandment did He add?(Jn.13:34,35)