



# Big Faith *in a* Big God

*Learning how to have steadfast faith,  
even in hard times.*

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## *Introduction*

In this study, we are going to learn how to have a steadfast faith, how to trust God and have BIG FAITH even when you encounter tough situations. This is something that I am trying to live out in my own life.

Let's talk about situations where this happens.

So you've been going to bible study and you feel like you are getting closer to God. You've been better about reading your Bible and praying more often. You've seen some God winks in your life. Things are good and you really feel like you have seen some progress in how you handle stress. Then you find out that due to taxes your mortgage is going up \$300 a month. The same day, your boss tells everyone that your company is doing some re-structuring and they are going to lay off 20 % off the company. Then some birds lay a nest in your air conditioning unit and it will cost \$1500 to fix and you are without air for 2 days. How do you respond?

For many of us, this would send us in a spiral of worrying and stress. The planners would think through every possible outcome, make a new budget based on all the different scenarios and maybe even apply for a part-time job, just in case. The emotional ones would get a knot in their stomach, decide to numb their stress through food or screen time and spend lots of time texting and talking to their friends about it. The Ignorers would pretend that nothing was wrong, but they would walk around with tight shoulders, not sleep well and find themselves getting easily upset at work or with loved ones.

How do you think you would react to this?

## *A quick Recap....*

For the past 430 years, the Israelites had lived in Egypt as slaves under the Pharaoh's rule. The people cried out to the Lord and God heard their pleas. God sent Moses to Egypt to demand that Pharaoh let his people go. God sent 10 plagues upon Egypt so that Pharaoh and all the Egyptians would know that he was God. The last plague brought death to the firstborn of every household and livestock unless they had taken the blood of a new lamb and marked around their door. The angel of death passed over all the houses that had this, which were all the Israelites, since they had been told exactly what to do. This was the first Passover, which was named as such because the Angel of Death passed over any house with the blood of an unblemished lamb.

Before the plagues had begun, God had given them a vision of what he was doing, the promise he was fulfilling and how they would leave Egypt.

Read Exodus 3: 15-22

1. How did God describe the land of Canaan?
2. What were they going to leave Egypt with?

Read Exodus 12:33-39

3. What kind of dough did they take and why?
4. What did the Egyptians give the Israelites?
5. How many Israelites left Egypt?

God fulfilled his promise by giving the Israelites favor with the Egyptians so they left with jewelry and clothing. Moses tells the people that when they get to Canaan, they will celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the same month as when they left, in remembrance of what God has done in delivering them from Egypt. It was the Feast of Unleavened Bread because the Egyptians wanted them to leave their land so urgently that they left before their dough had leavened.

## *Taking the long way*

So let's pick up in Exodus 13

Read Exodus 13: 17-22

1. Why didn't God lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines?

The Philistines were the Israelites' enemy and there is a lot of history of strife between the two nations in the Bible. David fought Goliath, who was a Philistine. Samson, the one with the supernatural strength, was appointed to save the Israelites from the Philistines. God knew that if they went near the Philistines, the Philistines would attack and God didn't want the Israelites to lose heart. So he took them the long way, through the wilderness.

2. Looking back in your life, can you see evidence of God's protection in your life even when it didn't feel like it at the time?

3. What does it say that the Israelites were equipped for?

They were ready for battle and yet God is purposely leading them away from the possibility of war because he knew they might be easily discouraged. They had just left Egypt where they had over 400 years of slavery. Before the first plague, Moses tells the people again what God is going to do but they are unable to listen. Read Exodus 6:6-9

4. What is their emotional state?

God knew that they were physically tired and spiritually spent. They were not ready for war or else they were going to want to turn back. God doesn't just protect us physically, he also guards our heart and spirit, just as any loving parent does.

5. Who went with them and how did they see his presence?

6. Did he ever depart from them?

Can you imagine if God went before you in a pillar of cloud? All you would need to do is follow the cloud and he would lead you where you needed to go. And then at night, you would have fire to give you light and heat, so you would always see his presence. Y'all this is the dream!! They knew exactly where to go.

## No Where to Go

The Israelites have been rescued from slavery, they have silver and gold from the Egyptians, they are being led by a Pillar of Cloud by day and Pillar of Fire by night. They are in a great place, wouldn't you agree? Let's see what they encounter next.

Read Exodus 14: 1-9

1. In verse 2, what are the Israelites to do?
2. Have you ever had a situation where you had to turn and go back in the other direction? Did you start to question God's goodness?

It can be easy to question his goodness too when it says that he hardened Pharaoh's heart. But Pharaoh's heart was already hard. He had decreed that all the young newborn babies born to the Israelites would be killed. This is why Moses' mom had to hide him and they put him in a basket in the river for Pharaoh's daughter to find and save. Notice that the text says that Pharaoh's mind was changed towards the Israelites and then later God hardens his heart. Again, God just allowed Pharaoh's heart to move in the direction it was already in.

3. How many chariots did he take with him?
4. Where were the Israelites encamped by?

This meant the sea was behind them and the Egyptians were in front of them.

5. What would you have thought when you saw hundreds of chariots, horses and soldiers coming towards you?

Let's see the Israelites response to this. Read Exodus 14:10-14.

So, dramatic much? They didn't say, "Oh no, what are we going to do?" They immediately brought in sarcasm and anger. Remember that they had just seen the power of God through the plagues, through the Passover, through their quick escape, heard the promises of God and seen the pillars of cloud and fire and yet their first instinct was, "We are going to die!!"

6. Do you struggle with immediately going to the worst case scenario? Why or why not?

## No Where to Go

The Israelites start believing that it would have been better to stay in bondage in Egypt. How quickly they forgot the hard labor, persecution and death that Pharaoh had inflicted on them. We do this too! We try to leave a bad situation and encounter something that makes us doubt God's ability to deliver us. We begin to believe that maybe what we were leaving wasn't that bad. That not knowing our future is worse than the situation we are fleeing. Our fears cause us to doubt God's protection, his goodness, his promises and his power.

### 7. What was Moses' response?

Look at what he says after he tells them that the Lord will fight for them. I would think that he would follow it with a command to trust the Lord, but he says that all they had to do was be quiet. I love the Message's translation of Exodus 14:14: "God will fight the battle for you. And you? You keep your mouths shut!"

How many times do our words and thoughts keep us from believing the promises of God? The words we say are the words we believe. If we want to trust in God then we have to silence the words that question God's goodness and plan. Look at the Lord's answer to Moses and the people of Israel.

The words  
we say are  
the words we  
believe.

Read Exodus 14:15-18.

They are to go forward in faith and watch the Lord work. Repeat that to yourself.

**They are to go forward in faith and watch the Lord work.**

This is exactly how we should respond to times of uncertainty and doubt. Go forward in faith and watch the Lord work. Our instincts will tell us to stop and worry; God says keep moving and have faith. The Israelites don't have to do anything other than walk. No battle to fight, no sacrifices to make; just put one foot in front of another and walk. And in our own hard times, when we don't know what else to do, we can just focus on taking one step at a time.

## *A Powerful Reason*

When God does something, he does it big, so that no one has any doubt about who is making it happen. Read Exodus 14:17-31.

1. What will the Egyptians know after this happens?

When people see God's power, they have a choice to believe or turn away. Everything God does is to point people to himself, since he knows that life can only be found through him. One of the main reasons we are called to reflect Jesus to those around us is so that they will come to know him too. God's actions are always rooted in love.

2. Where did the pillar of cloud and fire go?

3. Where did the people walk as they went into the sea?

4. What did Israel see that day and how did they respond?

When God does something amazing in our life, it creates awe and worship. It strengthens our faith and gives us spiritual grit to believe in God's plan for our lives. The key to steadfast faith is to consistently remember and give praise for all that God has done, is doing and will do for us.

Read Psalm 77.

How does the Psalmist describe his situation in the first 6 verses.

What are some of the doubts about God that the Psalmist thinks in verses 7-9?

How does the Psalmist change his negative thoughts and doubts to praise?

In verse 10, whose footprints are unseen?

What do you learn from the Psalm?

# *What We Learn about God's Plan*

## **God's Plan includes Promises**

God told the Israelites from the very beginning that he would rescue them and take them to the Promised Land, one filled with milk and honey. This was an already established land where their enemies lived, so he was going to take from those who had wronged them and redeem anything they had lost.

## **God's Plan includes Provision**

When the Israelites left Egypt, they took with them treasures of gold, silver and jewelry that the Egyptians gave to them. As slaves they had very little, but they left Egypt with money and treasures that they could use for their journey and future.

## **God's Plan includes Protection**

God didn't take them the short route because he knew that would take them by the Philistines, who would attack them. We want our lives to be filled with straight lines and short paths and God's path is usually filled with detours and longer roads. We don't understand the reason and we begin to doubt his plan. But these zig zags in our life are protecting us; not keeping us from something better.

## **God's Plan includes his Presence**

God accompanied them with a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire so they would never feel alone. We now have the Holy Spirit who lives inside of us, giving us individual nudges, encouragement and strength. And remember this is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, so this ain't no small thing!

## **God's Plan includes Purpose**

In every situation, God is clear about why he brings the plagues, why he hardens Pharaoh's heart and why he allows the Egyptians to pursue them after he leaves. Because he wants them to know that he is the Lord and for the Israelites to give him glory for that he had done for them. God doesn't do this for applause. His main reason is that when we see his power and his hand, it strengthens our faith in Him.

## *What We Learn about God's Plan*

### **God's Plan includes Power**

When the Israelites saw the Egyptian army advancing towards them and the sea behind them, they let their fears keep them from remembering God's power.

They assumed the worst and believed that what they were leaving behind was better than trusting God. In the big struggles of our life, it can seem impossible that God can get us out. We too look around and only see obstacles. And we let those fears give voice to negativity and despair. But this is when to silence those fears and words by remembering the power of God to do the impossible, his deep love for us and the promise that he is always working towards our good.

Romans 8:28 - 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

# Scripture Reading

Summarize or rewrite these verses

Proverbs 19:21

Psalm 16:11

Psalm 136

2 Corinthians 10:4-5

Deuteronomy 7: 8-10

Praying for:

Weekly Checklist

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Notes