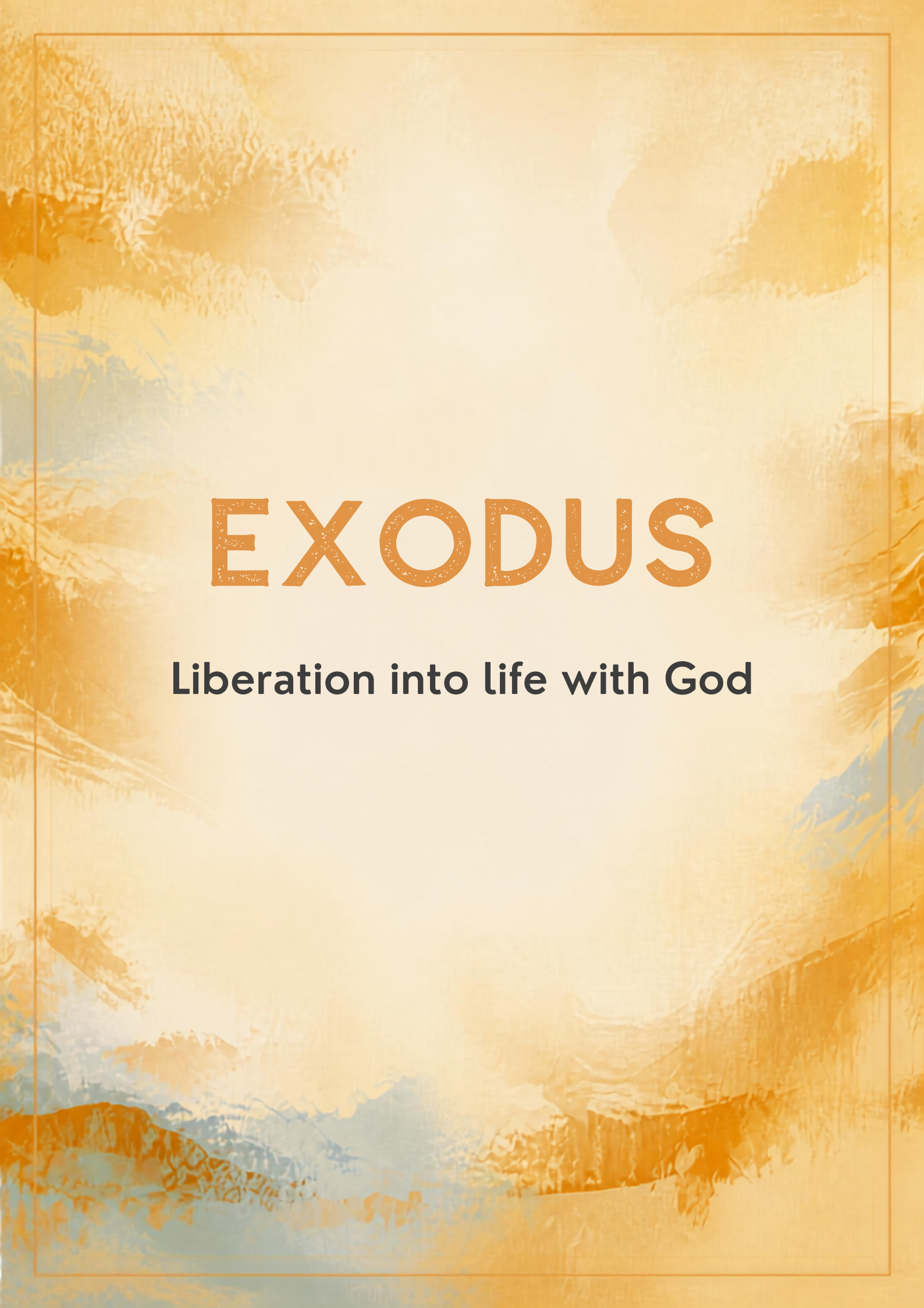




EXODUS

Liberation into life with God

This booklet is less an introduction to the story of Exodus (the Bible Project, among other resources, is a great website for this) - it's more a simple guide to help us enter the story as our story. A little aid to help us get to know the God of Exodus as our God.

Reading isn't for everyone, and there's no pressure to read any further! You could use it in your small group, you could use it on your own; in one go, or dipping into it as we go through the Sunday series.

There are a few questions to think and pray about along the way, with a little space to write (and more at the back). There is also a reading plan if you'd like to read the whole book of Exodus over the autumn.

We like to think of ourselves as free. We choose our lifestyle, we make of ourselves what we want. But for some of us, while we might *look* free, the truth - or at least how we feel - is different. Under the surface we're in debt, we're addicted to certain habits, we're manipulated by others, we're trapped in anxiety, bitterness, or in desires for unhealthy things. Or perhaps we feel free, but in enjoying our freedom we've become blind to others who don't.

The book of Exodus is in many ways an Old Testament Gospel, and it's a Gospel of Freedom. 'Exodus' means 'the way out': it tells the good news of God's rescuing Israel out of slavery in Egypt, into the freedom of relationship with him. But it is not just good news for them then, it's good news for us now. Jesus has welcomed us into the people of God, and so this has become our story too – our pilgrimage out of slavery, through the wilderness, into God's presence, learning to live his ways of freedom, as we are led by Jesus.

In fact, Exodus points forward to the good news about Jesus, *The Way out* - it helps us understand more fully who Jesus is and what he came to do as our Liberator. He came to set his world free from oppression, addiction, sin and death, into the wonderful freedom of life with him.

Exodus is about God: it's a story of the God Beyond drawing close. God shows himself to be beyond knowing ('I Am Who I Am', is his name (Ex 3.14)) – yet makes himself known (Moses talked with God 'face to face, as a man speaks with his friend' (Ex 33.11)). The God Beyond becomes the God Who Draws Close, setting his people free so that they can know the deep freedom of relationship with him.

What are you learning about the God Beyond who draws close, as you go through this series?

Exodus points us to the 'exodus work' of Jesus: The same God who led the people of Israel out of Egypt worked a cosmic exodus in Christ, and is working this exodus out in our lives and times now. Jesus' saving work is a liberation that the Exodus from Egypt points forward to – a total liberation for everyone in every place and time, in every aspect of our being, and every aspect of our world.

It might seem strange to say, but on one level, Exodus is 'about' Jesus. Paul tells us that Christ was the one leading and nurturing the Hebrew people: 'They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.' (1 Cor 10.3-4.)

So Jesus opens up the full meaning of the Exodus, and Exodus also helps open up more fully who Jesus is and what he came to do.

***How is Jesus opening up the meaning of Exodus for you?
And how is Exodus taking you deeper into the good news
about Jesus and his kingdom?***

Freed Slaves Freeing Slaves

In this story we come to a deeper understanding of ourselves. We discover that, like the people of Israel, we too are deeply formed by patterns of slavery, yet we have been (and continue to be) set free by Jesus. And as the body of Christ on earth, we also see ourselves as liberators sent by Jesus to set the captives free as we point them to the Liberator.

We, the Slaves: Like the people of Israel, we were slaves, and sometimes still live as slaves. Whether it be a slavery we have gotten ourselves into, or a slavery imposed on us, or somewhere in between – the God of Exodus came in Christ to set us free. As we see ourselves in this light, we enter into the story as those crying out for freedom, failing along the way, and seeking God's help to redirect our souls and bodies: away from the stuff that leads us back into slavery and towards the life we find in him.

In what ways am I still living in slavery?

How is God at work in me to bring freedom?

Am I experiencing oppression in any way? Do I need to ask for help?

We, the Liberators: As those being set free, we have the joyful call as the body of Christ of sharing and living the good news of liberation. It's a call to have open eyes and ears to respond to the cries of those in our communities whom Jesus longs to set free. But we do this from a place of humility: as freed (and being-freed) slaves, pointing away from ourselves to the only Liberator who truly sets free.

How can I open my eyes and ears to those who need the exodus Jesus brings?

How can we draw alongside those who are struggling, lament with them and cry out to God with them, and also offer Exodus-hope?

Freedom Looks Like Something

The Exodus kind of freedom is freedom *from*, and freedom *for*; ‘outer’ freedom and ‘inner’ freedom.

Freed *From*: In Chapters 1-15 we see the kind of ‘outward’ oppression that the people of God are being set free from: physical, psychological, social. And in the following chapters we begin to see the people of Israel’s ‘inner’ captivity: to their own desires and fears, and the spiritual slavery they are caught in. Exodus is about freedom from all this and more.

Freed *For*: Around chapter 14 onwards, the focus starts to shift more to what we are freed for: life with the God Beyond. God doesn’t just set the people free and leave them to it. He leads them into a relationship with him built on promise, following his ways, living in his glorious presence. We can tend to think of freedom as being able to do anything and everything, satisfying whatever desires we find within us. But Exodus, and Jesus, show us that true freedom has a particular shape. Freedom *looks* like something.

Freedom is... *What am I learning about what Freedom looks like?*

Freedom is a Pilgrimage

Out of slavery, Through the wilderness, Into God's presence.

Just as the Israelites' liberation was a journey, our liberation into freedom in Christ is a journey, a pilgrimage. We discover, as they did, that being set free by God's grace - from oppression, from temptations, and growing closer to God - takes time, and we meet with challenges along the way.

This pilgrimage takes us through the wilderness, where there can be confusion and pain as we leave one kingdom and enter a new one. But here is also where we encounter God's miraculous provision, his care and commitment; here we learn a deeper kind of trust. And ultimately, the pilgrimage is a journey home: into his constant presence.

Where do you find yourself in your Exodus pilgrimage at the moment?

Who is God calling you to help along the way in their pilgrimage?

A Weekly Exodus Reading Plan

We are not reading the whole book of Exodus in church, but will be missing bits out so that we can cover it over 11 weeks. If you'd like to read the whole thing to fill in the gaps and take more time with the book, here is a reading plan (or feel free to read at your own pace). Please note we will have breaks from this series on Sundays 27th September and 8th November, so you could either pause on those weeks or get ahead. It begins 6th September.

Week 1: Chapters 1-2

Week 2: Chapters 3-4

Week 3: Chapters 5-10

Week 4: Chapters 11-12

Week 5: Chapters 13-15

Week 6: Chapters 16-18

Week 7: Chapter 19 (you may wish to read some of next week's chapters this week)

Week 8: Chapters 20-31

Week 9: Chapters 32-33

Week 10: Chapter 34

Week 11: Chapters 35-40

Reading might prompt questions for you. **The Bible Project** provide helpful resources if you'd like to dig further: videos, podcasts and things to read. Search 'Exodus' for resources to explore the book of Exodus; search 'the Exodus Way' to explore the theme of Exodus in the Bible more widely.

How is God wanting to work his Exodus in me? And among us?

How is God calling you to join in his Exodus work in Stannington and beyond? Are there any small steps to take?

Feel free to use this space for any extra notes you'd like to make / prayers to write...

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Christ Church
Stanningington