

Life: God delivers his people

May 31, 2013

• *The Bible Studies for Life* lesson for June 19 focuses on Exodus 3:7-10; 12:12-13, 29-31; 14:5-6, 13-14, 21, 26.

God has done many great things throughout the course of history. He walked with Adam and Eve, talked with Noah and made a covenant with Abraham. God chose to use Abraham's family as a vessel to bless all the other families on Earth. He rescued his people out of Egypt and then gave the Torah, or law, at Sinai.

God guided, provided for and walked with his people through days of failure and days filled with hope. Eventually, God became a man in that same family line and walked upon this earth.

Passover is a way to remember some of the great works of God. Many of them we know from Scripture, and others we know from his work in our own lives. We are familiar with the pain we experience on Earth, and we all have cried out to God, desperately asking him for help. He has given us opportunities for freedom, but we are left with the choice to remain in our pain or throw off the chains of slavery.

Freedom from slavery

We have seen God work in this pattern time and time again. We are slaves to self-reliance, fear or to the ladder of success. Some of us are tied to substances and habits that hold us with such a grip we fear we never will escape. But the same God who delivered slaves from Egypt by a pathway through walls made of sea has extended his hand to you and me today.

Often "tradition" takes on a negative connotation in the religious realm. Many hear the word and think of empty ritual or man-made ceremony. But

living without tradition is almost impossible. We all have patterns in our lives when it comes to the way we speak to those we love and the way we relate to God. Tradition can be positive.

The tradition of Passover prompts us to step away from our lives and the chaos around in order to remember God's glorious work and provision. When we take a moment to reflect on his power, we receive the courage we need to face tomorrow.

Jesus' Passover

It is no coincidence that Jesus participated in the Passover meal right before he faced the most difficult challenge of his life. The night before his crucifixion, he reclined at the table and had the Seder with his disciples. As he remembered and reflected on God's plan, purpose and provision, he was equipped to face the horror that awaited him at dawn.

Passover still is important for Christians living today, because slavery is hard to leave behind, even when you are free. Each of us needs constant reminders of God's deliverance and our own freedom. Without such reminders, we are apt to forget what he has done and who we are in him. That is why we continue to celebrate and recognize Passover.

The Jews have been celebrating Passover more than 3,000 years. Today, the table is set with the finest wares and the best tablecloth. Silver cups of wine are placed across the table, intermingled with stacks of unleavened bread. There is one stack of three pieces hidden under a linen cover. One special plate in the center of the table holds the ceremonial foods, flanked by candlesticks made of the finest silver. Several generations of close family and friends gather around the table for this holy meal.

Redemption

The first Passover represented more than just a promise of redemption.

There was an actual sacrifice, and an actual firstborn child was redeemed. The Israelites took a spotless lamb, slit its throat, painted its blood on the doorframe, roasted it whole and did so without breaking any of its bones.

Centuries later, there was another redemptive act that involved a spotless Lamb, his gruesome death and his unbroken bones. Both experiences provided life and hope for those in great trouble. May we take time to remember today so God can give us the courage we need to face tomorrow.