

Don't Go Back to Egypt!

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FAITH FIGHTING ADDICTION
*A PROGRAM OF GASTON CONTROLLED
SUBSTANCES COALITION*

How to use this study

According to a Pew Research Study (Oct. 26, 2017), 46% of Americans know someone who is currently or has been addicted to substances. So, it is safe to say, at least half or more of any church congregation has a personal experience with addiction. This study uses the Israelites' journey and experiences in the Exodus to illustrate steps an individual can take to break bad habits and addictions and to change unhealthy relationships. Every person has some part of their life they need to change: a habit they want to stop or a healthy one they want to start, an addiction from which to recover, or a



relationship they would like to change for the better. An additional purpose of the study is to help all participants better understand the process of recovery. This is done by comparing events in the Exodus to the steps involved in recovery. As believers, we are called to walk along with God's people as they struggle to reach freedom and to be the people God intended them to be from the beginning.

The Israelites' Exodus journey had three distinct phases

- ***Out of Egypt***
- ***Through the Wilderness***
- ***To the Promised Land***



Lesson One

GETTING OUT OF EGYPT

EXODUS 2:23-34

*Bad habits, addictions, and unhealthy relationships can restrict and limit the life we desire and the life God intends for us. They can enslave, diminish, and restrict us, often with our **own** permission.*

THREE PHASES OF ENSLAVEMENT

The teacher can use his or her own examples or use some of the following to help people reflect and identify traits they need to change.

1. Bad Habits: These can range from the seemingly benign timewasters to debilitating activities. e.g. biting fingernails, unhealthy eating, watching too much tv, spending too much time on social media, being late, interrupting others, using profanity, overspending.

2. Addictions: An addiction might be characterized as a chronic, compulsive disorder that one continues despite harmful consequences. Harmful or illegal substances, shopping, pornography, and work are all examples of things that can be addictive. These diminish our lives and relationships.

3. Unhealthy Relationships: There are two aspects to unhealthy relationships that need to be changed:

- Spending time with people who lead us to do illegal, unsafe, or unhealthy activities.
- Traits in our existing relationships that limit the lives God desires for us to live. Some examples of traits that limit and hurt relationships are uncontrolled anger, domestic

violence, lying, overspending, breaking promises, passive-aggressive tendencies, illicit sexual activities, selfishness, or self-absorption.

“Almost anything is easier to get into, than to get out of.”
Agnes Allen

In Exodus 1:1-11, the Israelites are immigrating to Egypt to avoid dying by famine. After Joseph's death, the Egyptians turn against the Hebrew people and enslave them.

Often, bad habits, addictions, and unhealthy relationships seem to be managed for a short period of time. As time goes on, however, the effects of these bad decisions and unhealthy relationships become more visible and debilitating. They hinder the path God has planned for each of His followers.

According to Lesli Koppleman Ross, Egypt, in Hebrew is called *Mitzrayim*. The name means “narrow straits.” In Egypt, God’s people were constricted by slavery, controlled by oppressive masters that narrowed and restricted their lives. They were unable to flourish. The quality of their lives was limited because their choices were limited. The freedom to

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LESSON ONE: GETTING OUT OF EGYPT



DURING THAT LONG PERIOD, THE KING OF EGYPT DIED. THE ISRAELITES GROANED IN THEIR SLAVERY AND CRIED OUT, AND THEIR CRY FOR HELP BECAUSE OF THEIR SLAVERY WENT UP TO GOD. GOD HEARD THEIR GROANING, AND HE REMEMBERED HIS COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM, WITH ISAAC, AND WITH JACOB.
EXODUS 2:23-24

stand on their own - not be dependent on their masters - was stifled. Bad habits, addictions, and unhealthy relationships can become like bondage in our lives like the bondage of God's people in Egypt.

STEP ONE

The first step in breaking the bondage is to **admit the need for help**, as the Israelites did in Egypt.

One must face the fact that they are falling short in the life they desire and the life God desires for them. This may come in a gradual realization or in a blinding moment of clarity because of a failure, a job loss, a divorce, or even an arrest. These painful events can lead to a deep realization of helplessness and brokenness that causes them to turn to God for help.

DISCUSS: *Why are people reluctant to ask for help?*

In an article entitled "2 Words That Make Asking for Help a Lot Easier" in the business magazine, *Inc.*, author Amy Morin identifies the difference between being willing or unwilling to seek help is the attitude of being "mentally strong" vs. just "acting tough." A mentally strong person recognizes when they need help. They can deal with the emotions that come from a recognition they are falling short in a certain area. They are mentally strong enough to face an accurate appraisal of the situation. A person "acting tough" masks their weaknesses by pretending they have it all together and turns a blind eye to their shortcomings.

Morin recommends using two words to start the healing process: "I'm struggling." These words acknowledge you are having a hard time and open dialogue to begin addressing the problem. The Christian should recognize this process in relation to their faith. It is the realization that salvation comes only by confessing sin and helplessness, "for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God..." (Rom. 3:23). For us as Christians, the truth of sinfulness brings a blessed realization of our shortcomings and the need for God's grace. We are beyond struggling, hopelessly in need, but that realization leads to confession and salvation through Christ (Rom. 10:9-10).

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This first step requires humility and the realization that human efforts are not enough.

Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up! - James 4:12

You do not have because you do not ask. - James 4:2

Other Scriptures calling upon God for help are: Isaiah 30:18-19, James 1:5, Psalm 121:2, and Matthew 7:7-8.

Asking for God's help to change means we realize we cannot do it on our own. This requires humility and courage.

Questions to ask ourselves:

1. Where do I need help?
2. What habits continually sabotage my life?
3. Which one of my relationships needs help most urgently?
4. Is the same trait or habit sabotaging more than one relationship?
5. What trusted friend or relative could I ask if they believe I have a problem?

STEP TWO

The next step is seen in the call of Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3-4. In this encounter, God empowers Moses to take specific action to free God's people. God causes Moses to face his failures (fleeing Egypt) and his fears (public speaking). Paradoxically, Moses had to **go back** to Egypt to get his people **out** of Egypt.

Moses had to face his past for his people to have a future. However, God was relentless in getting Moses to take action steps to free his people and face his past.

- God reveals His name (Ex. 3:14).
- God reveals miraculous signs (Ex. 4:1-12).
- God recruits Aaron (Ex. 4:14-16).

Scriptural examples of changing a pattern in response to a problem: Moses complaining, but taking his father-in-law's advice and restructuring the leadership (Ex. 18:1-27); and the disciples reacting to the needs of the widows in the early church and recruiting the first deacons (Acts 6:1-7).

DISCUSS: *"Facing our past" means examining how past events in our lives impacts our present lives. Why is that important?*



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STEP THREE

An example of needing to take steps:

The testimony of many in Alcoholics Anonymous is that the first three steps of the program are vital and important; however, they are not enough.

The first three steps are:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

Multiple testimonies reveal recovering addicts did not get solidly on the path of sobriety until participants began to attend meetings and work the rest of the steps.



"All meaningful change requires significant spiritual and emotional energy and resources."

These steps include admitting to God and to someone else the exact nature of our wrong, admitting the wrongs committed upon others, making amends where possible, and being willing to openly commit to help others overcome alcoholism.

These steps call upon the participant to face their failures and weaknesses as Moses had to face his failure in Egypt. Completing these steps begins to diminish the power and shame that past actions have. They strengthen the ability to live an abundant and redeemed life. Facing and admitting where one is wrong and attempting to make amends is a pattern for healing and strengthening relationships that have been damaged by bad habits or unhealthy actions.

Changing any deeply embedded pattern requires a great deal of energy. To get Pharaoh to allow Egypt's primary workforce to leave Egypt took God's mighty hand. All meaningful change requires significant spiritual and emotional energy and resources.



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LESSON ONE: GETTING OUT OF EGYPT



Paul has this type of commitment in mind when it comes to Christians desiring to please God. It is all encompassing, an act of worship, offering bodies as a living sacrifice. (Rom. 12:1-2)

Christians desiring to break bad habits and addictions and to change unhealthy relationships must offer their whole self to Christ in a continuous pattern of transformation and renewal. It will require perseverance, courage, and peer support. Each person should seek the Lord through prayer, worship, listening to wise counsel and making steps to move out of the bondage of addictions, bad habits and unhealthy relationship patterns. However, we need to remember it is not simply “*Try harder!*” It is surrendering to Christ and exerting effort to change.

In our struggles, we need to remind ourselves we are loved by God not because of our successes, but because God is a loving God.

Refer to: John 3:16, Exodus 34:6, Psalm 86:15

God provides an avenue to escape sin and temptation, but there is responsibility upon the believer to walk through the door that God is opening.

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure. - 1 Corinthians 10:13

SUMMARY

- Bad habits, addictions, and unhealthy relationships can be like enslavement in Egypt. They limit and restrict our lives.
- The first step is to realize you need help and to ask God to help.
- The second step is to step out in faith, to act! To face and deal with past actions like Moses at the burning bush.
- Changing deeply embedded patterns requires spiritual and emotional resources. It combines surrender and commitment.