

## PROMISES & PROBLEMS - Studies 1 - 6

Many years have passed since the death of Joseph in Egypt. Instead of the glorious future the people expected, God's people are oppressed, discouraged and bitter. But God shares with Moses his plans for his people and brings him into the situation to share in it, to learn from it and then to lead the people out into freedom.

In these opening chapters we follow how, despite opposition, God was preparing Moses for this work for over 80 years. Moses is the hero of the whole story, but we also see his weaknesses, in contrast to God's almighty power and love.

### Study 1

## An Impossible Situation?

**Exodus 1:1-22**

INTRODUCTION

5 MINUTES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS 30 MINS

**AIM:** That we will know how to respond as we trust God in situations that seem to be impossible.

**E**xodus tells of the most important events in the history of the people of Israel. The book tells us how they were set free from slavery and set out for the promised land. There are many dramatic events - miracles, plagues and victory in impossible situations.

Exodus begins with what God has already done, and sets the scene for what he has yet to do. The closing chapters of Genesis end with Jacob's whole family in Egypt and Jacob blessing his sons before he died. Now Joseph is dead and a new king is on the throne 'who knew not Joseph' (v.8). The situation is one of oppression and attempted genocide. This opening chapter tells of the people living as slaves and God's promises to their forefathers forgotten.

Here at the beginning everything looks hopeless.

### Read Exodus 1:1-7

#### **The past:**

1. Why did Jacob, his eleven sons and many descendants go to live in Egypt (Gen 47:11; Ex.1:1)?
2. Discuss how you think they felt in those early days as immigrants in Egypt. What do you think enabled them to prosper so well (v.7)?

### Read Exodus 1:8-14

#### **The present:**

3. Almost 430 years had now passed since Jacob and his sons came to live in Egypt. In what way had the situation changed and why was this a problem:
  - a) for the Israelite families (v.8)?
  - b) for the king of Egypt (v.9)?
4. What action did the king take in response to his fears and how did the local people express their feelings towards these immigrants (vv.11-14)?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONT.	<p>You may be the only committed Christian where you live or work and you may feel you are on your own. These verses reminds us that God often begins his work in small ways. Even when the situation seems 'impossible' and very discouraging, God's purposes will not be stopped.</p>
<p><b>Read Exodus 1:15-22</b></p> <p><b>A 'final' solution:</b></p> <p>5. What directive was first given to the 'Ministry of Health' and what further order was given when this did not solve the problem (vv.15-16, 22)?</p> <p>6. What was the result for the Hebrew midwives when they disobeyed the king of Egypt (vv. 17-21)?</p> <p>Do you think we can <b>always</b> expect such a positive outcome in similar situations? Why?</p>	<p>APPLICATION      20 MINUTES</p>
TEACHING SUMMARY      5 MINUTES	<p>Divide into two or more groups for discussion and prayer.</p>
<p><b>T</b>he situation for the people of God looked impossible. Jacob and his family had travelled to Egypt during a famine and had been allowed to settle in the north-eastern part of the country, nearest to the land they had come from. As immigrants they may well have been despised and distrusted. In time they lost the security they once had enjoyed when a new Pharaoh saw them as a threat to the national security. They were forced into the labour of building royal cities under oppressive conditions. Despite this, they continued to increase in numbers.</p> <p>The Hebrew midwives were ordered to kill all the baby boys at birth and only two were prepared to oppose Pharaoh's attempted genocide. Yet something very remarkable happened. In spite of Pharaoh's efforts, the Israelites experienced a population explosion! God was at work.</p>	<p>1. Discuss how you could help someone who finds themselves in an 'impossible' situation.</p> <p>Ask the group to share one or two examples from their own experience.</p> <p>2. What are the possible consequences for individuals and the community when there is civil disobedience e.g. strikes?</p> <p>When might such an action be justified?</p> <p>Read <b>Exodus 2:1-22</b> before next week. What was wrong with Moses efforts to help his people?</p> <p><b>PRAYER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Thank God that he is always in control of every situation.</li> <li>* Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to trust God and learn how to take right action when you find yourself in situations that seem impossible.</li> </ul> <p><b>MEMORY VERSE: Matthew 19:26</b></p>
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