

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

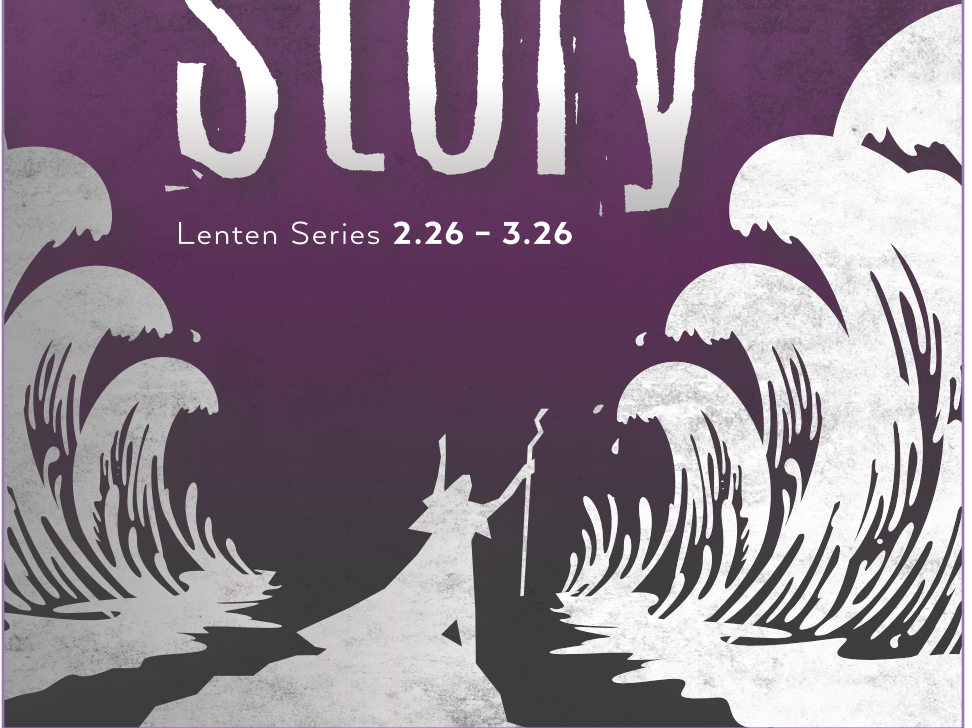
# The DEVO

FEBRUARY 20 - 24, 2023

Welcome to the

# Story

Lenten Series 2.26 - 3.26



# MONDAY

Read **Exodus 1:6–7**

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## Too Comfortable?

On account of Joseph’s heroic actions, Jacob’s entire clan was allowed to enter and reside in the land of Egypt. They were more than welcomed, not only on Joseph’s account but also because they had expertise in work that the Egyptians despised: raising and tending livestock.

Thus, Joseph’s brothers were given all the best pastureland in Egypt. Exodus reveals that God blessed them there with noticeable success. Both their families and their animals flourished. Life was good, very good—perhaps a little too good for their own good.

They knew that the land God had promised to Abraham and his descendants was *not* Egypt. It was Canaan, where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob received God’s promises and were buried. Joseph had been quick to acknowledge this fact. Genesis 50:7–10 describes his trip, with a “*very large company*,” to lay his father to rest, as he had promised, in the cave in the field of Machpelah, where Abraham and Isaac were buried.

Joseph’s brothers and their families also promised, on oath, to do the same for him; but when the time came, they delayed. After all, they had acquired much land, many children, and large herds. Such a trip might be difficult to organize and costly. And what if the Egyptian rulers objected?

How easy it is to enjoy God’s blessings and become so comfortably settled that we fail to follow through on commitments we *know* the Lord has called us to fulfill. We envision difficulties and challenges, and we delay. We tell ourselves *later will be better, especially after ...* [fill in the blank].

Have you found yourself in such a situation? Are you in one right now and starting to feel the discomfort of delayed obedience? If so, acknowledge it to the Lord and take a step toward obedience. If you need help in discerning what that first step is, ask a wise friend or counselor for help, and take heart. You are not stuck! *“For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him”* (Philippians 2:13 NLT).

## QUESTIONS

Why did God have Israel’s patriarchs and many generations that followed live in Egypt? What are some of the problems with getting “too comfortable”? What is “your Egypt”—a place where you don’t belong, but have grown comfortable occupying?

## PRAYERS

For Brandon and Kendra Kertson,  
Chi Alpha Ministry – San Diego State University

Pray for God’s wisdom while Brandon and Kendra are coaching and training campus missionaries.

# TUESDAY

Read [Exodus 1:8ff](#); [Galatians 4](#); [Hebrews 12:11](#)

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## Settling for Less

Jacob's (aka Israel's) family deserves no blame for taking refuge in Egypt. God had miraculously prepared this safe haven for them, a temporary home, through Joseph. What a wonderful haven it turned out to be! God provided free and undisturbed access to pastureland, as well as freedom to follow their own faith.

However, just as the memory of Joseph and his heroism faded, so did the family's willingness to *remember* (in the active Hebrew sense of that word) both God's promise and their own promise to Joseph. They delayed so long to keep that promise—and to make any move toward returning to their own land—that they lost motivation and became complacent.

Hebrews growing up in Egypt just after Joseph and his brothers willingly settled for something good and yet far *less* than what God had promised, far *less* than what God had planned for them. So, He allowed these ancient Israelites to experience some hard but necessary discipline. What He provided was neither wrath nor punishment, but the life-saving (though unpleasant) discipline of a loving Father.

That is exactly what God does for His children today. He provides fatherly discipline, which often includes essential training, because He loves us. As Hebrews 12:11 says, *“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”*

Do we embrace the fullness of the freedom that is ours in Christ, the freedom of His children and heirs? Or, are we still living by the basic principles of the world, the false idea that we can battle our way to freedom from sin through so-called willpower? Let’s meditate on Jesus’ promise that we will never have to settle for anything less than the full rights and freedoms of our inheritance in Him.

## QUESTIONS

How did God deal with the ancient Hebrews who had become complacent in Egypt? Have you ever heard, “Sometimes God has to take something out of your hands, even something good, so that He can give you something even better”? How has this shown up in your life? Why does God discipline His children, allowing difficulties and trials? What are some examples of this in your own life as a believer?

## PRAYERS

For Brandon and Kendra Kertson,  
Chi Alpha Ministry – San Diego State University

Brandon and Kendra are traveling all over the US training college ministry teams, so pray for travel mercies and safety.

# WEDNESDAY

Read **Romans 6:20-22; 2 Timothy 1:7**

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## Another Kind of Slavery

When we read what happened to Jacob's family in Egypt, we may tend to overlook what the story reveals about two kinds of slavery. The enslavement of Israel's sons is blatantly obvious: harsh physical servitude. However, another kind of slavery is less obvious, the slavery to fear that gripped Egypt's leaders and eventually devastated their nation.

Egypt's Pharaoh grew fearful as he observed how this immigrant population was thriving. He had become increasingly dependent on their capabilities and productivity. *If* he had wanted to, he could have discovered the Source of their blessing. Instead, his darkened, idolatrous mind (see Romans 1:18-23) imagined a fearsome scenario: These people might unite with an enemy. Worse yet, they might leave the country, he thought.

In the grasp of this fear, Pharaoh and his court made decisions and took actions that drastically backfired. They became more irrational, more hardened, and utterly powerless to repent and turn. Ultimately, they brought ruin far worse than what they had feared. At the same time, despite their physical suffering, God's people grew stronger. More importantly, they witnessed the awesome power of God!

What a potent lesson God has provided for us in this story! None of Pharaoh's diabolical efforts to thwart God's plan and destroy his people succeeded. In fact, Pharaoh's evil actions served to propel God's plan forward. Our God is stronger than any force or foe that may come against those who belong to Him.

We all experience two kinds of fear—healthy and unhealthy. The first is given by God for our protection; the second comes from the evil one and does damage. It keeps us in bondage to unwholesome stress and anxiety. It distorts our thinking and robs us of peace and joy. In the quiet of our hearts and/or with the help of a mature Christian friend, we can identify and acknowledge our fears and surrender them fully to God, in the power of the Spirit. *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline”* (2 Timothy 1:7 NLT).

## QUESTIONS

What are some examples of the type of “slavery” that gripped ancient Egypt's leaders? What were the consequences for the Hebrews then living in Egypt? How did God use this, ultimately, to achieve His kingdom purposes? What sorts of “unhealthy” fear do you wrestle with at times?

## PRAYERS

For Brandon and Kendra Kertson,  
Chi Alpha Ministry – San Diego State University

There are increased budget needs with all of the traveling. Brandon and Kendra need to raise \$1000 more a month to cover their costs. Pray for God's provision.

# THURSDAY

Read [Isaiah 41:10](#); [John 16:33](#); [Romans 5:3–5](#)

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## God's Promise Holds

Jesus alerted us in plain language that “*in this world you will have trouble*”—or, as one translation says, “*many trials and sorrows*” (John 6:33). He did not want hardship and heartache to take us by surprise or cause us to doubt His love and care. He recognized how disheartening tribulation can be.

We can easily imagine that the sons of Israel were sorely tempted to doubt God's goodness and care for them when they found themselves increasingly under the thumb of Egyptian authorities. We might expect to read in Exodus 1:12 that the Israelites came to dread their taskmasters. Instead, surprisingly, we read that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites! The slave drivers must have become uneasy as they observed a supernatural power at work among these people, adding to the strength and numbers as hardship worsened.

The slave drivers' reports served to increase Pharaoh's paranoia. Enraged, Pharaoh went so far as to command Israel's midwives—and then Israelite parents—to take the life of all firstborn sons. God said, “No.” He gave the people courage to risk death in obedience to their conscience. What's more, God protected them and blessed them all the more (see Exodus 1:15–2:10).



Still, God's deliverance did not come, and we are reminded that God's timing is not ours. This called for faithful endurance on their part, and it calls the same of us. Even as we may continue to suffer, we can rely on the Lord to sustain us, just as He sustained and strengthened the Israelites. Notice that that they did not stop crying out for deliverance, and we must not quit either.

Do we ever grow weary of waiting upon God to make right the wrongs and injustices we see all around us? Do we lose heart when our prayers for deliverance from trials and suffering seem to go unanswered? Exodus 2:20-25 tells us God saw and heard the people's anguish, felt concern for them, and "remembered [in the active sense] His covenant." Let's take heart from 2 Peter 3:9: *"The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."*

## QUESTIONS

How did God use hardships to mobilize the Israelites? How easy do you find "waiting upon the LORD" to be?

## PRAYERS

For Brandon and Kendra Kertson,  
Chi Alpha Ministry - San Diego State University

The Kertsons' children are making big decisions about high school and college. Pray for God's guidance as they navigate these teenage years.

# FRIDAY

Read [John 8:31-36](#); [1 John 1:8-9](#)

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## Breaking Free

However far along any of us may be in our journey to freedom from sin, we have a way yet to go. We know that the penalty for our sin has been wholly absorbed by Jesus and no longer hangs over our heads. Praise God! Yet this freedom is just the starting point.

Paul's prayer for us in Philippians 1:10-11 points forward. He asks *"that our love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that we ... may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God."*

After our study of Exodus, it seems hard to fathom the Jewish leaders' reaction to Jesus' proclamation of freedom in John 8. In this text Jesus defines a disciple as one who sticks to His teaching, learns the truth of it, and then is set free by it. Here we see one of the most glaring cases of denial in all of Scripture: *"We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone"* (v. 33).

Has there ever been a more obvious blind spot? What about Egypt? What about Rome? The Jews were slaves at this very moment, not only to Rome but to the letter of the Law. How could they not see it? How can we be oblivious to our own blind spots?

The answer becomes clear in 1 John 1:8–9, which says, *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

Our freedom, by faith, from eternal condemnation sets us free to recognize our sins—our shortcomings and selfish acts—with grief for what they are, to confess them to the Lord, and to receive His cleansing on a daily basis. What a gift! We don’t need to live in denial, which will only keep us trapped. We can make room in our hearts for that abundant crop of fruit that the Spirit wants to grow in us—to the glory and praise of God. Let’s whet the appetite of those who are still empty and starting to feel their hunger!

## QUESTIONS

What are your most recent “growth spurts” in becoming more Christlike? What “blind spots” might others ascribe to you?

## PRAYERS

For Brandon and Kendra Kertson,  
Chi Alpha Ministry – San Diego State University

Pray for continued good health and energy for the Kertsons.



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