

# EXODUS

v o l u m e 3

(Exodus 21:1-23:19)

**Bottom Line:** The quality of your worship is shown in your conduct toward others.

**What is something that your parents made you do when you were younger that you didn't quite understand until you got older? Or, for parents, what is a rule that you have for your children that they don't quite understand? What is the heart behind these rules?**

One of the most difficult parts of the Bible to understand and apply to our lives is the Old Testament, especially the passages that seem to contain outdated, archaic, and seemingly irrelevant rules and regulations. This difficulty is front and center in these few chapters of Exodus because they seem to contain several strange laws and commands. How are these relevant to us today? At this point, it may help us to back up a bit and remember the context in which these laws were given. Remember that God commanded Egypt to "let my people go, so that they may worship me" (Exodus 7:16; 8:1; 10:3). The whole point of God delivering Israel from Egypt was so that the Israelites would be better able to worship God rightly. The Ten Commandments, which we just finished studying, were the beginning of God's instruction to Israel on how to worship Him correctly. Now, these various laws are a continuation of that instruction. So, if we are to understand this passage of Scripture in context, we need to see these rules as laws given to a particular nation at a particular time for a particular purpose. They were given to the nation of Israel to help them navigate their current cultural climate and situation in a way that best reflects God's character and holiness in their context. Understanding that, it's not exactly the *rules* that are relevant to us in our culture, in our age, in our context, but it's the *principles* implied that we are to try and apply to our lives. We see this illustrated for us by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians.

**Read 1 Corinthians 9:9-12. What Old Testament passage is Paul quoting? How does he apply this passage to the Corinthian church?**

Paul took an obscure Old Testament passage and was able to discern the underlying principle and apply it to his current context. It's the same thing that we must do here in Exodus. And when we look at the various laws and rules described in this passage, understanding that these rules were given to Israel to facilitate their right worship of God, we can take away the following principle: *The quality of our worship is shown in our conduct toward others.* When God wanted to show Israel how they should worship Him, He gave them several rules about how they should treat both their fellow kinsmen and outsiders.

**When you think about worship, does your mind often go to how you treat others? How does our treatment of other people reflect what we believe about God? How does what we believe about God affect the way we treat others?**

**Has your relationship with a person ever been damaged due to the way they treated someone else? How does this help us understand God telling us that we love Him best when we love others well?**

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## **Read Isaiah 1:11-15.**

Here God is telling Israel that He does not delight in their religion. He does not delight in their worship of Him precisely because it is not true worship. Something has invalidated their worship of Him. To correct this, what does God tell Israel to do? “Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; *cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause*” (vv. 16-17). Israel was doing everything they were supposed to do *ceremonially*, offering sacrifices, observing the appointed feasts and holidays, etc., but they were not doing what they needed to do *communally*. And their failure to love one another like they should have resulted in their worship being considered by God as “an abomination” (v. 13).

## **Read Matthew 5:23-24.**

Here the Lord Jesus explains this same idea: the priority in our worship of God is not observing rituals, it’s loving others. If we do not love others rightly, it turns our worship of God into nothing more than religious hypocrisy. Our worship of God is robbed of authenticity if we lack concern and love for our neighbor, but our worship is validated if we have also loved others rightly. The entire law is summed up in two commandments: love God and love others (Matthew 22:37-40). We cannot do the first without doing the second. If we are going to be people committed to the worship of God, then we must also be people committed to the pursuit of love, justice, and peace with one another.

**What are ways that we can love each other, those inside the church, that help give authenticity to our church’s worship?**

**What are ways that we can love others, those outside the church, that help give authenticity to our church’s worship?**

**Think specifically about how the church should love the following groups of people (keep in mind that “loving” does not necessarily equate to “approving”):**

- Orphans
- Widows
- Immigrants
- Homosexuals/LGBTQ individuals
- The elderly
- The poor
- Racial and ethnic minorities

**What role will you play in these efforts?**

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**Reflection:** Read these aloud, using your discretion about which questions should be pondered and which questions should be discussed.

**God delivered Israel before he taught them how to worship Him. The same is true for us, we must be delivered from sin before we can worship God rightly. Has God delivered you? Have**

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**you trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and deliverance from death? Until you take that step, you will not be able to begin to truly worship God.**

**Did you cringe or shrink back at the mention of loving any of the people groups above? Do you think that any of those people are less deserving of justice, respect, and love than others? Why? What is it in your heart that makes you apprehensive about loving those people?**

**Who in the church do you need to reconsider the way you treat them? Who in the church do you need to try and develop a deeper love towards? Who outside the church do you need to reconsider the way you treat them? Who outside the church do you need to try and develop a deeper love towards? In both of these cases, what does fulfilling God's command to "love your neighbor" look like to them? What do you actually need to *do*?**