

# Marks of Discipleship

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading  
Giving Time, Talents & Resources ■ Spiritual Friend-  
ships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

August 4, 2019

## Day 1: Exodus 14:5-6

**5** When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the minds of Pharaoh and his officials were changed towards the people, and they said, 'What have we done, letting Israel leave our service?' **6** So he had his chariot made ready, and took his army with him; **7** he took six hundred picked chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them.

Pharaoh, still not sure of his decision to let his workforce escape. He compounds all his bad decisions by going after the Hebrews with an army. How soon people forget, and go chasing after what they ought not to have.

**Question:** How much time do you think went by before the king decided to go after the Hebrews?

**Challenge:** Think of a time in your life when one bad decision led to another.

**Scripture:** James 4:1-11, Proverbs 3:34

## Day 2: Exodus 14:9-11

**9** The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, his chariot drivers and his army; they overtook them camped by the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon. **10** As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the Lord. **11** They said to Moses, 'Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt?'

This is the first of a series of complaints made by the freed slaves about the risks of freedom. They are convinced that the Egyptian army will kill them because there is no place to run. Their backs are against the sea and they have no boats. The Israelites complaining are saying that given a choice they would prefer to die in Egypt of old age and as slaves, rather than as a free people. How quickly they have forgotten the cost of freeing them and how God bent the powerful Pharaoh to his will. How soon we forget what God has done for us when we face new and difficult problems.

**Question:** If the Hebrews were so numerous, why were they afraid of the advancing army?

**Challenge:** See if you can find the areas spoken of in verse 9.

**Scripture:** Numbers 21:4-9

## Day 3: Exodus 14:12-14

**12** Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, "Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians"? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.' **13** But Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. **14** The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still.'

The act that God is about to do will show to all the real power and glory of God. It seems that Pharaoh will use Egyptian power to destroy the Hebrews but everything is as God has planned. Pharaoh sees the slaves and he resolves to destroy them. However, it was his intention all along to get revenge on Moses and the slaves for the many losses he suffered. Moses does not answer the protesters but rather he uses the trust he has developed for God's providence to state that (he did not know exactly how) God would indeed fight for the people, they just had to watch.

**Question:** What did some of the Hebrews want to do?

**Challenge:** Between verses 13 and 14 there are at least 3 suggestions for dealing with your anxiety (don't be afraid - stand firm - keep still). Which one could you do and which one would you have the hardest time doing?

**Scripture:** Luke 1:30-33, Psalm 23, Matthew 14:23-33, Psalm 37:10-11

## Day 4: Exodus 14:15-16

**15** Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward. **16** But you lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the Israelites may go into the sea on dry ground.'

Poor Moses. God keeps giving him orders to do something that seems impossible before he actually does it. Moses is supposed to tell the people to start walking into the sea before dry land has appeared. I often wonder who was first because I believe that the waters did not part until someone first put their foot into the sea.

**Question:** What two things did the people and Moses have to do before they crossed the sea?

**Challenge:** How would you feel if you were one of the Hebrews and your leader said to walk into the sea?

**Scripture:** Joshua 3

## Day 5: Exodus 14:21-22

**21** Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. **22** The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

As the people walked the waters parted and formed a wall on either side of them. As long as they kept their eyes on the road ahead of them they would not fear the wall of water falling on them. Just like Peter walking on the water, as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus he would not sink, but as soon as he thought about the turbulent water he began to sink.

**Question:** What time of day does the sea recede and is it important?

**Challenge:** When was the last time you had to go forward without seeing a good ending?

**Scripture:** Matthew 14:23-33, John 3:1-10

## Day 6: Exodus 14:23-28

**23** The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. **24** At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. **27** So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. **28** The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained.

The sad part of this encounter is what happened to the army. They followed orders and were drowned. I wonder if Pharaoh had led the way would the disaster have actually happened. Anybody can command from behind but you can only lead from in front. Like many arrogant rulers Pharaoh let others suffer the consequences of his bad decisions. People who are leaders in government and business today need to be careful before making a decision that affects the lives of those they lead.

**Question:** Do you think the fire was in front of the Egyptians to stall them or behind them to drive them into the sea?

**Challenge:** It cost the first born and most of the Egyptian army to set the Hebrews free — how much is freedom worth to you?

**Scripture:** Exodus 15:1-21

# Marks of Discipleship

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading  
Giving Time, Talents & Resources ■ Spiritual Friend-  
ships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

August 11, 2019

## Day 1: Exodus 16.1-3

**16** The whole congregation of the Israelites set out from Elim; and Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. **2** The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. **3** The Israelites said to them, 'If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.'

Egypt was a place of anxiety, fear & repression but it was filled with food and it was safe. The wilderness was a place of thirst, hunger & the unknown but it was where freedom lay. The Hebrews were still unsure if they made the correct move by leaving Egypt. They were still under the spell of the wealth, prestige & the extravagance of Egypt. They saw Egypt's glory but they did not understand that that glory was going to bring their eventual death. The glory of God will be seen by them in the wilderness because that is where they will find life and meaning.

**Question:** Not ever seeing the place where the Israelites were camped how do you picture the wilderness?

**Challenge:** When have you made a decision and then regretted it? How did you deal with that regret?

**Scripture:** Numbers 19.1-5

## Day 2: Exodus 16.4,5

**4** Then the Lord said to Moses, 'I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. **5** On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days.'

The bread is called Manna. It is Hebrew word that means "what is it". Just as God told Moses that the name of God is 'I am' so the bread that gives life is called a question. The bread of Egypt is filling but costs you your freedom. The bread of heaven is just as filling and it provides freedom. To teach the Hebrews about dependence on God the Manna was only good for one day. The next day it must be collected again until the Sabbath eve when they can collect two days worth. We can experience this "test" by God today if before making an important decision we take time to pray and ask for guidance and patience.

**Question:** What New Testament passage mentions this bread?

**Challenge:** When have you doubted God's providence and took matters into your own hands to solve a problem

**Scripture:** Psalm 46

## Day 3: Exodus 16.12,13

**12** I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, "At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God." ' **13** In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. **14** When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground.

God provides a diet of both meat & bread. The meat is for strength & endurance & the bread is for energy. The wilderness which at first seemed a threat is now a place of unusual nurture. The manner of the food appearing and the need for it each day is transforming the people from dependence upon themselves to dependence on God.

**Question:** Is there a reason for meat at night & bread for morning?

**Challenge:** For the rest of this week make a special effort to thank God for the food you are about to eat.

**Scripture:** Psalm 37

## Day 4: :Exodus 16.27-29

**27** On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, and they found none. **28** The Lord said to Moses, 'How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and instructions? **29** See! The Lord has given you the Sabbath, therefore on the sixth day he gives you food for two days; each of you stay where you are; do not leave your place on the seventh day.' **30** So the people rested on the seventh day.

The Sabbath, being a day of rest, no bread appeared. They were allowed to collect twice as much the day before so that they might eat on the Sabbath and still rest. Resting meant joining with God in God's last act of creation. The seventh day is as much a part of creation as 1-6. What was created, on the seventh day, was a way for us to be with God so that we might listen, reflect & recall how God has journeyed with us.

**Question:** Why didn't the people believe that no food would be there on the Sabbath?

**Challenge:** Do you spend time to listen, reflect and recall how God has been with you each day? If not spend the rest of the week taking time to do so.

**Scripture:** Romans 8:31-39

## Day 5: Exodus 17:1-3

**1** From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. **2** The people quarreled with Moses, and said, 'Give us water to drink.' Moses said to them, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?' **3** But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, 'Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?'

Not enough food and now not enough water-we have a patient God. It seems that people soon forget what God did for them but were to blame what they thought God did to them.. Moses led them through the sea when it looked like the Egyptians would kill them. He gave them bread & meat to eat when they thought they would die of hunger. Now they accuse Moses (and by implication God) of still leading them to a place where they would die.

**Question:** How long into the journey do you think this event happened? Why?

**Challenge:** Think about why God would wait until the Israelites were so desperate to act?

**Scripture:** Nehemiah 9.2-20

## Day 6: Exodus 17:5-7

**5** The Lord said to Moses, 'Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. **6** I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.' Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. **7** He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'

Notice that Moses takes the elders with him to strike the rock. Moses does not work alone but with a team. The only time he is alone is when he talks to God on the mountain. Massah means "test" and Meribah means "quarrel". Even though God answers the "test" given by the Israelites they must not assume that God's sovereignty can be reduced to meeting their questions & demands. To demand, out of deep pain of loss, is not being arrogant. But to demand that our request be done when we want it is being arrogant and not understanding the relationship between the created & the creator.

**Question:** Do you recall what the staff did when it touched the Nile?

**Challenge:** Think of a time when you wondered if the Lord was among us?

**Scripture:** Psalm 42

# Marks

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading  
Giving Time, Talents & Resources ■ Spiritual Friendships  
■ Service In & Beyond the Church

## of Discipleship

August 18, 2019

### Day 1: Exodus 20:1-4

**Then God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.**

The commands that follow are neither suggestions nor a series of rules. They are a self disclosure of God and how God shall be made real in the community. The God who forced the liberation of the Israelites is neither an abstraction nor a theoretical construct to give people hope. This God is a real presence in the community and God's presence is felt as the people of God practice these commands. 'No other gods' means that our whole life is to be organized around one single loyalty – God. When we allow our life to be split up into various other loyalties we participate in idol worship. God is the creator and all creation is under God therefore to invest any divinity with any part of creation is not only foolish but distracting from worshiping the creator.

**Question:** What is the difference (if any) between "Lord" and "God"?

**Challenge:** How would you define "idol" for someone and explain why they are dangerous?

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 5:1-21

### Day 2: Exodus 20:7

**You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.**

This command warns us about taking the Lord's name and making it mean nothing or twisting it to mean something that God is not. To take it and make it mean nothing is to claim you are a believer and then act as if God does not matter. To use it wrongfully is to threaten people using God's name or to do an act of violence in God's name.

**Question:** Are people having a religious experience when they say "oh my God"?

**Challenge:** Think back on your life and see how you have wrongfully used the name of God.

**Scripture:** Acts 2:16-21, Romans 10:8-13

### Day 3: Exodus 20:8-10

**Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. For six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.**

Six days we work for our family and community but one day we "work" (rest) for God. The challenge for us today is to interpret what it means to rest. We usually think of rest on Sabbath as praying, reading the scripture, worship and taking it easy. We could think of it as one day in seven when we rest or we could think of it as giving a 7th of our waking time for God's work. Or perhaps we could think of it as taking parts of a day as 'Sabbath time.' However we might observe the day of rest, it is as much a part of creation as the first six.

**Question:** What do you think it means to bless the 7th day?

**Challenge:** How do you practice Sabbath?

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 17:19-27

### Day 4: Exodus 20:12

**Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.**

The Hebrew word we translate as honor is *kabed*, which means "give weight to" or "take seriously." We are told to take seriously our parents and by extension all those who have gone before us. Respect is part of taking seriously but it means much more. We are told not to discount their life experiences because if we do then we will have no future. Living long on the land is a way of saying you will have a real future if you take seriously your parents. We honor them by listening to them and caring for them.

**Question:** Why would listening to your parents give you a longer, fuller life?

**Challenge:** Think of some advice your parents gave you that helped you. Think of some things you observed in your parents that have helped you. Have you taken them seriously?

**Scripture:** Hebrews 12:4-14

### Day 5: Exodus 20:13-15

**You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.**

Not murdering, stealing, lying, or having sex with someone who is not your wife are all community preserving instructions. They seem like no brainers but are often violated. We can avoid violating these if we keep in mind that what we do affects a whole group of people. Each violation brings down a community.

**Question:** What does it mean to covet? *Hint: it is more than just wanting something someone else has.*

**Challenge:** Which of these commandments has been the hardest for you to follow?

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:22-32, Deuteronomy 7:20-8:4

### Day 6: Exodus 20:18

**When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance, and said to Moses, 'You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die.'**

The people's response to the thunder and lighting is normal. They want someone who knows God to speak for them. Moses is there to assure them that the power of God, so displayed, is not to harm them. God will not destroy them, God only wants to find out if their faith is serious. The people trust Moses and his words but still do not want to come into the direct presence of God. Even today Christians come into the presence of God through Jesus Christ. It is through His death and resurrection that we can stand before the powerful God without fear.

**Question:** Why would the people die if God spoke to them?

**Challenge:** When people ask for God to speak to them do you think they mean it? Would you like God to speak to you?

**Scripture:** Exodus 19:9-25

# Marks

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading  
Giving Time, Talents & Resources ■ Spiritual  
Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

## of Discipleship

August 25, 2019

### Day 1: Numbers 13:17-20

**Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, 'Go up there into the Negeb, and go up into the hill country, and see what the land is like, and whether the people who live in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many, and whether the land they live in is good or bad, and whether the towns that they live in are un walled or fortified, and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are trees in it or not. Be bold, and bring some of the fruit of the land.' Now it was the season of the first ripe grapes**

This whole event is the explanation of why the children of Israel spent an extra twenty years in the wilderness. Moses has representatives from each of the tribes go on this recon mission. They are to explore and bring back information on the conditions in the Promised Land.

**Question:** If they spent an extra 20 years in the wilderness then how long in total did they spend?

**Challenge:** Get a map of the ancient world and see if you can trace the route of the spies on their recon mission.

**Scripture:** Numbers 13:1-24

### Day 2: Numbers 13:25-28

**At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the Israelites in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to the entire congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, 'We came to the land to which you sent us; it flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. Yet the people who live in the land are strong, and the towns are fortified and very large; and besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there.**

The exploration's goal was to verify for the rest of the people that the land was good, not to assess the people and their ability to ward off invasion. They were to see with their own eyes the salvation of God. Their freedom from Egypt was only the beginning of their salvation, the completion was to enter the land. They were, with their own eyes, to acknowledge God's gift to them and report back to the rest of the people. There was not a river of milk and honey. The phrase 'milk and honey' is used to say the land is a good place for livestock (mostly sheep and goats) and that there is plenty of vegetation because of the bees who do the pollination.

**Question:** Can you find out who or what the Anak were?

**Challenge:** The people weren't prepared for change. What would you have done to help prepare them to listen to the report and trust that God would not let them go into danger without help?

**Scripture:** Numbers 13:25-14:10

### Day 3: Numbers 13:30-31

**But Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, 'Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.' Then the men who had gone up with him said, 'We are not able to go up against this people, for they are stronger than we are.'**

Caleb was singled out from the rest of the spies because he followed Moses instructions (really God's instructions) to report on how good the new land would be for them to live on. The others looked at the size of the people, not the size of the fruit. The others saw the problems but Caleb just saw the glory of God revealed in the fruitfulness of the land.

**Question:** How did Caleb find the strength to talk to the crowd about going ahead when his fellow spies gave a negative report?

**Challenge:** What has helped you in the past to overcome your doubts about God's plan for your good?

**Scripture:** Numbers 14:11-25

### Day 4: Numbers 14:1-2

**Then the entire congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. And all the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron; the whole congregation said to them, 'Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!'**

Once again the fear of the unknown causes the people to respond to the negative report of the elders with an outlandish claim - let us die in Egypt or the wilderness but not there. The people are at fault for not listening to Caleb but the leaders have let the people down in a big way. This is consistent with the concerns of the prophets. They were speaking directly to those in leadership when they talked about the injustice and phony worship that took place in both Judah and Israel.

**Question:** Think about how the complaint was actually made. Was it a petition, a demonstration, a sit in, or what?

**Challenge:** When have you been so distressed that you have asked God, "why me?"

**Scripture:** Numbers 14:26-45

### Day 5: Numbers 14:3-4

**Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become booty; would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?' So they said to one another, 'Let us choose a captain, and go back to Egypt.'**

The back to Egypt committee is in full swing. Before we heap blame on the people let us recall how we may have treated God. The back to Egypt committee comes when there is too much attention paid to complaints instead of prayer. Too many people treat God like someone running for office. They ask, "What have you done for me lately?"

**Question:** How bad do you think the report about the people in the land was to cause such worry about being totally destroyed?

**Challenge:** When have you seen "the back to Egypt committee" in action? Have you ever been a part of it?

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 1:19-45

### Day 6: Numbers 14:22-23

**none of the people who have seen my glory and the signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have tested me these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their ancestors; none of those who despised me shall see it.**

God does not destroy the people but the consequence for their unbelief is to wander for twenty more years. The people are not ready to accept God's gift of salvation. The writer in Hebrews is correct when he said that "today is the day of salvation, do not harden your hearts" (Hebrews 4:7). God will continue to lead but that generation will not be going into the land.

**Question:** What do you think this verse means to us in the 21st century?

**Challenge:** Can you think of some of the ten times of testing God is referring to?

**Scripture:** Exodus 14:10-14, 16:2-4, 17:1-1-7, 32:1-14