

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Message Title: "Why is it called the Old Testament?"

Speaker: Pastor Kevin Myers

Date: February 24, 2008

Icebreaker: (Choose 1)

Option 1: In his Message intro at the Hwy 20 campus, Pastor Kevin's (PK's) prayer was that we don't let ourselves be distracted by the new cool features of the building, but are able to focus on Jesus Christ as the center. On a scale from one to ten (with 1 feeling not very distracted and 10 feeling highly distracted), how well have you adapted to the new building or how much are you still distracted by the size, the coolness, and the Starbucks?

Option 2: Share with the group some ways in which last week's life lesson from Abraham helped you during this week. (Hint: When you focus on your pressures, God's promises fade, but when you focus on God's promises, your pressures fade.)"

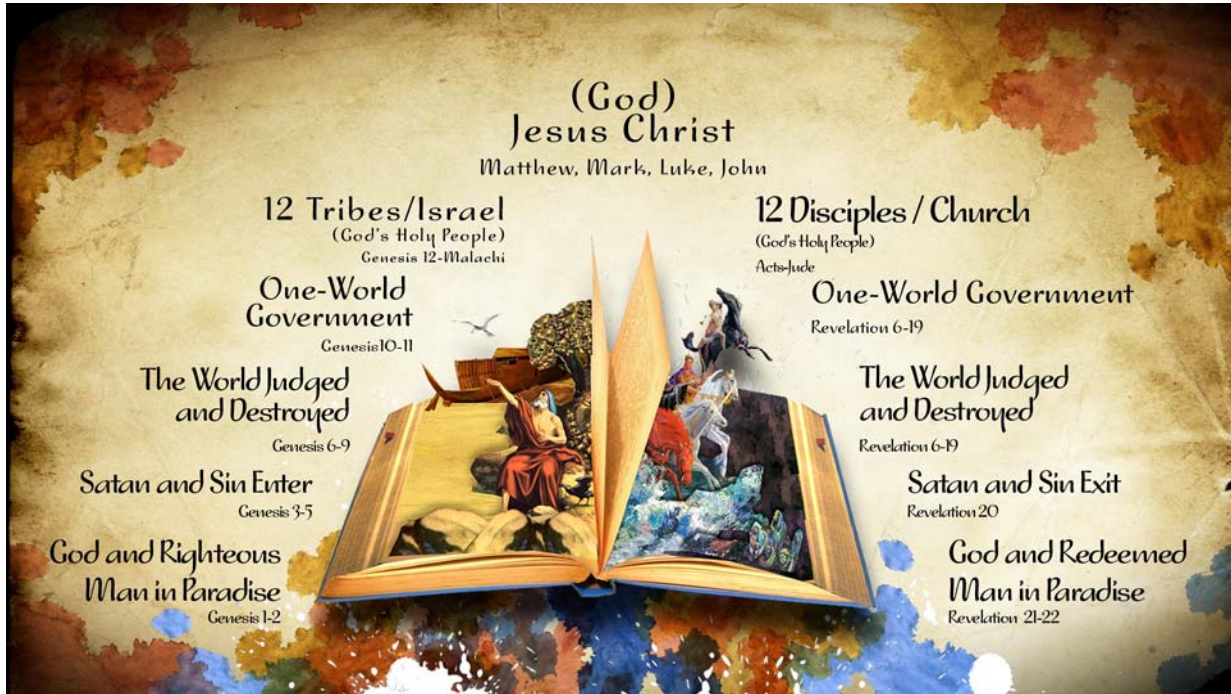
Message Overview:

PK used the story of the Israelites and particularly Moses to discuss another Life Lesson: "Never confuse "in charge" with "in control!" Being *in control* means to set the standard, or the direction or goal; whereas being *in charge* is to take responsibility to follow the standard, to go in the given direction, and to achieve the established goals.

As we can learn through the story of the Israelites and Moses, God is the One who is ultimately in control, not mankind. What God does expect from us is that we take charge of following him and keeping his commands [to be holy]. However, if we keep struggling with holiness, as did the Israelites, we sin and the result is a separation from God, and ultimately - death. The Good News is that God created a way to restore our relationship with Him. In the example of the Israelites in Egypt, it was found in the blood of the goat that was put on the sides and top of the doorframes. In the New Testament, Jesus is the Lamb of God [John 1:29] who died for all, to cover our sin.

One way God shows His standard and that he is in control, is through the covenant (or testament) He gave containing His commandments (e.g. the 10 Commandments). Through these he provides us with directions and goals He knows mankind needs to follow. We are not in the position to redefine (or lower) them. We cannot define our own moral and/or spiritual standards, because we cannot trust our Moral Compass. If we do so, we cheat ourselves, because God is Holy and he expects us to be holy, too. Typically, when we attempt to break God's rules [law], we only break ourselves [physically, emotionally, and/or spiritually].

As PK explained, Christianity is not at all about constructing our own 'Feel-Good' moral and religious compass. There is a real God and there are absolute truths. We can accept or deny these, but either way, we are only in Charge, and not in Control.



Discussion:

(Leaders: Do not try to cover every question provided in this study guide, but rather review the complete list, selecting a mix of questions that work best for your group, mixing scripture research/discussion as well as personal application of the teaching principles. Please also look through the appendices – there are several this week. You don't need to use them all, but try to pick the ones that are mostly geared towards your group.)

Never confuse “IN CHARGE” with “IN CONTROL”!

- What are some examples of people being in control vs. being in charge? What can happen if the two get confused and the person in charge takes over control? Share an example from your life where you saw that happening and what the results were.
- Think back to last week's story about Abraham. Where in his life did he confuse 'in charge' with 'in control'? What were the results and the consequences? What happened when he finally let God take over control?
- One of the greatest dialogues on this confusion is found in Job. Read Job 38:1-15 and 42:1-6. In what ways does God show that He is in control? How did Job react when he realized that he had been confused about this issue? What can we learn from Job's reaction?
- If you have children, in what ways can it affect your parenting if you confuse 'in charge' with 'in control'? Could it be that some parenting problems are a result of you being confused about it in other areas of your life and that your children are witnessing it? How does your parenting style affect the way they understand God's power and control?

Lessons from the life of Moses and Pharaoh

- PK said: “Moses spent his first 40 years becoming ‘somebody’, his next 40 years becoming ‘nobody’, and the last 40 discovering what the God who is in control can do for and through a ‘nobody’.” Compare this statement with stations in Moses’ life (See appendix 1 and Hebrews 11:23-29).
- Moses might have been hesitant to follow God’s call because he was afraid he would have to be in control. Read Exodus 3:14-15; 4:3-7; 11-12. How did God show him that He was in control? Have you ever experienced the same hesitance as Moses when God called you to do something? How did you deal with it and what helped you follow God’s call?
- Recall the orders Pharaoh gave to reduce the number of the Israelites and the results (see Exodus 1 and 2). In what ways did God show Pharaoh that though he was in charge, he was not in control? What was Pharaoh’s reaction (Exodus 7:13)? What could have stood in the way of him surrendering under God’s control?
- Read Genesis 15:5, 13-14 and Exodus 1:9-11 and 12:36. Compare the promises God made Abraham with how they were fulfilled. What does this show us about God’s power and Him being in control?
- PK said: “Pharaoh should have been terrified by the coming judgment and so should we.” Because our culture has leveraged grace to the point of nearly removing judgement, we don’t really fear it. Read Revelation 16:8-9. Without going into the details of Revelation (that will come up in a later message) compare this verse with Pharaoh. How does this verse also describe many people today?

The Old Covenant

- Compare Exodus 12:12-13, Luke 22:14-15 and John 1:29. God allowed the Israelites a substitute sacrificial lamb to pay for the sin and escape judgement. How does the story of the Passover help you understand the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ?
- The Old Testament is the Old Contract where God sets the standard for his people. His standard is, “Be Holy for I am Holy”. Read Romans 7:7. What was the usefulness of the old covenant? Share some information from appendix 3 with your group to help them understand the importance and meaning of the Old Testament.
- Our tendency today is to do what we feel is right. What happens if we trust our personal Moral Compass? Where have you experienced being hurt because someone else just did what he/she felt was right?
- PK used the image of basketball to explain that it is easy to fulfill standards when we are the one setting them. Read the 10 Commandments either in Exodus 20 or in the appendix 4 (there they come with explanations). In what ways do they compare with a 25-foot basketball hoop?
- We never break God’s law, we break ourselves. Recapture how PK explained this with the law of gravity. When in your life have you been broken by God’s law?

Wrap-Up:

At the end of his message PK asked us to ask ourselves a few questions. Read the following questions to your group and give everyone some time to think about them. You might want to give out index cards, so everyone can write down one next step that they would like to take.

Where are you living in confusion?

Where are you trusting in your own moral compass?

Where are you lowering God's standard so you can feel at peace with yourself?

Where are you comparing yourself with others versus God?

Throughout the Week: (Optional)

(Leaders: Share these optional exercises for further study and growth with your group.)

- 1) Memory verse: Exodus 3:14: *God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (NIV)*
- 2) Study the 10 Commandments (Exodus 20, appendix 4) and compare them to the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:17-30). Write down how you fall short of God's standards and take time to thank Him for Jesus our Savior.
- 3) Go over the questions from the small group study that you were not able to cover during your group time.
- 4) Read Exodus 25-27 & 40.

Appendix 1: Moses

Name

In Exodus 2:10 we read that the name Moses was given because it sounds like the Hebrew word for 'draw out'. It was not unusual to associate the name of a person with an event of his birth or life. But it is unlikely that Pharaoh's daughter gave the baby a Hebrew name. Moses is actually an Egyptian name meaning 'gave birth'. It can either be understood as 'son of an unknown father' or a compound with the name of a deity, meaning 'Ra gave birth (to this child)' or 'Thut gave birth'.

Moses' Life

Moses was born probably around 1525 BC. He was the Son of Amram (Ex 6:20), who was a Levite (Ex 2:1-2) and of Jochebed (his mother) who was also his aunt (Ex 6:20). He had a brother called Aaron, who was three years older (Ex 7:7) and an older sister (Ex 2:4) Miriam (Ex 15:20, see also 1 Chronicles 6:3). He was hidden by his parents, put in a basket and into the Nile River, and was later found by the Pharaoh's daughter. Still his own mother was able to raise him, because Pharaoh's daughter chose her to be the one to nurse him. He most likely spent his first 2-5 years with his real mom and then went to the palace, where he experienced a royal education (see Acts 7:22).

When Moses was forty years old (Acts 7:23-29) he killed an Egyptian (Ex 2:12) and fled to Midian (2:15). He married Zipporah, daughter of the priest of Midian and with her had a son, Gershom (2:16-22). Later they had another son, Eliezer (4:20; 18:4). Moses spent the next forty years (7:7) tending sheep in Midian. He then met God in the burning bush and was called to lead the Israelites out of Egypt (Ex. 3). Pharaoh fought him first, which led to the 10 plagues (Ex 7-11).

The Israelites were finally allowed to leave Egypt. They celebrated the first Passover (Ex 12), miraculously crossed the Red Sea (Ex 13-15), and despite their moaning and groaning, they experienced God’s love and care through the provision of water, manna and quail (Ex 15-16). Although the Israelites were probably not trained for war (see 13:17), they were able to defeat the Amalekites through God’s power (Ex 17). Then Moses led them to Mount Sinai, where God gave his people the 10 Commandments (Ex 19-20), the law, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the rules for the priests and His covenant (Ex 21-31). After the incident with the Golden Calf (Ex 32) and God’s forgiveness and renewal of the covenant (Ex 34), the Israelites built the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle went with them on their journey, which took forty years due to the lack of faith when they would have been able to enter the Promised Land (Numbers 14). Moses died, without entering the Promised Land, because of his disobedience (Numbers 20:12 and Deuteronomy 34).

Appendix 2: Background of the Name of God

We can find the first use of “Yahweh” (Jehovah) in Genesis 2:4, but God did not reveal himself as “Yahweh” until the time of Moses. (See Exodus 6:3 – “I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them”.)

God revealed himself to Moses as Yahweh in the appearance of the burning bush (Exodus 3:14-15). Here is the translation of these verses from the Complete Jewish Bible:

God said to Moshe, “Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh [I am/will be what I am/will be],” and added, “Here is what to say to the people of Isra’el: ‘Ehyeh [I Am or I Will Be] has sent me to you.” God said further to Moshe, “Say this to the people of Isra’el: Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh [ADONAI], the God of your fathers, the God of Avraham, the God of Yitz’chk and the God of Ya’akov, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever; this is how I am to be remembered generation after generation.

The word ‘ehyeh in verse 14 is a future tense from the Hebrew verb ‘hayah’ (‘to be’):
 אהיה (ehyeh) יהיה (hayah)

The word that God uses to give his name is similar:
 יהוה

It consists of the four Hebrew letters Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh:

ה	ו	ה	י
Heh	Vav	Heh	Yud

(Hebrew is read from right to left)

In Hebrew, only the consonants are written as letters. The vowels are dots under and above the letters. The vowels of Yahweh are actually a very short “e” (as in egg) under the Yud and a long “a” (that sounds like ‘u’ in umbrella) under the Vav.

Because this name was so sacred, whoever would read a passage and got to the name Yahweh would say Adonai (which means my lord). After a while the people who would copy the Bible by hand used the vowels of the word Adonai under the consonants of Yahweh. This later led to the reading of Jehovah instead of Yahweh.

Appendix 3: Mosaic Covenant

- The Mosaic Covenant contains very extensive detailed information, and the Scriptural account of the covenant extends from Exodus 20:1-Deuteronomy 28:68.
- The key provision of the Mosaic Covenant was the Law of Moses, which contained a total of 613 commandments. Of these, 365 were negative commandments, things which were forbidden; 248 were positive commandments, things that should be done.
- The Law is considered a unit comprised of 613 commandments. It is this principle of unity of the Law of Moses that lies behind the statement found in James 2:10: *For whoever keeps the **whole** law and yet stumbles **at just one point** is guilty of breaking all of it* (emphasis mine). The point is clear; a person needs only to break one of the 613 commandments to be guilty of breaking all of the Law of Moses.
- This was a **conditional** covenant, which meant there would be blessings for obedience, but judgment for disobedience (Ex. 15:26; 19:3-8). Compared to the Abrahamic Covenant, discussed last week, which was an **unconditional** covenant, meaning Abraham did not “do” anything to make the covenant happen; God was the sole initiator and provider of that covenant.
- What we call the Ten Commandments are called the Decalogue by Jews. The name *Decalogue* is a Hebrew word which means “ten words” or “ten statements”.
- The Ten Commandments are numbered in different ways by various churches. For example, the Catholic and Lutheran communions take verses 2-6 as one commandment and divide the tenth into two. Other branches of the church place the seventh commandment before the sixth.
- The Law is there to show God’s standard of righteousness that He demands for a proper relationship with Him. The Law is also there to reveal man’s sinfulness and need of substitution atonement. The Law was never intended by God as a means for salvation. Jesus, in the flesh form, was the only man to keep all of the commandments. He **fulfilled** the commandments through His surrendered life and death.

Resources:

The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, Oxford University Press

The Nelson Study Bible, NIV, Thomas Nelson Publishers

Appendix 4: The Ten Commandments

1. “You shall have no other god’s before Me” (Ex. 20:3).

The first commandment deals with the object of our worship, forbidding the worship of any false god. The first commandment begins with our relationship to God. It is a demand for our exclusive and zealous worship. We break it whenever we look for direction from other sources or whenever we give some person or something the first place in our affections, which belongs to God alone.

2. *"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below..." (Ex. 20:4-6).*

The second commandment deals with the manner of our worship, forbidding us to worship even God in an unworthy manner or by images. It is a demand for our spiritual worship. Images dishonor God, for they obscure His glory. Images mislead men, for they are not only inadequate; they are harmful.

3. *"You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God..." (Ex. 20:7).*

The name of God represents the nature of God. So, to dishonor the name is to dishonor God. We blaspheme God's name by using it in vulgar language. Using God's name in making a promise or taking an oath and then not fulfilling the commitment, is cheapening His name and blaspheming God.

4. *"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy..." (Ex. 20:8-11).*

The word "Sabbath" means "rest". Genesis 2:1-3 states only what God did on that day, but there is no command to observe that day. From Adam to Moses, there is no record of anyone's keeping the Sabbath, but now it became a part of the covenant relationship with God. By resting on the seventh day, the Jews were promoting their own welfare, as well as that of their servants and farm animals, acknowledging the lordship of God over time and creation.

5. *"Honor your father and your mother..." (Ex. 20:12).*

At this point the commandments move from those that are concerned with God and His worship to those that are concerned with how we respect and treat other people. This begins with the smallest unit of society, the family. However, there are other kinds of "parents"- political (kings and presidents) and spiritual (pastors and other church leaders). So the command also has to do with rightful authority, respect for authority, and obedience.

6. *"You shall not murder" (Ex. 20:13).*

This commandment did forbid the taking of life, for the Law itself made provisions for capital punishment (21:15-17, 23) as well as warfare (17:8-16). The issue here is premeditated murder; which Jesus said could have its beginning in anger (Matt. 5:21-26).

7. *"You shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14).*

So serious is adultery that it is considered a capital crime (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22). Jesus commented on this commandment, saying that it prohibits not only the actual act of adultery but even the lustful longings of the heart (Matt. 5:28). The Bible's standard is purity before marriage and fidelity afterward.

8. *"You shall not steal" (Ex. 20:15).'*

The Bible tells us why stealing is wrong. It is because our possessions have been given to us from God (James 1:17), and therefore to steal from another is to steal from God. We steal from

our employer when we waste time or do not give the best work of which we are capable. We steal when we are not good stewards with all of God's resources.

9. *"You shall not give false testimony" (Ex. 20:16).*

This command embraces a legal way of speaking and therefore refers at least minimally to perjury in a court of law. It is also a commandment to be truthful. It excludes all forms of slander, gossip, and all forms of exaggerations and distortions of truth.

10. *"You shall not covet" (Ex. 20:17).*

Covet means to "have a strong desire for". It is not just appreciating something from a distance, but an uncontrollable, selfish desire. It is the one command that deals directly with our attitudes and not just our actions.

Resources:

The Nelson Study Bible, NIV, Thomas Nelson Publishers

The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation by Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler;
Oxford University Press

Email any questions or feedback about this Study Guide to robin.ritchie@12stone.com.