**BCM Bible Study: October 28/29, 2020**

**Exodus 17-18: The Nations**

Review last week’s challenge:

1. Fast. See [this site](https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/fasting/personal-guide-to-fasting.html) and the related resources.
2. Give something away. (money, possession, time)
3. Practice the Sabbath. Pick a day (Saturday or Sunday) to do no work.

Amalekites: **Read Exodus 17:8-16**

* How is the battle against the Amalekites won?
	+ There is debate surrounding the significance of Moses raising his hands. At the end of the day, it is clear that victory comes from God as Moses obeys his instruction.
* The staff in Moses’ hand and his raised hands evoke images of the parting of the Red Sea. **Read Exodus 14:16**.
	+ What does this communicate about God’s protection of his people going forward?
* God’s destruction of the Amalekites is troublesome for many. Keep in mind that the Amalekites are second behind Egypt in a long line of people and groups that attempt to stand in the way of God’s redemptive purposes. In the New Testament, the focus shifts to the ultimate enemy, Satan, who is revealed as the leader of the attack against God’s purposes.
	+ What are some things that are contradictory to God’s purposes? What role does the Church play with respect to these things?
* This is far from the last time that the Israelites encounter the Amalekites. They are a persistent enemy. They appear as one of the reasons Israel is hesitant to enter the promised land (Num. 13:29) and are a perpetual hindrance once they do enter the land. (Judges 3:13, 6:3, 7:12, 10:12) They are the subject of Saul’s battle in 1 Samuel 15 until David finally completes their destruction in 1 Samuel 30.
	+ Knowing this, why is it significant that God would give them decisive victory here?
* The Israelites had won the first battle, and though there were more battles to come, the altar served as a reminder that ultimate victory was sure. In the same way, Christ has defeated Satan. There are more battles to come, but the empty tomb stands as a memorial that ultimate victory is sure.
	+ The Christian life is often referred to as a battle. What do we learn about fighting this battle from the following verses? **Read Ephesians 6:10-12, 1 Timothy 6:11-12, James 4:1, 7-10, Romans 8:12-13.**
	+ What are your own “altars”? When have you seen God meet you in your time of need and deliver you? What role do our “altars” play in fighting these battles?
	+ What role does the altar of the empty tomb play in fighting these battles?

Jethro’s Advice: **Read Exodus 18:1-12**

This story has a different feeling than all the others in this section of desert testing. We must ask, why is this story included? What purpose does it serve to illustrate?

* Jethro is familiar to us from chapter 2, but we can’t forget that he is not an Israelite – he is a Midianite. It is worth noting that this is the second foreign group that Israel encounters after leaving Egypt, the first being the Amalekites. Moreover, the accounts have a lot of parallels – see Graphic 1 below. How does Jethro’s response compare to the Amalekites?
* Remember that brining the nations to a knowledge of the Lord was God’s purpose in what he did in Egypt. **Read Exodus 6:7, 7:5.** How do you see God’s universal plan at work so far in Exodus?

The universal mission of God persists today. Jethro worshipped God because of what God had done. And just like these first evangelical events, the gospel will spread by our bearing witness to what God has done in Christ. What does it look like to tell others about what God has done?

* What are some hindrances to this mission? How should we respond?
* What do you think is your role in God’s mission? Have you ever sensed that God is calling you overseas?

**Read Exodus 18:13-27**

* What is Jethro’s advice to Moses?
* God could have given Moses this advice directly, but he doesn’t – he uses Jethro. Moreover, the qualifications that Jethro gives in v.21 resemble the qualifications for leaders given in Numbers 11 and Deuteronomy 1. Why is this significant?
	+ In my view, this is an early picture of the global people of God at work. Moses is God’s mouthpiece, but a foreigner brings godly advice.
* Jethro’s advice to Moses is very practical. It is a reminder that God has given us limits and that we should honor them.
	+ In what ways do you feel that you are stretching your God-given limits? How is this impacting your relationship with God and others?
	+ What would it look like for you to honor these God-given limits?

Conclusion

To close today’s Bible study, read the prayer card that your family has received and pray accordingly. Hand out the cards to your family and encourage them to pray throughout the week.

Graphic 1



Extra Notes:

* The identity of the Amalekites is somewhat unknown, as they are not mentioned by extra-Biblical sources. (maybe a fulfillment of v.14?) Their likely origin is descendants of Esau.
* That Amalek is a familiar foe explains why Moses gives them no introduction in ch. 17. They needed no introduction for Exodus’ original audience.
* The Hur in ch. 17 may refer to the Hur who is the grandfather of Bezalel, one of the builders of the tabernacle in Ex. 25-40.
* Joshua is first introduced in Ex. 17.
* We aren’t sure to what extent Zipporah was with Moses during his time in Egypt. We also aren’t sure if she returns with Jethro. The reason this is speculated is that Moses is said to have a different wife later on. It is unsure what, if anything, happens to Zipporah.
* Sadly, Midianites would not continue to follow Jethro’s example and will eventually become a significant cause of opposition to Israel. See Isaiah 10:26.
* Where did Jethro’s bread come from? Is it manna? Maybe he brought it himself! Jethro and Moses broke bread in 2:20, so this serves as somewhat of a bookend to the story – we are now full circle at where Moses first met Aaron at the foot of Sinai/Horeb.
* Pausing to mention Moses’ sons and their names in 19:2-4 serves to remind us of Moses and Israel’s past. They have been foreigners and homeless and God has heard their plight and delivered them. It is significant that we are reminded of this right as a foreigner seeks favor with Moses.
* The meal of celebration is a prelude to what Israel will regularly practice. See Deut. 12:5-7.