

Lesson 3. “Stand Firm and Watch” – Finding Stillness in Prayer (13:17-14:31)

Opening Thoughts: In times of crisis or danger, human instinct is fight or flight. What are some common human responses to situations when they feel trapped? What is your common instinct? What have you learned about prayer from such situations? No matter the circumstances or how you got there, all situations relate to God’s good purposes for glory and every moment of crisis or despair is meant to draw us closer to God.

Study: Exodus 13:17-14:31 – (Text Notes) After ten plagues upon Egypt, Pharaoh reluctantly is forced to let the people go. They travel out of Egypt toward the great mountain, the sign where God is going to meet with them. Rather than leading them the shorter route where they would face other battles right away, God led them toward the Red Sea. He appeared to them as a cloud by day and fire by night. In his madness, Pharaoh refused to accept defeat. He charges after the Israelites for the final showdown with God.

1. 13:17-22 Why did God not want to lead the Israelites by the shorter route through Philistia? What does this teach us about how God directs our life in times of adversity?
2. 14:1-4 Where does God direct Israel? What does this prompt Pharaoh to do? What is God’s purpose in all this? What does this teach us about times that God allows stress and suffering? What does He plan to accomplish in your life?
3. 14:5-9 Pharaoh has continually and repeatedly defied God and hardened his own heart against Him. Now, God hardens Pharaoh's heart, so that he is driven to self-destruction in his madness. What has God done to Pharaoh that has enraged him to such an extent? What does God prove by doing so? What does this say about the situations which frustrate or enrage us and what God wants to teach us?
4. 14:10-14 The people see the trap that Moses has led them to. The sea on one side and the Egyptian chariots on the other. They begin to complain to Moses. What is their solution? Is it reasonable?
5. When humans feel trapped and under attack they will respond with fight or flight. What tends to happen when we turn to fight the problem? What happens when we run away back to Egypt? Moses points Israel to a third way of dealing with the situation. What is the third way and how does that shape our approach to prayer and spiritual warfare?

6. Have you ever practiced silence and stillness in prayer? How would you describe that experience?

7. 14:19-20 In a poem by St. John of the Cross, he tells of his "dark night of the soul." This is his experience of prayer and contemplation through a very dark and troubling time. He says in the poem, "In that happy night, / In secret, seen of none, / Seeing nought myself, / Without other light or guide / Whom I knew well, / Save that which in my heart was burning." We might think of waiting as doing nothing. However, in the poem, God is also pictured waiting for us and we are trying to find him with the light that guides us. What does the dark night of the soul teach us about finding God?

8. 14:21-31 List the three verbs in v.31 that describe the Israelites' experience: They _____, _____, and _____. What do these reactions say about our own prayer experience?

9. Cross reference Ephesians 6:10-13. Note any words that get repeated and emphasized. How does this passage reinforce as well as reshape the way that we consider the Red Sea event? What does Paul say that we should do when facing such situations?

Any Prayer Requests? Final Questions or Comments?

For Next Time, Read Ahead and Reflect on the Questions Below:

4. "What Is It?" - Praying for Daily Bread (16:1-36)

Text Notes: During the wilderness journey toward the Mountain, the Israelites face a series of three testings. Each time they face adversity, they respond with grumbling. In the second event, they come to the Wilderness of Sin (pronounced 'seen', not related to "sin" as corruption; prob related to Sin-ai, the Mountain). The response to their grumbling is that the LORD directs Moses to test them to see if they will walk in his instructions or not.

Read and Reflect: A meal is a meeting with God. Sometimes children do not consider all the work and circumstances it takes to put a pleasant, healthy meal on the table. We have to learn by practice of prayer to be grateful and appreciate the work others do to make our lives sustainable. We have so much of our daily needs automatically provided for us that it becomes increasingly easy to complain. What are some daily events and circumstances that lead people to grumble? How is grumbling related to entitlement? When it comes to our relationship with God does God want us to learn dependence or independence? How does our "daily bread" experience mean to test us every day? Are we more grateful when we have more or less? How does this shape our prayers for daily bread?

Key Verse: Exodus 16:30 So the people rested on the seventh day.