

**WOMEN OPENING THE WORD**

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**SET FREE**

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**CASANDRA MARTIN**



**A 21st Century Christian Publication**

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# Set Free

*"...I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God."*

– Exodus 6:6-7a

*"Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.'"*

– John 8:34-36

You are the desire of God's heart. He has moved heaven and earth to open His arms and provide a pathway for you to draw near to Him. Slavery is a brutal word. Captured in the layers of that ugly word is a dramatic picture of our hearts. Cords of sin and chains of guilt and shame hold us captive to this world. The cells that hold our hearts prisoner seem impenetrable. The walls are high, the doors are thick, and the lock is secure. But there is good news! Jesus has the key. He is the Truth – the One who has the power to set us free. It is His great longing to redeem you, rescue you, and lead you on a journey into living a free indeed life. He is willing to fight battles, go great distances, unleash His power, and walk into the darkest hiding places of your heart to set you free. He wants you to walk with Him in the light. He aches to hold you close and heal the wounds left by slavery. He wants you to give Him your heart so He can pour out all the great blessings He has stored up for you. He wants you to be free to enter into His peace, experience His joy, and live with eyes wide open to His presence. He does all of this for love. He does all this for you. Join the journey, and learn what it means to be set free.

## Welcome to WOW!

*Women Opening the Word* is a Bible study series designed to help women more richly and fully experience the presence of God. Meeting God in the pages of a WOW study opens your eyes to the wonder of God's love and the purpose of living deeply in His presence. Transformation is at the heart of studying the Bible. God wants you to be transformed into His likeness – to look like Jesus. The WOW Bible studies help you to answer the call to live as changed women – cross-shaped, resurrection-empowered, faith-driven, Christ-exalting women.

Whether you use the study in a classroom or small group setting, or in your personal quiet time, WOW focuses on answering three challenges every woman who longs to live closer to God faces: **Commitment** – WOW's four-day format is designed to help you find the time and

develop the discipline of daily Bible study. **Confidence** – At times, Bible study seems intimidating and overwhelming. WOW guides you on a walk through Scripture to seek God’s face and experience His transformation as you connect God’s truth directly with your life. **Creativity** – When studying the Bible feels stale, the WOW studies provide refreshing and innovative ways to encounter God through a variety of study methods, insights, and the following special features:

**Day 1 Days 1-4** – Each lesson is broken into four parts. As you begin a lesson, start with Day 1. Work through the first day – open your Bible, enjoy the time with God, and experience the life-changing lessons He has planned for you. Tomorrow study Day 2, and so forth. The WOW studies are designed this way in order help you spend daily time deep in the presence of God. There are many lessons, treasures, and blessings God wants to pour into you as you spend time with Him in His Word. Spreading out each lesson over four days provides the best opportunity for you to absorb as much richness as you can from your time with God.



**Open Your Bible!** When you see this symbol, it indicates an opportunity to open your Bible and meet God in its pages. God speaks to you through His Word. He longs for you to take off your sandals and draw near to Him on holy ground. Choose an accurate, reliable, and readable translation. This study specifically refers to the New International Version (NIV). You are welcome to use any translation that you prefer. The important thing is to open your Bible and prepare your heart to meet your amazing God.



**Key Question** – The Key symbol invites you to slow down and answer a question that speaks directly to your heart, opening it to the truths that move you toward transformation. They are thought questions. Everyone’s answers will be personal and unique. They are designed to help God’s Word speak directly to your life.



**To the Heart** – These are messages from my heart to yours. These special thoughts have one purpose – to help you experience the glorious richness of God’s love in a very personal and intimate way.



**Draw a Picture** – The Exodus is incredibly visual. Pausing to create a picture of the scene the Bible is describing will help you walk into the moment and experience the full power of God as He moves to set you free. Creating a museum-worthy masterpiece is not the point here. Use stick figures, simple shapes, words, and colors to help you visualize the action God is taking on behalf of His people. I really can’t draw myself, but I gained so much by trying to move through these Bible scenes with my five senses that I wanted to encourage you to give it a try as well.

**Set-Free: Growing a God-View** – In many ways, being set free starts with your eyes. At the end of Days 2 and 4, there is a place for you to stop and do a vision check. This vision check is set up to help you examine your heart in the light of the lessons God reveals through the experiences of the Israelites in Egypt and the wilderness. **World-view** helps define the ways the world wants to keep your heart captive and under its control.

*God-view* focuses your attention on the truths that God promises will set your heart free. *Adjusting My Vision* is the eye test. Here you will find a question or activity meant to help you look deeply at your own heart in the light of God's grace and His desire for you. Your answers will help reveal where God wants to work in your life, places that require surrender, and obstacles that are keeping you from living the set free life Jesus wants to give you.

## Leading a WOW Study

Leading a WOW study is primarily about opening the door to the presence of God and helping the people you are with make the journey. You already have the tools you need – a willing and loving heart, prayer, your Bible, the help of the Holy Spirit, and your WOW book.

There are as many different ways to effectively use a WOW study as there are people excited about meeting God in His Word. The WOW studies are designed to be flexible and allow you to adapt the study to your individual and group needs. Be creative! The WOW studies are tools meant to help you dig deeply into God's Word. Use them in the way that best helps you meet God, experience the depth of His love, and be transformed into the likeness of His Son.

If you are leading a WOW study in a **45-minute Bible class format** –

*Commit to spending time in prayer and study.* Pray for the women in your group. Ask God to create an environment among your women that will allow Him full access to every heart. As you study, remember to honor the truth that you are meeting God in the pages of His Word. Let His love touch you first; then prepare to share that love with others. Leaders always receive deep blessings from the time spent preparing to share God's Word with others.

*Divide each lesson into two parts.* Using the Day 1-4 markers, ask your class to study Days 1 and 2 on week one, Days 3 and 4 on week two, and so forth. There is enough material in each two-day block to meet the needs of your class time.

*Use the Set Free: Growing a God-view chart at the end of Days 2 and 4 to help you focus on the main points of the lesson.* This is the one truth that you want the class to walk away with at the end of your time together. Use them to guide your preparation and the direction of the class.

*Allow the class to be discussion-oriented.* The Key Questions are designed to open the door for sharing thoughts, feelings, questions, and perspectives. It often takes time for women to open their hearts and be transparent. Be patient and loving. This time of discussion will help each woman plant the truth of God's Word deeply into their heart.

*Keep your eyes open for the ways God is working among you.* Take special note of the many ways God is blessing your time together as a group of women studying His Word. Let that awareness be a springboard for praise, thanksgiving, and renewed surrender.

If you are leading a WOW study in a **90-minute women's Bible study format** –

*Commit to spending time in prayer and study.* Pray for the women in your group. Ask God to create an environment among your women that will allow Him full access to every heart. As you study, remember to honor the truth that you are meeting God in the pages of His Word. Let His love touch you first; then prepare to share that love with others. Leaders always receive deep blessings from the time spent preparing to share God's Word with others.

*Do one lesson per week or divide the lesson into two pieces, depending on your schedule and the amount of time your women want to devote to the study.* Either way – there will be enough material to meet your needs.

*Use the Set Free: Growing a God-view chart at the end of Days 2 and 4 to help you focus on the main points of the lesson.* These are the truths that you want the class to walk away with at the end of your time together. Use them to guide your preparation and the direction of the class.

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If you are using a WOW study for **personal study**–

*Commit to spending time in prayer as you study.* Prayer is indispensable to preparing your heart to meet God. Prayer and study go hand-in-hand and allow your heart to respond to the truths and direction God is teaching you.

*Use the Day markers to help guide you in daily Bible study.* As you begin a lesson, begin with Day 1. Work through the first day – open your Bible, enjoy the time with God, and experience the life-changing lessons He has planned for you. Tomorrow study Day 2, and so forth. The WOW study is designed this way in order help you spend daily time deep in the presence of God.

*Use the Set Free: Growing a God-view chart at the end of Days 2 and 4 to open your heart to the deep transformation God wants to work in your life.*

*Keep your eyes open for the ways God is working in you.* Take special note of the many ways God is blessing your time with Him. Let that awareness be a springboard for praise, thanksgiving, and renewed surrender.

## Joy for the Journey

May God richly bless you as you spend this time in His Word. He has so many treasures to share with you because you are the treasure of His heart. Know that as you study, you are covered with prayer and thanksgiving. My prayer is that you will be able to see God's words fully take shape in your life as you commit your heart to living free indeed. *"You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself."* – Exodus 19:4

Cassandra

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# Lesson 1

## Captive

***“In my anguish I cried to the LORD, and he answered by setting me free.”***

**- Psalm 118:5**

Thank you for joining me on this journey. You are a blessing and an answer to prayer. Our walk through the Exodus will reveal the captors that try to grab at our souls, and open a pathway straight into the heart of God. He is our Redeemer. The one truth shining through our study together will be the passion God has for His people. For you. He will fight battles, slay enemies, shake prison cells, and break chains in order to make you completely His own. Open your Bible, and experience His presence. Read through history, and discover that its words reveal your story. Commit yourself to living fully in the presence of your God, and shake off the chains that hold you to this world. Fix your eyes on the cross, and learn what it truly means to be set free.


## Day 1

It was her own fault. The good people around her told her to be careful. They warned her not to listen to other voices. They reminded her of the wonderful future that lay in store for her if she would just be patient and wait. But she felt compelled to satisfy her curiosity, and now it is too late. The moment her finger touches the spindle, Princess Aurora of Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* is lost. Her life is now held in the spell of the evil witch. She is a captive in the tallest tower of a faraway castle, held in the bondage of a sleeping death from which she can only be released by true love's kiss.

The evil witch cackles in her glee. Finally, she has everything for which she has so carefully plotted for years. The life of the princess belongs to her. She creates evil enchantments all around the castle. Thorns grow thick, obscuring the path to freedom. A dragon takes up residence on the grounds. Night falls, and in the darkness, evil savors its victory.

## Set Free

The witch, however, underestimates the prince. True love compels him to find Sleeping Beauty and make her his own. He braves treacherous travel, cuts through dense thorns, and fights the dragon in order to reach his beloved. Finally, his courage, determination, and desire for the princess carry him up the castle stairs to the bed on which she lies bound by a curse. He kisses her, she awakes, and they live happily ever after. She is set free by true love.

 In what way is Sleeping Beauty's story your own story?

Fairy tales seem an odd place to discover a biblical truth, but Sleeping Beauty is my story. And yours. We have all walked in Sleeping Beauty's shoes. The allure of the spindle is imagery for whatever calls us away from God. We touch the forbidden, and our lives are locked in a prison of our own choosing. We are trapped within the curse of one who longs to lock us away from true love.

But there is One who wants us for His very own. Not content to leave us bound in a castle faraway, He makes a treacherous journey to find us. He cuts through thorns, faces dark shadows, and even fights the dragon itself in order to reach His beloved.



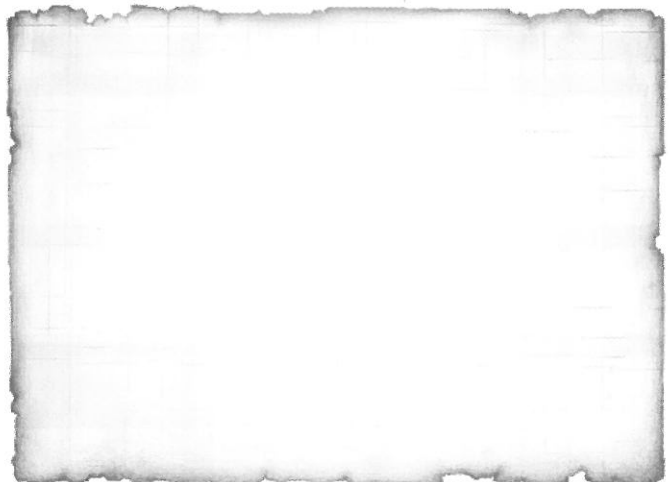
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Using two beams and three nails, He builds a ladder that reaches deep into the captor's snare and offers us true love. In taking His hand, we are set free.

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One of the most foundational truths God teaches us through His Word is about the nature of sin. Sin lies at the heart of our struggle. It is the reason that we need a Redeemer to set us free. Sin has plagued humanity since its earliest moments, and continues to be our most desperate trouble.

 What is sin?



Create a picture of how our sin affects the heart of God

Sin is a violation or offense against the will and character of God. We really can't define sin without looking at the heart of God. God is holy. He is pure, clean, and fully light. Sin is the opposite of God's holiness. In sin, we miss the mark. We fall short of the standard of God's holy nature. Sin is fueled by selfishness, rebellion, and a desire to determine our own direction.

**Write Romans 3:23.**

God always tell us the truth. We all sin. I sin. You sin. We have all fallen short, missed the mark, and gotten entangled in the dark shadows sin brings to our lives. While the truth is clear, it is amazing how far we go to try to hide our eyes from this reality. We brush sin off, dress sin up, and compare our sin with others, justifying our actions. But sin does not go away. It wraps its tendrils around our hearts, penetrating our souls with its heavy weight.

The consequences of our sin are devastating. Played out over and over in the heart of every person, the destructive nature of sin separates us, ensnares us, and condemns us.



Read the following passages and note the damage that sin does to our hearts.

	Sin's consequences...
Isaiah 59:2	
Ephesians 2:1, 12	
Proverbs 5:22	
John 8:34	
Genesis 2:17	
Romans 6:23	

## Set Free

The consequences that unfold in our lives because of sin are many and multi-faceted. Every time we pull off one layer, it just seems to reveal a whole new layer of ugliness attached to our souls. These layers of darkness group themselves in three ways.

The first result of sin taking residence in our lives is that it **separates us from God**. God is light. Sin is darkness. When we choose to embrace sin, we step out of the arms of God. A breach erupts, creating a chasm between our hearts and the heart of God. Once that separation has occurred, we are powerless to span it on our own.

Another consequence of sin is that it **takes us prisoner and holds us captive**. We become slaves to sin. Sin's heavy chains wrap tightly around our hearts. Its cords bind our souls, enslave our minds, and yoke our bodies to darkness. Sin gives an illusion of freedom, but in reality, it captures us, ensnares us, and relentlessly holds us in its power.

Sin's third effect is even more chilling. **Sin leads to death**. Sin destroys the soul. In God, there is life. Apart from God there can be nothing but death. Since sin separates us from God, we move from light to darkness, life to death, heaven to hell.

**What impact has sin made on your city? Your family? In your life?**

It is necessary to step into the light and take a clear, long look at the devastation that sin brings to our hearts. Its blackness is impenetrable. Its grip on our souls is suffocating. The weight of its chains binds our hearts and holds us captive. Hope bleeds out. Fear sets in, and desperation claws at our souls. The thorns grow high. Night falls, while the dragon prowls the grounds of the castle.

But there is a Prince....

## Day 2

If the story of Sleeping Beauty ended with her touch of the spindle, it would be a dark story indeed. A warning, perhaps. A sad glimpse at the reality of our world. But the story doesn't end there. There is a prince who loves Sleeping Beauty. He wants her for his very own and is willing to make a perilous journey to save her.

Jesus is your Prince. He loves you. He longs for you to be His, to live with Him, and to share all the joy, beauty, peace, and abundance that life with Him has to offer. He grieves over your chains. His heart breaks when He sees you reach out for the spindle. His love moves Him to great lengths in order to set you free.

Christ has a different life in mind for you than the one you have chosen for yourself. He doesn't want to see you as a slave to sin. He wants you to be free to experience all the wonderful blessings wrapped up in a life spent walking with Him. He wants to change your heart, free your soul, lighten your load, open your eyes, and empower your steps. He wants to teach you how to walk in freedom so you won't fall victim to sin's snares. He longs to hold you close, encircle you with love, and bring you into His kingdom so you can live happily ever after.

 Read John 8:31-36.

What defines those who are truly Christ's disciples?

What happens to those who know the truth?

What do Jesus' listeners fail to see about the chains which ensnare their own souls?


What does it mean to be a slave to sin?

Write John 8:36.

Jesus makes a radical promise here. *"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."* Jesus doesn't deny the power of sin. He doesn't blink at the darkness that holds us captive. In fact, when His listeners reveal their blindness to the chains that ensnare them, Jesus exposes the truth about our hearts. Everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Sin is a master that exacts a terrible toll. It sets us outside of the family – we have nowhere to belong, no one to love, and no place to call home.

## Set Free

Jesus offers to change all of that for us. He wants to move us from slave to son, from being on the outside to living on the inside, from brokenness to wholeness, and from captivity to freedom. The reality of His promise is found in Himself. He is Truth, and only Truth can set us free.

 What do you think it means to be *free indeed*?

So here is our reality. We have all sinned. Sin holds us captive, binding our hearts with heavy chains, holding us tightly within its evil grip while pulling us toward death. Sin separates us from God. Once we choose darkness, we cannot step back into the light on our own. What we are helpless and hopeless to do on our own, Jesus comes to do for us. He shines light to dispel our darkness. He brings the keys to unlock our chains. He moves us from death to life through His blood. He spans the dark chasm that separates us from God with a cross. He releases our souls from their captivity and offers to set us free – to make us free indeed.

Read John 8:31 again. How do we grab hold of Jesus' promise to set us free?

Jesus reveals three steps in the journey toward being set free in John 8:31.

Being set free starts with **believing Jesus**. *"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said,..."* Believing Jesus is always the first step into being set free. We have to believe what Jesus reveals about our bondage to sin. We have to accept that we are prisoners, held captive by forces from which we cannot escape on our own. We have to believe that Jesus is who He says He is, and that He has the power and the passion to set us free. This kind of believing ignites faith, allowing us to see with new eyes. When we believe Jesus, we see the truth that His light illuminates about our hearts. We see sin differently. We see ourselves in a new light. We see the possibility that our stories can have a new ending.

 Read John 12:44-46.

 What truths does Jesus reveal about the one who believes in Him?

Being set free gains momentum when we **hold on to Jesus' teachings**. The words of Jesus are life. They teach us how to move from darkness to light, how to be released from sin and live in freedom, and how to walk with Jesus as His very own people. These words are not something that we just mentally acknowledge. We hold on to them. We carry them with us. We wrap our hands, our minds, and our hearts around their truth, letting them shape everything that we are.




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Following Jesus involves listening to His voice, learning about His heart, and lifting Him up in every part of our lives until His character transforms every part of who we are.

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Read II Peter 1:3-4.



What has God given us through our knowledge of Him?

Being set free results in a **new identity as His disciples**. When we believe Jesus and hold on to His teachings, He sets us free. In being set free, Jesus changes us. Our names change, our hearts change, our focus changes, and our direction changes. In captivity, we were slaves to sin. In the freedom we have in Christ, we are His disciples. We are a people committed to learning and growing in Him. We determine to shape our lives around the truth He reveals. We become deliberate students of His heart. We learn what it means to walk with Him in the everyday, ordinary moments of our lives. We open ourselves up to the transformation that will enable us to be free indeed.



Read II Corinthians 3:18.



What amazing work is God doing in your life as you commit to your new identity in Him?

God's intention has always been for His people to walk in His freedom. He has been watching the devastating influence of sin ravage His beloved since the beginning of time. His heart determined before sin's first chain was forged to commit Himself to setting you free from the captivity He knew would one day ensnare you. He has been planning, preparing, and laying out lessons for how to embrace His promise of being set free since His earliest relationships with man.

## Set Free

Looking back through the record of God's pursuit of His people, the time of the Exodus takes on a deep meaning for us who long to be free indeed. In very clear pictures, God reveals the heart of a people enslaved. The Israelites are slaves to Pharaoh's brick pits. Their physical slavery highlights a spiritual slavery which holds all of our hearts captive. The mighty work God does to free His people from Egypt is a mirror of the powerful ways in which He sets us free from the gods of this world, the control of our culture, and our own fear and hard-heartedness. Walking through the wilderness does more than move the Israelites toward the Promised Land. It teaches them how to shed the influences of their old life and embrace the new life of freedom God wants for them. In their journey, we find a road map for making our own journey.

In each lesson, at the end of Days 2 and 4, we will pause to cement the lessons God is teaching us about living free indeed. Being set free begins with our eyes. Learning to walk in freedom requires us to clearly see the **World-view** for what it is, noting the ways it distorts our vision and pulls our eyes anywhere but up. A **God-view** shows us the clearest picture of how God wants our hearts to celebrate the set free life. **Adjusting My Vision** provides us an opportunity to surrender our eyes and hearts to the way God wants to change how we see, how we walk, and how we embrace everything it means to be free indeed.

## Set Free: Growing a God-view

### World-view



The world tells me that true freedom is found in

walking my own way, following my own desires, and allowing myself any pleasure or action I desire.

### God-view



God shows me the insidious nature of sin. Following my

own desires leads to slavery. Jesus comes to my rescue. Through Him, I can be free indeed.

### Adjusting My Vision



Make a pro/con list for a sin with which you particularly struggle. Be ruthlessly honest

about the pleasures you enjoy, and the cost of participating in that sin. Ask God to help you see your heart with His eyes.



## Day 3

The Exodus frames a picture of how God wants to work within our lives to set us free. In walking with the Israelites as they witness the miracles that bring them to freedom, we find fresh evidence of the way God moves today to free us from the things that enslave us, and keep us from enjoying an intimate relationship with Him. Their story is our story. The places may be different, but the hearts are remarkably similar. The chains that bind their hearts to Egypt may have different names, but the power God is willing to wield to set us free is the same.

The story of the Exodus actually begins in the last chapters of Genesis. Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, has twelve sons. In a bitter scene of sibling rivalry, the older brothers sell Joseph into bondage. He goes down to Egypt in a Midianite caravan, becoming the slave of an Egyptian official named Potiphar. Through a series of events that he comes to understand were orchestrated by God, Joseph is raised up to the second most important position in the land, lower only than Pharaoh himself.

 Read Genesis 41:41-57.

Describe Joseph's power and influence in the land of Egypt.

It is difficult to underestimate the power Joseph holds in Egypt. His word is law. He has the ear of Pharaoh. He travels throughout the land, organizing the people so that they will survive the famine God has told them is coming. Using the wisdom given to him by the Lord, Joseph touches every part of Egyptian life.

Eventually, Joseph is reunited with his family. Arriving from Canaan in search of food, Joseph meets his brothers and, in the end, reveals his identity to them. He makes arrangements for his elderly father to be brought to Egypt, and they settle in the land of Goshen. As Jacob leaves Canaan, he seeks the blessing of the Lord.

 Read Genesis 46:1-6, 26-27.

What promises does God make to Jacob as he prepares to go to Egypt?

## Set Free

How many does Jacob's family number as they arrive in Egypt?

Fast forwarding more than three hundred years brings us to the account of the Exodus. Exodus 1 serves as a bridge between the end of Genesis and the time in which we join Israel before they leave Egypt. Written by Moses, Exodus gives us a front row seat for the amazing process of redemption God plans to work on behalf of His people.

 Read Exodus 1:1-7.

Describe how the sons of Israel fare in the land of Egypt.

Read Exodus 12:37. How numerous do the children of Israel become during their time in Egypt?

From a company of seventy, Jacob's family has grown into a nation numbering six hundred thousand men while living in the fertile Nile delta region of Goshen. Adding in women and children, estimates place the number of Israelites at around two million people at the time of the Exodus.<sup>1</sup>

 Read Exodus 1:8-14.

What change in leadership brings a dramatic change in circumstances to the Israelites?

Why do the Egyptians fear the Israelites?

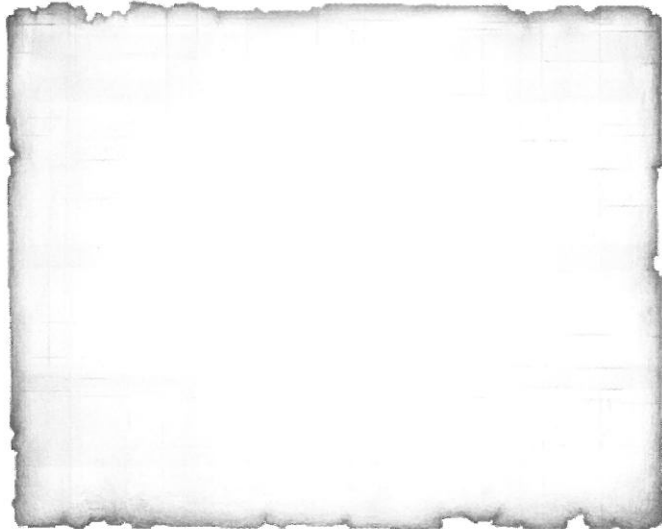
What action do the Egyptians take against the children of Israel?

As the decades accumulate into centuries, the memory of Joseph's wisdom and power fades. A new king rises to the Egyptian throne. Leaving history in the past, the new Pharaoh evaluates the strengths and vulnerabilities of his new kingdom. Once a small family, the Israelites now cover the land of Goshen. The new king sees in their numbers a great threat to the stability of his new kingdom. He orders the chains of captivity to be wrapped around the necks of the Israelites.



Reviewing Exodus 1:11-14 again, make a list of the words that describe the life the Israelites now have under their Egyptian slave masters.

The embittered life the Israelites now have under the Egyptians unveils the sorrow and wretchedness of slavery. Their slavery is a picture of the captivity of our hearts. **Oppression** speaks to the pressure put on us by the evil that surrounds us. It presses in on our hearts and pushes us to conform to its desires. **Forced labor** defines a life where our choices are limited by greed. We give our lives to activities that build kingdoms and treasure cities, but don't meet the deepest needs of our hearts. **Ruthlessness** describes an existence devoid of compassion, joy, or kindness. Within the reality of captivity there is only room for self-interest. Fear, cruelty, and pride become the basest masters of our souls. **Bitterness** is the final ingredient in slavery's recipe. It creeps into our hearts, robbing us of dignity and hope.



Create a picture of bondage

## Set Free



All of us struggle with slave masters. There are pieces of every heart that are held captive by fear, selfishness, bitterness, or the pressures of the world. Our journey with Jesus is the journey to being set free from the slave masters which entangle and ensnare us.

In the space below, talk to God about the particular slave master that has a hold on your heart. Ask Him to show you how to live free indeed.

## Day 4

Israel's people live in Egypt, enslaved by the people among whom they once sought safety. Egypt is a mighty nation and the dominant political power throughout the early history of the Bible. Its great wealth and influence grow from its position along the Mediterranean Sea, and the stable crop production it enjoys from the ever-flowing waters of the Nile River. Its economic strength and military might make it a nation that influences God's people for centuries.

The religion of Egypt is complex. It is a nation of many gods. There are so many different deities worshipped by the Egyptians, it is hard to count them all. Estimates place the number of Egyptian gods between 80 and 125, with many more uncounted local gods. The gods of Egypt are closely associated with nature. Many of the gods are portrayed as having animal or insect characteristics. These gods are interwoven in a tangled line of mythology that stretches back through the centuries. As different leaders rise to prominence, they bring different gods to the forefront of Egyptian society. Temples and places of worship are found throughout the land, and the Egyptian culture boasts a very large priestly caste. The lives of the people in Egypt are saturated with the presence and attempts to please the plurality of gods that surround them.



Read Acts 17:16, 22-23. Similar to what we find in Egypt, Paul walks through Athens and notes how religious thought permeates every part of their lives. What similarities do you see between the religious cultures of Egypt and Athens and our own society?

Like the ancient cultures of Egypt and Athens, we live in a society that celebrates spirituality. Religious thought is all around us and a plurality of beliefs is exalted as the highest good. We are encouraged to explore different avenues of spirituality, and each path is promoted as one more way to reach the divine.

In contrast to our culture's pull toward spiritual plurality, write Jesus' words in John 14:6.

At the head of Egyptian culture is Pharaoh. Pharaoh is a title for the ruler of the land of Egypt. There is much discussion among scholars about the exact identity of the Pharaoh of the Exodus. There are dozens of different theories by experts in Egyptology each seeking to identify the exact man who stood against God at the time of the Exodus. In the end, the identity of the man who reigned as Pharaoh isn't the most important part of our study. Instead, we will focus on identifying what Pharaoh represents in the story of redemption.

Egypt in general, and Pharaoh in particular, give us an insight into the perspective of the world. Pharaoh teaches us how the ungodly mind sees and reacts to the movement, commands, and love of God. He identifies for us a particular worldview. *Worldview* is a philosophical term that just means how one sees the world. Everybody has a worldview. Everyone has a particular set of glasses through which they look at the world and make decisions about what is happening around them. Have you heard of *rose-colored glasses*? We use the term to describe someone who chooses to see everything in a positive light. Wearing rose-colored glasses refers to a type of perspective or worldview. Our chosen perspective allows us to process information and make our next move.

There are three primary questions that are answered by whatever worldview you choose.

**What is my purpose?** Philosophers have been wrestling with the meaning of life since the beginning of time. Pharaoh will show us a worldview which says that pleasure, satisfying self, and looking out for one's self-interest is the purpose of life. He speaks not only for ancient Egypt, but for our culture as well. A God-view reminds us that our deepest purpose lies in reflecting the glory of the Lord.

**Where is my place in this world?** Pharaoh sits on a throne. It is more than a physical throne. It is a throne which announces to the world that he is the center of the universe. He wants everyone to know that the world revolves around him. A perspective defined by Christ leads us to a place by the Father's side. Our identity is rooted in our relationship with Him, rather than the claim we can stake in the world.

## Set Free


**Who has the power to control my life?** Pharaoh sees himself as a man of power. He believes he has the power to control his destiny, determine the course of his nation and the people under his rule, and the right to stand or bow as he chooses. Fundamental to a God-view is the understanding that Jesus is Lord. He not only has the right, but also the power to direct our lives and change our hearts

The Bible is in large part the story of two different perspectives – what we will call a *world-view* and a *God-view*. Over and over, God tells us that there is an earthly way to see things and a heavenly viewpoint. Being set free involves trading our *world-view* for a *God-view*.

 Read I Corinthians 1:18-31.

 How does Paul contrast the world-view of Christ with the God-view of the cross?

Jesus spent much of His time on earth pulling people's eyes from a world-view to a God-view. He turned the worldly perspective on its head and encouraged people to look at their lives through the eyes of God.

 Read the following statements by Jesus. Make a note of the world-view Jesus identifies and the God-view He wants people to embrace.

	World-view	God-view
Matthew 16:25		
Matthew 18:1-4		
Matthew 19:26		
Matthew 20:16		
Matthew 20:26		

Jesus consistently challenges us to see beyond the physical and discover the rich wonders of the spiritual world. Life is bigger than what we can touch through our senses. Our hearts were made to embrace the infinite possibilities of walking by faith with God. A world-view tells us that clinging to life, grabbing it with both hands, putting ourselves first, and measuring life by our own strength is the only way to live. Jesus helps us see that only when we die to self, take the place of a servant, become like a child, and put our lives in God's hand can we truly live.



Give your own example of a commonly expressed world-view. What different perspective or God-view does following Christ compel us to carry?

This, in a nutshell, is the conflict that lies at the heart of learning to be free indeed. We are held captive by the world-views that permeate our society. The thinking, motives, desires, and focus of the world are wound tightly through our hearts, impacting the way we see and respond to the movement of God.



Being set free involves allowing God to cut away the world-views that hold our hearts captive, and opening our eyes to a God-view.

Pharaoh will help us see our own culture and its influence with fresh eyes. God will use the might He displays in freeing the Israelites to reveal how He wants to move into your life and unleash His power in you.

Write II Corinthians 4:18. Use it as a launching point to ask God to give you new eyes and a fresh God-view.

## Set Free: Growing a God-view

### World-view



The world tells me that my purpose lies in seeking my own pleasure, my place is on the throne of my heart, and I have the power to control my own destiny.

### God-view



God's deep desire is for me to be by His side, walking with Him in freedom. My purpose rests in the transformation He works in my life to conform me into the image of His Son. He alone has the power to set me free, and mold me into the person He most wants me to be.

### Adjusting My Vision



Our perspective shapes our priorities and direction. Spend a few moments writing out the answers to these three key questions. Ask God to help you see your life through His dreams for you.

- What is my purpose?
- Where is my place in the world?
- Who has the power to control my life?

<sup>1</sup> *ESV Study Bible*, p260