

First Baptist Regina Weekly News

For the Week of July 5th, 2020

The spread of the corona virus is disrupting our way of life. It has become a cliché that we are “moving into a new normal.” Daily life right now sometimes feels like a period of waiting between what used to be and what is coming.



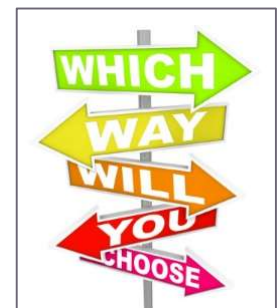
This summer we are reading through the stories of the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. Israel found itself in the wilderness for years. They lost all the certainty and familiarity of life in Egypt and had to wait for a long time until they entered their “new normal” in the promised land.

The longer Covid restrictions last, the more the costs will rise and our endurance will be tested. How will we respond? Maybe this experience will give us more sympathy for the Israelites who never seemed to get it right in the wilderness. They had witnessed God’s power like few ever have and yet they kept falling back into doubt and anger toward God.

They had a choice to make. Would they continue to follow the culture and the habits of their life in Egypt? Or would they take this opportunity to choose to live together in a new way? The law that came through Moses proposed new ways of being neighbours, of buying and selling, of settling disputes, of working and resting, and of living right with God.



Perhaps in the midst of the continuing suffering and loss, we also have an opportunity to change. Will we change our habits of prayer? How we spend money? How we work? How often we walk or bike instead of driving? How much time we make to be with family and friends? The easy thing to do as the virus lifts is to go back to what we know best—how things used to be. Our choice will be made every day in the changes we make to our habits.



With love,
Pastor Joel

New Small Group: Reading Through the Old Testament

In the not-too-distant future, Pastor Richard will be setting up and facilitating a new small group: "Reading Through the Old Testament." This group will meet online, using Zoom. A schedule will be provided with weekly readings. We will plan to connect once a week to discuss what we have read, share anything that has stood out to us, and ask any questions we may have. Please contact Pastor Richard at richard.fbcregina@sasktel.net, or leave a message at (306) 359-1450, Ext. 222, if you are interested in joining. Watch for updates!

Covid 19 Update

The provincial guidelines for places of worship were changed about two weeks ago. However, the consensus among the board and pastors remains that we wait on re-opening our Sunday morning in-person worship services. For the time being, we will continue to meet online on Sundays. *Learning for Life* will continue all summer at 9:30 a.m. and the service start time will remain at 11 a.m.

A committee has been created to plan the restart of in-person Sunday worship services. They are considering possibly September or earlier. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak with one of the board members or pastors.

Our phone team will be in touch as well. We wish to hear how everyone is doing and how many of us are ready to take part in in-person gatherings (following all the health guidelines).

A valuable source of information about First Baptist is our website: firstbaptistregina.ca. The links for *Learning for Life*, Sunday services, and the weekly newsletter can be found there, as well as links to our Facebook page and YouTube channel.

This could also be an opportunity for us to grow in friendship and in prayer. Contact Pastor Richard if you would like to be part of a small group or take part in one of the studies that are underway.

"Lebanon Live" Fundraiser Results

Thank you to all who gave so generously to our annual Lebanon Partnership fundraiser throughout the month of June. Our goal was to match our Missions budget of \$8,500, and the total raised as of June 30th is \$9,103! (It is never too late to give, so if you still wish to help, see a previous newsletter or the Lebanon link on our FBC website: firstbaptistregina.ca) The economic and political situation in Lebanon is dire, and our partners are extremely grateful for our ongoing prayer and financial support.



What's happening at First?

Morning Prayer

Join us each morning, Monday to Friday at 7:15 am to begin your day with scripture and prayer, via Zoom. Visit our website at firstbaptistregina.ca for the link.

Children

The children are having a short break from meeting at this time.

Youth

We will have fewer gatherings over the summer, but still plan to get together in smaller groups, or over Zoom, semi-regularly, so that we can stay connected and continue to build relationships.

Gospel of Mark Small Group

In May we had a new small group get underway via Zoom with two different meeting times: The 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month at 7pm and the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month at 10am. We are reading through the Gospel of Mark at about a chapter a week and meeting to discuss what we've read twice a month. This is not an in-depth study of Mark, but more a slow reading of Mark with informal discussion. Our conversation, along with highlights from Mark's Gospel, includes visiting to get to know each other better and we also take some time to pray together. We invite you to join us! Contact Pastor Richard (richard.fbcregina@sasktel.net) and he will get you connected.

Spiritual Disciplines Series: Guidance

In Psalm 25:4-5 we read: "Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long." I trust that for those of us who have faith in God, we have some inkling of this desire in our hearts – to be guided in God's truth and in his ways. But what does this mean and how do we do it? I would suggest that there are two basic categories of guidance. The first is the guidance we seek individually or privately from God. The second, while still seeking guidance from God, takes the form of seeking this guidance from God through his people (the church).

I recall one season in my own life in which I needed guidance. I had just graduated from high school (yes, a few years ago!) and went off to college. In my first week of college I felt something was terribly off and each day was struggling with whether I was supposed to be there or not. I was at Loyalist College in Ontario studying police foundations. A friend of mine at the time had given me a verse before I left for college; it was Proverbs 3:5-6 – "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, and do not lean on your own

understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he shall direct your paths.” I prayed that week for guidance, often. The struggle I had inside of me was whether I was supposed to be there studying for police work or if our Lord had called me into ministry and I should return to New Brunswick for Bible college. Over 25 years ago I discerned (was guided) to withdraw from Loyalist and pursue vocational ministry.

How did I know this was the right thing to do? While there can sometimes be grey area in these decisions, F. B. Meyer has provided us with a great start in discerning these types of decisions. In his book *The Secret of Guidance*, Meyers provides three conditions for guidance: Our impressions within or what could be called the leading of the Spirit (I had impressed upon me that I should pursue vocational ministry); God’s Word, meaning the guidance of the Bible (my impression within was not in contradiction to the Word of God in any way that I was aware); and lastly, God’s providence or what could be termed our circumstances (there was nothing preventing me from follow this impression within).

The second way of seeking God’s guidance – through his people – is just as important. Sometimes in our individualistic culture we seek to find the answers on our own. We miss out when we do this. Paul, in his letter to the church at Corinth, notes guidance as one of the gifts that has been given to the church (1 Corinthians 12:28). So as we seek guidance from God, we can and should consider the impressions we have within, check these with the Word of God, with an eye to our circumstances as to whether what we are considering is even possible – but then, we ought also to bring our impressions to some sisters and brothers and ask them to pray, seeking God’s guidance with us and for us.

The big-game hunter was showing his trophies. “See that bearskin on the floor? I shot it in Alaska. It was either him or me.”
“Well,” sighed the guest, “the bear does make a better-looking rug.”

Two sisters were looking at a book of religious pictures and came across a painting of the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus. “See there,” said the older girl, “that’s Jesus, and that’s his mother.”

“Where,” the younger girl wanted to know, “is his father?” Her sister thought for a moment, then explained, “Oh, he’s taking the picture.”

This cartoon is dedicated to a number of cats in our congregation who have been seen, along with their owners, enjoying our Sunday services on Zoom:



“Minding His Presence”

Pastor Richard Hovey’s sermon from July 5, 2020

Exodus 19 through 33

The people have come from out of Egypt after centuries of slavery. They have been delivered by the mighty hand of God! They have been saved as God’s people, and God has promised to lead them into a land flowing with milk and honey – their own land, their own place. A place in which they shall be with God and shall be God’s people. Yes, God promised “I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.”

And so God brings about the great Exodus. He brings the people out from under their bondage in Egypt. The people of God, as you know the story, crossing the Red Sea on dry ground! Delivered from their taskmasters, delivered from their captivity, delivered by the Lord their God in order that they may worship Him as a witness to the nations.

One of the beautiful pictures we get in Exodus 19, that they shall be a royal priesthood, a people set apart for God as a witness in their time and in their place.

Their God has delivered them. Our God has delivered us. Their God provided. Our God provides. Their God is! Our God is! Our God is with us! Our God is for us, much as he promised to be with the nation of Israel as he delivered them. His very presence was displayed in the pillar of fire and the cloud! The provision in the manna and the quail.

I want us to ponder, this morning, the wonder of the presence of God among us. During this season, it might seem a little less obvious as we don’t gather physically together as a corporate body, but the Spirit of God, the presence of God, the promise of God is with us. He is among us. He is by us. He is, yet, for us.

God gave the promise to Moses as He told him to go back to Egypt to set his people free. God said to Moses: “I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain. Or you shall worship God on this mountain.” I love the fact that Moses was given a call, a task, a job to do, and was told, when you have completed this task, you will know that I have sent you after it’s done, because you will worship God on this mountain.

In Exodus 19, we find the people of God in the wilderness of Sinai beside the mountain, and God speaks to Moses: “Tell the people of Israel: You have seen what I did to the

Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, if you will be my people, you shall be my treasured possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

God has delivered. God has provided. God has worked wonders and miracles in leading them out of captivity, out of bondage, out of slavery, into his very presence and into a promised land.

He has offered a covenant for them to be his people. The people of his possession, the people of His making, a people of his presence.

We have a similar promise and provision for us today. We read in the marvelous words within the Gospels, the Epistles and the book of Acts, that all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. This new covenant, this new promise of deliverance, of provision, of presence by God, all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. We read that all who believe upon him have the right to become the Children of God. We are told that we have been bought with a price. We have been redeemed by the blood of the cross.

We are to be a holy nation. Very similarly in Peter's words, we find this call for the people of God. We find this within Peter's letters and this wonderful call that you shall be this people set apart, this peculiar people, if you will. A holy nation, set apart for God to display, to tell of his marvelous works and of his wonders.

Now this wonderful calling is given to us today. We have the promise that we are being led into another land, a heavenly place, a city whose builder and architect is God. We recall the beauty of those who were persecuted and recorded as being persecuted as the people of God in the book of Hebrews, and how they looked ahead to that destiny and that place, that other city, that possession that was to be theirs beyond this world. The promise of God to us, as it was to the nation of Israel, is "I will be your God and you will be my people."

In Exodus 20 through 30 God calls Moses up onto the Mountain, and He gives him the 10 commandments as well as other laws to govern the people, as God's covenant people. As well, God instructs him on the building of the tabernacle. And this is to be the place where the presence of God dwells among his people. A portable sanctuary in which the people of God could draw near to God as they journeyed to the land that was promised to them! God's presence would be with them. God intended to dwell with His people in the tabernacle – His very presence going with them as they journeyed to the promised land!

In Exodus 32, we find the disheartening account of the golden calf! I don't know if you ever grow impatient, in general, or in the ways of God in your life. But Moses has been gone for awhile, and the people have grown impatient, waiting for him to return. Moses is getting instruction from the Lord. He's getting the commands for this covenant people. He's getting instructions on the building of the tabernacle in which the presence of God will dwell with them.

In their waiting, they become impatient, searching for something tangible to worship. The golden calf is created and they sacrifice to it, and they worship it. They were to worship God in that place, and their worship turns to an idol. You think of the commandments that they were given. They first two, that you shall have no other gods before me, and you shall not worship any idols, and here the first commands are broken. They hail this golden calf as the god who has brought them out of Egypt, out of captivity.

Let us never forget who has redeemed us. Who has delivered us. Who has bought us with a price. Who has saved and is sanctifying us. Who it is who delivers us and redeems us from our bondage and our sin. It is the Lord God now made known and manifest in Jesus Christ, present among us by the Holy Spirit.

People of God – we are to worship God, and worship God alone. Moses, distraught at their sin and their idolatry, intercedes on their behalf with God. In Exodus 32, we find this wonderful intercession in prayer that Moses gives up for the people of God in interceding for them. In verse 9 we have these words of the Lord to Moses following the golden calf episode: “I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. Now let me alone so that my wrath may burn hot against them, and I may consume them. And of you I will make a great nation.”

But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, “O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say it was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth. Turn from your fierce wrath. Change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants like the stars of the heavens, and all this land that I have promised, I will give to your descendants and they will inherit it forever’”.

In verse 14, “Then the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people. The Lord had decided that in their sin, that he would destroy the altogether and begin again with Moses. But Moses intercedes on behalf of the people.

Christ continues to intercede on our behalf. As we rebel even following our faith, as we turn again to the deeds and the ways of the flesh, as we seek other gods to worship in the midst of our context and in our life, Jesus intercedes on our behalf before God for our sins to call us back, to provide, again, for us, this hope, this promise of the presence of God among us.

In Exodus 33:1, God speaks to Moses, “Depart and go on up from here, you and the people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt.” So we get this call to go forth. Recall, the presence of God was supposed to be with them, but they have worshipped the golden calf and God’s presence is now not going to be going with them, but he will not consume them or destroy them. In chapter 33, we get the call to go and to leave this place. “You and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, and go to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘to your descendants I will give it.’”

Then in verse 2 of chapter 33, “I will send an angel before you. I’ll drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey.” But hear this: “But I will not go up among you, or I would consume you on the way. You are a stiff-necked people.”

God has relinquished on the plan of the building of the tabernacle, on the plan of his presence going up with the people, because of their worship of another god, because of their creation of an idol image to worship, because of their breaking of the covenant of God, of which they said, “We will be your people.”

And so, out of his holiness and his grace and his love, he has decided not to go up with the people, lest he consume them. Verse 4 of chapter 33, “When the people heard these harsh words, they mourned, and no one put on ornaments. For the Lord had said to Moses, ‘Say to the Israelites: You are a stiff-necked people. If, for a single moment, I should go up among you, I will consume you. So now, take off your ornaments, and I will decide what to do to you. Therefore, the Israelites stripped themselves of their ornaments from Mount Horeb onward.’” An act of repentance, an act of understanding that they had wronged, that they had sinned against the God whom they were to worship.

Sometimes I think today, at least in my own life, I can take for granted the presence of God. The gift of the Spirit of God among us, Paul noting as we gather again in this season – not gathered as we would like, but as we get together with other believers, we become the place, we become the temple where the Spirit of God dwells. We ourselves have the gift of the presence of God and the Spirit in our own lives.

But sometimes I wonder, do we pay this the mind, do I pay this the mind that I ought. Do I seek for other things? Do I get distracted and led astray by other idols in my own life?

What does this do to the ability and the work and the place of the presence of God in my own life. Am I willing to recognize the areas in which I have fallen short in being in covenant with God through the Lord Jesus Christ and the gift of his Spirit.

There is a fascinating picture here with the nation, Israel. Again, they are to worship God in this place, and the presence of the Lord their God was to be with them from that place. His presence was to be with them in the Tabernacle. They are called to depart, to move on – the promise of the new land still in place, but the tabernacle, which was to house the very presence of God, is not complete. God would not be taking up residence among them.

God's desire was expressed in the instructions given for this tabernacle, the building of which was read for us. He stated in chapter 29, verses 45 and 46, "I will dwell among them, the people of Israel, and be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them! I am the Lord their God."

God has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light – that He might dwell among us! That we might know God. That we might have eternal life, which is to know God and to know Jesus Christ whom he has sent. That we might be a light to the nations. Recall the nation, Israel, being called and set apart and being given the promise of the future and the promise of the presence of God. They're to be a witness, a testimony, a holy nation, set apart in their context.

This is true for us today, that we might be a light to the nations, a holy nation, "a people for his own possession, that we might proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people." Let us mind his presence among us.

As we continue the story in Exodus, we find that instead of building a tabernacle, the people had built a golden calf. Instead of proclaiming the wonders of their God who delivered them from their captivity, they worshipped what they had made by their own hands. What the Israelites had done, affected their relationship with God. They have removed themselves from the promise of God's dwelling presence. A promise that, at that moment in time, ceased to apply.

It's interesting, as Moses interceded for them once, he continues to intercede for them. God has called them to move on, but in Exodus 33:12, we read, "Moses said to the Lord, 'See, you have said to me, bring up this people. But you have not let me know whom you will send with me.' You have said, 'I know you by name and you have also found favour in my sight.' Now if I have found favour in your sight, show me your ways so that I may know you and find favour in your sight. Consider too, that this nation is your people."

In reply, God said, 'My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.' And Moses said to him, 'If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here, for how shall it be known that I have found favour in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us. In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth.'" In verse 17 we read, "The Lord said to Moses, 'I will do the very thing that you have asked, for you have found favour in my sight, and I know you by name.'"

I don't want to indicate or suggest that the Lord has lifted his presence from us. I don't want to indicate or suggest that the Lord has taken his spirit from us. But I do want us to ask, "Do we mind the presence of God among us? Are we aware of how important it is and of how our actions and attitudes and behaviours, how our worship could affect the presence and the power of the presence of God among us? Are we willing to intercede on behalf of God's people who have gone astray and not minded the promise of the presence of God among them? The God who has delivered us. The God who has redeemed us. The God who has promised to be with us, that we might be a light to the nations.

In the great commission that was read for us, Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

His presence is what enables us to be his people. His presence is what enables us to be his witnesses. His presence is what enables us to have a testimony about the goodness of our God and his ongoing and continued power in our lives.

We thank God for the intercession of Moses on Israel's behalf when they had sinned. We thank God for Jesus Christ and his intercession on our behalf when we sin. Might we be renewed in our covenant relationship with the Lord our God. Might we un-adorn ourselves as needed. Might we repent, confess, as needed, and celebrate the wonder and the glory of the presence of God among us, as we go forward.

For we have been delivered, we have been redeemed, we have been saved and sanctified by the Lord our God, who promises to be present among us, and who has given us the gift of his presence by the Holy Spirit. Let us recognize the value and importance of this today in our lives as his church, as his people, as his holy nation. We ask in Jesus holy name, amen.

Tithing during the pandemic

With the COVID-19 crisis limiting contact with others and restricting meetings of groups, please do not neglect the financial needs of our church.

We have several ways to provide your regular tithes and donations to the church:

1. Mail your gifts to the church or call and leave a message at (306) 359-1450 to arrange for an in-person pick-up. Please place your cheque in your regular offering envelope (or any envelope marked "Offering"), and seal that inside another envelope addressed to the church:

First Baptist Church
2241 Victoria Ave, Regina, SK S4P 0S4.

2. Establish a **Pre-authorized Remittance (PAR) Plan**. This will automatically transfer funds from your account into the FBC Regina account on a regular basis. Please email the church or contact the Treasurer if you would like to set up PAR, or change your commitment.
3. Make an online donation:
 - Use **Interac e-Transfer** to donate from your phone or computer to FBCRegina@gmail.com (*no fee or cost to the church*)
 - Use a credit card with a PayPal account via the **PayPal Giving Fund** (*no fee or cost to the church... 100% of your donation reaches us and contributes to our mission*)
 - Use a credit card or PayPal via **CanadaHelps** (*a fee of 4% is deducted from the donation*)
 - Use a credit or debit card via **FBC ChurchTrac** (*the church is charged a fee of approximately 3% for each donation*)

PLEASE refer to our website at firstbaptistregina.ca for more specific information on these contribution methods. You may also contact the treasurer at (306) 775-1497 or email the church at main_fbcregina@sasktel.net for further details.

Lockdown lingo #2

Covid-10

The 10lbs in weight that we're all gaining from comfort-eating and comfort-drinking. Also known as "fattening the curve".

Ever Notice...

...that whenever you hear the word save, it is usually the beginning an ad designed to convince you to spend money?

...that once you could fetch a drink during a TV commercial? Now you can go out and rake the lawn.

...that some folks not only keep you from being lonely—they make you wish you were?

...that if you give the weeds an inch, they'll take a yard?