

Relationship – God in us: Exodus & Leviticus

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Genesis chapter 15. We will be looking at Exodus and Leviticus, but we will be starting off in Genesis 15.

So get your Bibles at the ready. Genesis 15. You'll see by the title there this morning we're looking at relationships.

Somebody sent me a message when they saw that and said it was great that I was fitting in well with the day and what a romantic I was to be thinking of relationships.

[1 : 41] Well, let me make a disclaimer here. I made no connection between what I am saying and hadn't a clue that it was February the 14th and that it was Valentine's Day.

I'm a complete disaster in the area of spontaneity. So my poor wife, I shall try to do better.

Nonetheless, we're still going to be looking at relationships.

We can delete what's on the recorder. Don't worry. In case they remind me next year for the same mistake. So here we go. We'll pray and ask for God's help.

Father, we thank you for all the good things you bring to us every day.

There are times we struggle with ill health. There are times we struggle with circumstances that we are in. But yet in the midst of it, you are always God.

[2 : 48] In charge. Lord over all. With us. Not forsaking us. So would you please help us to understand better this relationship that you've called us into.

What it looks like. And how we should live with you. Father, please encourage us all this morning, we pray. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, it was a night that they would never forget. After 430 years of brutal slavery, God had rescued Israel from the cruel oppression of Pharaoh.

But if we've been following the story, that rescue would not be a surprise. Because 600 years beforehand, God had made this promise to Abraham.

Have a look at Genesis 15, verse 13. Genesis 15, verse 13. So this is 600 years before the release from Egypt.

[4 : 07] Then the Lord said to Abraham, Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and will be ill-treated for 400 years.

So he promised that there would be slavery. But he also promised this, verse 14. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterwards they will come out.

Literally, they will be redeemed, and with great possessions. But rescue was not only the beginning of the plan.

Have a look at Exodus chapter 6, verse 6. Exodus chapter 6, verse 6. Exodus chapter 6, verse 6. Exodus chapter 6.

So rescue was in God's mind at the beginning. But there was something more. Chapter 6, verse 6. Therefore say to the Israelites, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.

[5 : 29] I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. And here comes the reason for the rescue.

I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Can you see that?

They are rescued for relationship. I will be your God. You will be my people. I will belong to you, and you will belong to me.

Israel, this great nation, had been released from the brutal oppression of Pharaoh and have now been brought out under the loving rule of God.

They have been rescued for relationship. And in some ways, it's a looking back to the Garden of Eden. Do you remember how it was then?

[6 : 25] Adam and Eve living in relationship with God, enjoying God in the Garden of Delight. And now God is saying to this nation, not just to two people, but to a whole nation, I am going to be in relationship with you in a new land, in a new place, where you can know me and enjoy me.

You see, God's aching desire is to rescue people like us so that we also can live in relationship with him. He rescues us from our slavery to sin so that we can enjoy him.

He frees us from the oppression of Satan so that we can live under God's good rule. That's the big story of the Bible.

Now, if we're to live in relationship with God, well, it's a relationship that really matters. And we have to know how to learn or how to live rightly with God.

Have a look at Exodus chapter 19 as we move on through the story. Exodus 19. At this stage, they've been released from Egypt and they're now travelling through the desert and they've come to a mountain which is called Mount Sinai.

[7 : 52] And here God comes and speaks through Moses to the people. So chapter 19, verse 3. Moses went up to God.

So he went up this mountain and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to say to the people of Israel.

You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt and how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself. Do you see again?

It's that theme that's repeated. I've rescued you and I'm committed to you. This relationship that God is in with the people is not going to be an in-out kind of relationship.

It's a relationship where God says, We're not going to break up. We're going to be committed to one another. And that means there's going to be responsibility.

[8 : 51] So look at verse 5. So if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all the nations you will be my treasured possession.

Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you are to speak to the people.

I am going to give you a way to live, says God. I'm going to show you how you are to live in relationship with me. But there's a problem.

These people can't get close to God. Look at verse 10. And the Lord said to Moses, Go to the people and consecrate them.

Get them ready to meet God. Consecrate them today and tomorrow. Make them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day because on the third day the Lord will come down from Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

[10 : 02] Put limits for the people around the mountain. and tell them, Be careful that you do not go up to the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death.

But what's going on? God had said so clearly, I will be your God and you will be my people. You are going to be my treasured possession.

I rescued you for myself. But if you try and get close to me, you are going to die. But what kind of relationship is that?

It's an invitation to say, Come to me. But if you do, it's going to be very dangerous. Well, I think God wants us to understand who he is.

God is not our best buddy who we ignore and we can forget. God is not our mate who we can treat as we please.

[11 : 11] No, God is different to every other kind of relationship and he demands that we treat him rightly. So look at verse 16.

On the morning of the third day, there was thunder and lightning with a thick cloud over the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled.

Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire.

The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace and the whole mountain trembled violently and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. And Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

Here is God in his supreme power an absolute purity. Picture the scene. This fire coming down.
[12:18] This smoke coming from the mountain. The mountain itself begins to shake. You don't mess with this God. You dare not come to him with disrespect.

We cannot treat God as we want and expect to get away with it. You see, the problem is we have domesticated God.

We have reduced our Creator God into something manageable. We like the idea of a relationship with God but we want to control how that relationship should work.

So we like the idea of a God who is all-powerful but not so powerful that he will confront me and challenge me. Or we like the idea of a God who is pure and just but not so pure that he won't agree with what I want.

If the truth be told we want a grandfather type God. A God whose job it is to give us treats and soothe us with gifts when things don't go our way.

[13:35] We want a God who won't tell me how to live. A God who will ignore my sin but will always accept me. But God will not let us do that.

Verse 23 Moses said to the Lord The people cannot come up Mount Sinai because you yourself warned us put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy.

You see, God is different to us. We are not co-equals. He is not our mate our best buddy. He is our creator and our Lord.

So there are three things we need to know about God if we are to live in relationship with him. Here is the first one. God commands that we worship only him.

Look at chapter 20 verse 1 And God spoke all these words.

[14:53] I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt out of the land of slavery. This is what I have done for you. I am the God who has intervened into your lives and rescued you.

I freed you from slavery. I have brought you out of your cruel bondage. So because of what I have done for you this is how you should relate to me.

This is how you should treat me. Now I hope at the beginning of what we call the Ten Commandments you can see an order here. Do you see the pattern?

God always rescues first and then shows us how to live in relationship with him. God does not say follow this command and then I will rescue you.

No, God says because I have done this for you because I have freed you and made you my people this is how you should treat me. And it's no different for us.

[15:58] God always acts in grace to us first. He says because of what I have done for you it's not your performance it's what I have done for you this is how you should live in response.

So what does God command? Verse 3 You shall have no other gods before me. Do not replace me with your own gods.

Remember I'm the God who created you. I'm the God who has given you life and breath. I'm the God who sustains you and provides you with every single thing that you have.

So don't go making other gods and pretending that they look after you and that they save you.

Jesus himself would say the same thing when he was asked what is the greatest commandment.

Jesus replied love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

[17:07] I'm the God who rescues you so give to me your undivided loyalty and devotion. worship only me.

Now as Moses was receiving this command what do you think the people were doing down below when Moses was up on the mountain? Remember what the command was?

You shall have no other gods before me. What do you think the people were up to? Well have a look at Exodus chapter 32.

Exodus chapter 32 and verse 1. So we've got to remember the scene we've got to keep this in context Moses is up the mountain talking to God all the people are down below and they can't get close to God.

and what do we read? Chapter 32 verse 1 When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain they gathered round Aaron and said come make us gods who will be before us who will go before us.

[18:29] As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt we don't know what's happened to him. Aaron answered take off your gold earrings that your wives your sons your daughters are

wearing and bring them to me.

So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf fashioning it with a tool.

Then they said these are your gods O Israel who brought you up out of Egypt. Isn't it ironic?

Now we look at these bunch of people down around the mountain carrying on like this and we think no I would never do anything like that. That's not me.

But we must remember an idol is not just a carved statue. An idol is anyone or anything that takes the place of God.

[19 : 34] So that means your children can be an idol. Your job can be an idol. An activity a desire an object your career anything that takes the place of God is an idol.

Just like Israel we worship other things. We give our loyalty to our kids our devotion to our work our praise to our heroes.

We replace God with something else but God will not stand for that. Look at chapter 32 verse 9.

God looks down from the mountain and here's what he says verse 9.

I have seen these people the Lord said to Moses. They are a stiff necked people. That is they are stubborn and rebellious. now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them that I may destroy them then I will make you into a great nation.

But Moses sought the favour of the Lord his God. O Lord he said why should your anger burn against your people whom you brought up out of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

[20 : 54] why should the Egyptians say it was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountain and to wipe them off the face of the earth? Turn from your fierce anger relent and do not bring disaster on your people.

Well if we were to go on reading through the story we would see that God does not ignore their rebellious behaviour. He does punish the people but he does relent and the vast majority are saved but God is still unwavering in his command to the people.

Chapter 34 verse 14 So after this whole episode God comes back to it again.

Verse 14 he says to them do not worship any other God. for the Lord whose name is jealous is a jealous God.

You see God does not want to share us with anything else or anyone else. We belong to him so he deserves our lives he deserves our worship.

[22 : 18] We sometimes think of jealousy as something that's negative. But jealousy can also be something positive. So think of a married relationship.

If you're in that married relationship you don't want to share your husband or wife with another person. So suppose you're a wife and your husband comes home one day and brings another woman into the home and says I want to share my love with this woman as well.

She's going to move in with us and we're going to live together and well we can be committed to her too. What would you say to that? Oh that's okay.

I've no problem with that. We can share our loyalty and love together. Of course you wouldn't.

There would be a righteous kind of anger.

there would be a jealousy that rises up within you because you are jealous for your husband's love because you're committed to each other and you are not going to share that love with someone else.

[23 : 28] Now how do you think the creator of the world should respond when his creation, his people, who he loves and who he sustains, who he provides for, who he rescues and they give their love and loyalty, to someone else?

How do you think God will respond? Oh it's okay. That's alright. Live how you like. Just pretend that these other gods rescued you.

Just pretend that these other gods provide for you. It's fine. Make your own gods. It's all okay. No, God is a jealous God. I am your God who rescued you.

So give me your undivided loyalty and devotion. Worship only me. You see, if we are going to live in relationship with God, there is no room for another.

It is God who is first and he shapes every other relationship that we may have. So he commands that we worship only him.

[24 : 41] Second, God desires that we can live with him. Look at what God commanded Moses a little earlier.

Just go back to Exodus chapter 29. Exodus 29 verse 44. Here's something else God had said to the people.

verse 44. He says, I will consecrate the tent of meeting. Now the tent of meeting, you can read about this through Exodus.

The tent of meeting is sometimes referred to as the tabernacle. Basically it was a very carefully designed mobile tent. Very intricate and specially designed by God.

And this tent was where God would live amongst the people. So verse 45. Then I will dwell or I will live among the Israelites and be their God.

[25 : 46] They will know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell or live among them. I am the Lord their God. Now when we think of what the people did next, Christ.

So we are in chapter 29. Remember what they just did in chapter 32. They went making a gold calf to replace God. Now you would think in the knowledge of all of that God would get wise about what they are like and he would pull out of the deal and you go I am not moving in with that lot.

Look at the way in which they behave. There is no way I am going to be in relationship with them.

But that is not what happens. Have a look at Exodus chapter 40 at the very end.

Exodus chapter 40 verse 1 Exodus 40 verse 1 Then the Lord said to Moses set up the tabernacle the tent of meeting on the first day of the first month.

Then move down to verse 33 Then Moses set up the courtyard around the tabernacle So he's setting up the tent as God had designed in the altar and he put up the curtain at the entrance and so Moses finished the work.

[27 : 23] Then the cloud the cloud represents the presence of God coming down. The cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

You see God comes down into the midst of these people. God is moving in with these bunch of rebels. Now logically it's the wrong kind of response isn't it?

After everything that the people had done God should be keeping his distance from them. But we're not dealing with somebody who's like us.

If somebody offends us and upsets us we pull back we withdraw. But God is so personal and so intimate and so concerned for his people that he actually moves in with them.

He's moving in with a bunch of failures. You see God not only wants to rescue his people he longs for this relationship he longs to reside with messy broken people like us.

[28 : 33] It shouldn't happen but yet that's what God does for us. Later on in Numbers chapter 2 you can look at it later on we read about a great detailed plan of how the whole camp should be set up.

And the whole camp is set up around this tent of meeting. So wherever they go and settle God's tent the tent of meeting is always in the middle of the camp.

Surrounding it is everybody else's tent. And even when they get up and they start travelling somewhere else God's tent is always in the middle of all the people as they move along.

God living among failures. it is as if God is ramming home to these people even though you fail even though you worship other gods I will be your God and you will be my people I am committed to you I rescued you and I am going to show you how to live in relationship with me.

This is the kind of God that we have. God but yet how do we live in relationship with a God who is so personal but yet so jealous.

[29 : 57] A God who is demanding our worship but then strikes people down when they don't worship him properly. God may want to live among us but he's so powerful and so pure it's not safe for us to live with him.

So how do we get over this tension and this obstacle how can we get to live in relationship with this God? Well third God provides the means or the way so that we can enjoy him.

Go to Leviticus chapter 16 and here's where you need to start talking to your children over lunch and find out what they've been learning in Leviticus.

You see this tent of meeting was a place where the people could come and meet God. But you couldn't just go walking in there high fiving and presuming everything's okay.

The whole book of Leviticus is to show us how we can actually get to meet this God and how we can live in relationship with God.

[31 : 17] And right at the heart of Leviticus is chapter 16. Right at the centre it gives us the clue it gives us the detail of how we can meet with him.

Have a look at verse 1 of chapter 16. The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached the Lord.

Do you see what happens when they try to get close to God? They die. God is too powerful, too pure. And when you try to get close to him, you die.

We cannot live in his presence. So what are they going to do? Well, God provides a special sacrifice which happens once a year.

And it's called, as maybe the heading in your Bible has, the day of atonement. And that's what chapter 6 is all about. Read through it. It has this atonement all the way through.

[32 : 22] About 20 times in one chapter. Atonement simply means, if you look at the screen, God's wrath being turned away from us so that we can be at one with God so that we can enjoy him, relate to him.

Now in this sacrifice, we'll go through it quite quickly, this sacrifice required two goats. The first goat that they were to take, well this goat was to be killed for the sins of the people.

In a dramatic way, it was teaching all the people that somebody had to die in place of them. But then they took the second goat and this second goat, well it's not killed.

Have a look at verse 21. Something different happens. Chapter 16 verse 21. He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites, all their sins, and put them on the goat's head.

He shall send the goat away into the desert in the care of a man appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a solitary place and the man shall then release it in the desert.

[33 : 58] Do you see what happens in this symbolic way? The sins of the people are transferred. They are taken away from them and it is carried away out of sight so that the people can be at one with God so that they can get close to him and enjoy him.

But the problem is it was never fully realised. If we read on through the story of the Bible they could not really get close to God.

How could they ever get close to this God? How could God ever be contained in a tent? How could a goat literally deal with the people's sins?

It was impossible. It never worked. But God did it all to prepare for one who would come and make it all truly possible.

Remember how John put it in John's Gospel chapter 1 verse 14? when Christ when Jesus came he said the word became flesh.

[35 : 17] The word that's God became flesh and made his dwelling among us. God did physically move into the world in the person of Jesus Christ no longer in a tent but as a person.

God came to live amongst this world and he became known as one who ate with sinners. He came to the broken. He came to the failures.

He came to the screwed up and the messed up. He moved into and lived amongst rebels like you and me. But more than that he came into the world to deal with our failures.

No longer symbolically but in faith we now look to Jesus and as it were we place our hands on the head of Jesus and our sins are literally transferred from us to Jesus and Jesus carries our sins all of them to the cross and pays the debt that deserves to be paid so that people like you and me can be at one with God as far as the east is from the west so far as he removed our transgressions from us never to be remembered again taken away so that we can be at one with God but that's not the end not only does he take our sin away but now

God moves in remember what we said at the very beginning John chapter 14 verse 23 Jesus said if anyone loves me that is if anyone trusts me he will obey my teaching as evidence of someone who obeys or loves God they will obey him my father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him did you get that God would make his home in us not in a makeshift tent but God the creator God who rescues us moves into our lives by his spirit father son and holy spirit dwelling within us so that we can experience him so that we can enjoy him so that we can be at one with

[38 : 09] God every single day it really shouldn't happen but this is the kind of God that we have let's pray together our father God we are sorry that we do not treat you as you deserve to be treated we are sorry for reducing you down into something manageable where we make you nothing more than a grandfather type figure who doesn't challenge us or confront us but accepts us whatever we

do and father we're sorry for the way in which we behave please help us to see you as you really are thank you that you did come and rescue us and thank you that you have now called us into relationship with you and we thank you that because of jesus who has taken all our sin away we can draw close to you we can come close for you are now living within in us we praise you for that and we ask that you would help us to live in our relationship with you well and that we would be people who point others to jesus so that they also can have this incredible relationship with you we pray this in jesus name amen we're going to sing together it's an older hymn but a great hymn and you'll see there just on the top verse it