

The Book of Exodus, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 8: The Exodus and the Feast of Unleavened Bread

Exodus 12:31–13:22

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, this passage holds together two truths the class must not separate. First, the exodus is a real, historical redemption. God acted in time and space to break the power of Egypt and bring out a people He had promised to Abraham. The precise dating in 12:40–41 and the careful claim of the firstborn in 13:1–2 insist that this happened, that God keeps His covenant in history and not merely in sentiment. Second, the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the consecration of the firstborn belong to the Old Covenant given through Moses. They were shadows pointing forward, and their substance is Christ (Colossians 2:16–17). The teacher must present these ordinances with full seriousness as God's commands to Israel, while being careful not to bind them on Christians as law. We do not keep these feasts; we keep the One they pointed to.

The bridge to the New Testament runs straight through 1 Corinthians 5:7–8. Paul takes the unleavened bread and turns it into a call to purge out the old leaven of malice and wickedness and to keep the feast, our whole Christian life, with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. So the teacher can draw the timeless theme of redemption, remembrance, and a people belonging wholly to God, and apply the leaven imagery to the putting away of sin, without ever reimposing the festival calendar. Likewise the pillar of cloud and fire shows God's guiding presence, a truth that carries forward whole and unbroken to every believer led by the Lord today.

Beyond the doctrine, this lesson aims to form a people who remember. Your class lives in a culture of forgetting, where last week's mercies are crowded out by this week's worries. God stopped the exodus to teach Israel to remember and to teach their children, because He knew that unremembered redemption quietly dies. Help your students leave not only clear about shadow and substance, but more committed to remembering what God has done, telling it to the next generation, clearing the leaven out of their own homes, and trusting the God who still goes before His people by cloud and fire.

Question 1

Student Question:

Read 12:31–36. After ten plagues and a night of death, Pharaoh finally releases Israel, and the Egyptians press their treasures on them. What does this sudden, total reversal reveal about God's power over the most stubborn human resistance, and about His ability to keep the promise He made to Abraham that his descendants would come out with great possessions (Genesis 15:14)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin where the night ends. After the death of the firstborn, Pharaoh finally collapses. The man who said Who is the LORD that I should obey Him (5:2) now begs Moses and Aaron to leave and even asks for a blessing (12:32). Help the class feel the totality of the reversal. The hardest heart on earth has been broken, not by negotiation but by the sheer power of God. No human resistance is finally a match for Him.

Notice the Egyptians urging Israel out and loading them with silver, gold, and clothing (12:35–36). This is not theft; it is the fulfillment of a specific promise. God told Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved and afflicted, but that afterward they would come out with great possessions (Genesis 15:14). What looked like centuries of God’s silence was in fact God keeping a detailed word. The plunder of Egypt is the receipt of a four-hundred-year-old promise.

Draw the doctrinal point clearly. The exodus is redemption accomplished by God’s power alone. Israel did not fight her way out; she was brought out. This guards the class against any notion that we deliver ourselves. It also points forward, for the God who overcame Egypt is the God who overcame sin and death in Christ, our greater redemption.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God’s sovereign power to break the most stubborn human resistance (Proverbs 21:1; Exodus 12:31–32).
- The plunder of Egypt as the keeping of God’s specific promise to Abraham (Genesis 15:14).
- Redemption accomplished by God’s power, not by human strength or merit.
- The historical reality of the exodus as the ground of Israel’s, and our, confidence in God.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the breaking of Pharaoh’s hardened heart shape your view of God’s power over impossible situations?
- Where in your life have you seen God keep a promise long after you assumed He had forgotten?
- Why does it matter that God brought Israel out, rather than Israel fighting her own way free?

Question 2

Student Question:

Israel walked out of Egypt carrying dough that had no time to rise, leaving in haste at God’s word. When God finally opens a door in your life, are you ready to walk through it promptly, or do you tend to hesitate and negotiate? What makes obedience hard for you when the moment finally comes?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This first self-examining question takes the haste of Israel's departure and turns it on the student. When God said go, Israel went, carrying unrisen dough because there was no time to wait (12:34, 39). Their obedience was immediate, even costly and inconvenient.

Help the class see that God's open doors often require prompt obedience. We are tempted to hesitate, to negotiate, to wait for more certainty or more comfort before we move. Israel had every earthly reason to be cautious, yet they trusted the word of God enough to walk into the dark.

Land this honestly and personally. Invite students to name where they tend to stall when God has clearly called: a conversation they should have, a sin they should forsake, a step of service or obedience they keep postponing. The question is not whether God will open doors, but whether we will be ready to walk through them.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Prompt obedience as the proper response to God's clear call (Psalm 119:60).
- The temptation to hesitate, negotiate, or wait for more comfort before obeying.
- Trusting God's word enough to act before all the questions are answered.
- The cost and inconvenience that often accompany faithful obedience.

Discussion Prompts

- When God makes a next step clear, what tends to make you hesitate?
- Where might God be opening a door right now that you have been slow to walk through?
- What helps you obey promptly rather than waiting until it is comfortable?

Question 3

Student Question:

Read 12:37–42. Moses records that Israel left exactly four hundred and thirty years to the day, calling it a night of watching kept to the LORD. What does this precise timing teach about God's faithfulness to His own word, even across centuries that must have felt to Israel like silence?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The dating in 12:40–41 is deliberate and theological. Israel dwelt in Egypt four hundred and thirty years, and at the end of that period, on that very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out. Moses wants us to see God's exactness. This was not a lucky escape but a kept appointment.

Stress what this meant for Israel's faith. For most of those centuries, God seemed silent, and the promise of deliverance must have felt like a fading rumor. Yet God was keeping precise time.

Teach the class that God's apparent delays are not God's forgetfulness. He is faithful to His own word down to the day.

Note that the text calls this a night of watching kept to the LORD (12:42). The night God watched over Israel becomes a night Israel watches in His honor forever. Redemption creates remembrance. Help the class see that God's faithfulness in history is meant to anchor His people's worship across generations.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's exact faithfulness to His own word, even across long centuries (Galatians 4:4; Habakkuk 2:3).
- Apparent divine delay as God keeping time, not God forgetting.
- Redemption creating ongoing worship and remembrance among God's people.
- The historical precision of Scripture as a ground for trust.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the precise timing of the exodus speak to seasons when God seems silent?
- Why is it important to distinguish God's patience and timing from forgetfulness?
- How can remembering God's past faithfulness fuel present worship?

Question 4

Student Question:

The exodus became the defining memory of Israel, the story they told their children for generations. What are the defining stories of God's faithfulness in your own life that you most need to keep telling, and who in your family or church needs to hear them from you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question draws on the exodus as Israel's defining memory. For the rest of the Old Testament, when God wants Israel to trust or obey, He reminds them that He is the One who brought them up out of Egypt. The story was told and retold around tables for a thousand years.

Help the class identify the defining stories of God's faithfulness in their own lives, the moments when God provided, forgave, rescued, or held them through grief. These are not trivial; they are the personal exodus stories that sustain faith.

Press the generational responsibility gently. God repeatedly ties remembering to teaching the children. Ask who in each student's family, class, or circle of friends needs to hear these stories, and challenge them that an untold testimony is a fading one. We keep faith alive by passing it on.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The exodus as Israel's defining memory of God's faithfulness (Deuteronomy 6:20–23).
- The personal testimonies of God's faithfulness that sustain our own faith.
- The duty to pass on the stories of God's work to the next generation.
- The danger of an untold or forgotten testimony quietly fading.

Discussion Prompts

- What is one story of God's faithfulness in your life that you most need to keep telling?
- Who in your family or church needs to hear that story from you?
- Why does faith weaken when we stop telling what God has done?

Question 5

Student Question:

Read 12:43–51. God gave careful rules about who could share the Passover, requiring that even the foreigner be circumcised to belong. What does this teach about the holiness of God's redeemed community and about the truth that belonging to God's people has always come on God's terms, not ours?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The Passover regulations in 12:43–49 guard the holiness of the redeemed community. No foreigner, no uncircumcised man, could eat the Passover unless he was brought into the covenant. The point is not ethnic exclusion; a sojourner who was circumcised could fully share it. The point is that belonging to God's people comes on God's terms.

Teach that God's redeemed community has always been holy, set apart, and entered on God's conditions, not ours. Israel could not redefine who belonged or how. This protects the class from the modern assumption that we set the terms of our relationship with God. God has always determined how people come to Him.

Carry this forward carefully. Under the New Covenant, entrance into Christ comes on God's terms as well, through hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4). The principle endures even as the covenant changes: we come to God His way, not ours, and His redeemed people are called to be holy.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The holiness of God's redeemed community as set apart for Him (Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9).
- Belonging to God's people coming on God's terms rather than ours.
- Inclusion of the sojourner who entered the covenant, showing the door was never closed by ethnicity alone.
- The enduring principle that we come to God His appointed way (Acts 2:38).

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that belonging to God's people comes on His terms and not ours?
- How does the inclusion of the circumcised sojourner guard against reading this as mere ethnic exclusion?
- Why is the holiness of God's people not optional, then or now?

Question 6

Student Question:

God commanded Israel to clear all leaven from their homes for seven days. Leaven works quietly, spreading through the whole lump. Where is sin working quietly in your life right now, small and hidden but spreading, and what would it cost you to deal with it honestly?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes the image of leaven and turns it inward. Leaven works quietly, a little spreading through the whole lump (1 Corinthians 5:6). God commanded Israel to remove every trace of it for seven days, searching the house thoroughly. It is a vivid picture of dealing with sin.

Help the class see how sin behaves like leaven. It rarely announces itself. A small resentment, a tolerated dishonesty, a private indulgence, an unguarded habit, these spread slowly until they have worked through the whole life. The danger is not usually the dramatic sin we fear but the quiet one we have grown used to.

Press for honest, specific application. Ask each student to name, at least in his own heart, the leaven he has tolerated. Then point ahead to the cost and the freedom of dealing with it. Clearing leaven is uncomfortable, deliberate work, but it is the path to a life marked by sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:8).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Sin as leaven, small and hidden but spreading through the whole life (1 Corinthians 5:6).
- The danger of tolerated, familiar sin over the dramatic sin we fear.
- The deliberate, searching work of self-examination and repentance.
- The freedom and integrity of a life cleansed of old leaven (1 Corinthians 5:8).

Discussion Prompts

- What hidden, slowly spreading sin is at work in your life right now?
- Why is tolerated, familiar sin often more dangerous than the sin we openly fear?
- What would it cost you, practically, to clear that leaven out this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Read 13:1–10. God claimed every firstborn as His own and tied the Feast of Unleavened Bread to teaching the next generation. Why does God so consistently link His acts of redemption to a command to remember and to teach, and what does that tell us about the danger of an unremembered faith?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

In 13:1–10 God claims every firstborn and binds the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the teaching of children. Notice the rhythm: God redeems, then God commands remembering, then God commands teaching. The feast exists not for its own sake but to keep the story alive in the next generation (13:8).

Teach why God so consistently links redemption to remembrance. We are forgetful by nature. A redemption that is celebrated and retold stays believed; one that is neglected fades into a vague tradition and then into nothing. God designs ordinances of memory because He knows the human heart drifts.

Apply the danger of an unremembered faith. The generation that forgets what God has done soon forgets the God who did it, and then forgets His commands. This is the very pattern Israel later fell into. Help the class value the deliberate practices, gatherings, and retellings that keep the gospel fresh, so faith does not quietly erode into custom.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's consistent pattern of linking redemption to remembrance and teaching (Psalm 78:5–7).
- Ordinances of memory given because the human heart is prone to forget.
- The danger of an unremembered faith eroding into empty custom.
- The responsibility to keep the story of redemption fresh for the next generation.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does God so often tie His acts of redemption to commands to remember and teach?
- What happens to a faith that is no longer actively remembered and retold?
- What practices in the church keep the gospel from fading into mere custom?

Question 8**Student Question:**

God said this feast should be like a sign on your hand and a memorial between your eyes, so that God's instruction would shape everything Israel touched and saw. What practical rhythms keep God's word in front of you day by day, and where have those rhythms grown thin?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question draws on the striking image in 13:9 and 13:16, that the feast and the redemption of the firstborn would be like a sign on the hand and a memorial between the eyes. God's word was to govern what Israel did with its hands and what it set before its eyes, shaping all of life.

Help the class translate this into present practice. What rhythms actually keep God's word in front of them through an ordinary week? Personal Bible reading, prayer, gathering with the church, the Lord's Supper, conversations about Scripture, time in the Word with family. The image is of a faith woven into daily life, not reserved for an hour on Sunday.

Invite honest self-examination about where those rhythms have thinned out. Most of us drift not by a dramatic decision but by quietly neglecting the practices that keep God's word before us. Encourage students to name one rhythm they will renew so that God's word again governs their hands and their eyes.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's word meant to shape all of life, not a compartment of it (Deuteronomy 6:6–9).
- Daily rhythms that keep Scripture before our hands and eyes.
- The quiet drift that comes from neglecting ordinary spiritual practices.
- Renewing a thinning rhythm of time in God's word.

Discussion Prompts

- What rhythms currently keep God's word in front of you day by day?
- Where have those rhythms grown thin, and what would renew them?
- What would it look like for God's word to govern your hands and your eyes this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

Read 13:11–16 with 1 Corinthians 5:7–8 and Colossians 2:16–17. The consecration of the firstborn and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were part of the Old Covenant given through Moses, shadows that pointed forward to Christ, our Passover lamb. How does the New Testament free us from keeping these feasts as law while still calling us to live as a redeemed people, cleansed of the old leaven and devoted wholly to God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal heart of the lesson, and it must be handled with care. The consecration of the firstborn (13:11–16) and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were genuine commands of God under the covenant given through Moses. They were not arbitrary; the firstborn belonged to

God because God had spared Israel's firstborn on the night He struck Egypt's. Every redeemed firstborn was a living sermon: we are alive because God redeemed us at the cost of a substitute.

Teach the relationship of shadow and substance. Paul calls Christ our Passover lamb, sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7), and tells us to keep the feast not with literal unleavened bread but with sincerity and truth (5:8). Colossians 2:16–17 explicitly names the festivals a shadow of things to come, the substance belonging to Christ. So these ordinances pointed forward, and in Christ they have reached their fulfillment. Be clear and kind here: we do not keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread or redeem our firstborn sons as law. That covenant was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14).

Now draw out what does carry forward. The timeless truths abide: we are a redeemed people, bought at the cost of a substitute, and therefore we belong wholly to God. The leaven imagery still preaches, calling us to purge the old leaven of sin and live in sincerity and truth. The remembrance still matters, for we keep the Lord's Supper as the appointed memorial of our redemption. Help the class hold both edges firmly: freedom from the Old Covenant feasts as law, and full devotion as a redeemed people cleansed of the old leaven.

Guard against two errors. One is legalism, dragging the Mosaic feasts back onto Christians as binding law, which Colossians and Galatians forbid. The other is dismissiveness, treating these chapters as irrelevant relics. Neither is right. The Old Testament was written for our instruction (Romans 15:4). These shadows teach us to see Christ more clearly and to live as the redeemed people they always anticipated.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The consecration of the firstborn and the feasts as real commands under the Old Covenant given through Moses.
- Christ as our Passover lamb, the substance of the shadow (1 Corinthians 5:7; Colossians 2:16–17).
- Freedom from keeping the Mosaic feasts as binding law, the Old Covenant nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14).
- The enduring call to purge the old leaven and keep the feast of life with sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:8).
- The Lord's Supper as the appointed New Covenant memorial of our redemption (1 Corinthians 11:23–26).
- Avoiding both legalism and dismissiveness toward the Old Covenant shadows (Romans 15:4).

Discussion Prompts

- In what sense is Christ our Passover, and how does that fulfill the feasts these chapters describe?

- Why are Christians not bound to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread or redeem the firstborn as law?
- How does the leaven imagery still call us to sincerity and truth even though the feast is fulfilled?

Question 10

Student Question:

Read 13:17–22. God led Israel by a longer road and went before them in cloud and fire, never leaving them. Look back across this whole passage, from the midnight release to the guiding pillar. Name one specific way God is teaching you to trust His leading and His presence right now, and how Jesus, who is Himself our Passover and our guide, makes that trust certain.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone question gathers the whole passage around God's leading presence. In 13:17–22, God deliberately leads Israel by a longer road to spare them war they were not ready for, and He goes before them in a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, which never departed. God does not merely send His people out; He goes with them.

Help students name a specific, concrete area where they need to trust God's leading and presence right now, rather than settling for a vague comfort. The God who chose the longer, wiser road for Israel often leads us by paths we would not have chosen, and He is present in every one of them.

Point them firmly to Christ. Jesus is Himself our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7) and our guide, who promised never to leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5) and who leads His people by His Spirit and His word. Close by inviting each student to rest the next dark stretch of road in the hands of the God who still goes before His people by cloud and fire, all the way home.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's wise leading by the path we would not have chosen (Exodus 13:17–18; Isaiah 55:8–9).
- The pillar of cloud and fire as God's abiding presence with His people.
- Jesus as our Passover and our guide who never leaves us (Hebrews 13:5).
- Moving from information to a specific, named act of trust in God's leading.

Discussion Prompts

- Why might God lead us by a longer, harder road, as He did Israel?
- What does the pillar of cloud and fire teach about God's presence in our uncertain seasons?
- What is one specific area where you will trust God's leading and presence this week?