A dandelion seed head is positioned in the upper right quadrant, with its seeds blowing away into a sky filled with soft, white clouds. Below the horizon line, the ground is a vast, flat expanse of cracked, dry earth in shades of tan and brown. A single, small, dark tree stands in the distance on the right side of the horizon.

A Bible Study By  
Melissa Spoelstra

# Numbers

Learning Contentment  
in a Culture of More



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Abingdon Press / Nashville

## **Numbers**

### **Learning Contentment in a Culture of More**

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# CONTENTS

About the Author .....	4
Introduction .....	5
<b>Week 1:</b> Content in Deliverance Exodus 1-15 .....	10
<b>Week 2:</b> Content in Preparation Numbers 1-10 .....	40
<b>Week 3:</b> Content in Uncertainty Numbers 11-14 .....	74
<b>Week 4:</b> Content in Obedience Numbers 15-20 .....	106
<b>Week 5:</b> Content in Opposition Numbers 21-26 .....	136
<b>Week 6:</b> Content in Blessings Numbers 27-36 .....	164
Video Viewer Guide Answers .....	198
Digging Deeper Week 1 Preview .....	199
Notes .....	203



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MELISSA SPOELSTRA is a popular women's conference speaker (including the Aspire Women's Events), Bible teacher, and author who is madly in love with Jesus and passionate about studying God's Word and helping women of all ages seek Christ and know Him more intimately through serious Bible study. Having a degree in Bible theology, she enjoys teaching God's Word to the body of Christ, traveling to diverse groups and churches across the nation and also to Nairobi, Kenya, for a women's prayer conference. Melissa is the author of the Bible studies *First Corinthians: Living*

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(check here also for event dates and booking information)

# INTRODUCTION

More. Something in us aches for it. We sense that there must be more than what we are experiencing. More hope. More joy. More freedom. Our culture understands this longing and offers us many suggestions. All around us people are dancing to the steps of bigger, better, faster, and more. We can easily join in the dance without even realizing it. If we just had a bigger house, a better friend, a faster phone, or more stuff, then we could be content. However, once we attain any of these things, we quickly find other areas where we lack. We find ourselves comparing and complaining without getting any closer to filling the ache inside.

God offers us another way. We must leave the world's dance moves behind and walk with Him instead. It will take intentionality as we follow His way in order to learn the art of contentment, but the benefits are definitely worth it!

Numbers may sound like an intimidating book of the Bible, but as we open its pages, we'll soon discover how relatable and relevant it is to our lives today. God led the people of Israel out of slavery and provided for their needs in the wilderness with food, water, and guidance. Yet still they grumbled. They felt the same God-shaped ache for more that we experience, but they went their own way instead of following God's instructions. Though they came so close to the land God had promised them, they were unable to enter it for forty years because of their discontent and disobedience.

In the past I found myself feeling smug and condescending toward the wayward Israelites. They wandered; they complained; they worshiped idols; they didn't respect their leaders; they doubted God. In general, they just kept going their own way. But I've discovered I don't have to look further than my own heart to find the very same tendencies.

Like the Israelites, we can start off well, but somewhere in the midst of our journeys we get tired. Just as they did, we look at our circumstances through human eyes instead of keeping our eyes on the Provider. Often we overlook God's long-term blessings when confronted with daily discomfort. We too are so close to the life of faith that God longs to give us, but we keep taking the reins, trusting only what we can see and pouting about the obstacles in the way.

The New Testament tells us that these events in Numbers were written to warn us (1 Corinthians 10:6) so that we will not make the same mistakes and suffer the same consequences. God sent His only Son to die to set us free from the sin that leads to

discontentment. When we continue in it, we miss our own promised land of peace and contentment in the life He has given us. But there is good news: We can learn to be content! The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:11, “for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have.”

In this six-week study, which begins with the opening of the Israelites’ story in Exodus and quickly moves to the Book of Numbers, we will tackle some very practical topics, learning how to

- recognize our own complaining
- be content while still being authentic about the difficulties of life
- accept short-term hardship in light of the greater good of God’s ultimate deliverance
- understand the relationship between complaining and worry
- change our perspective from a posture of fear to a posture of faith
- respond to opposition, scary circumstances, and even blessings in ways that cultivate contentment
- realign with God’s character and promises

As we learn from the people of Israel, who got stuck wandering when they tried to do things their own way, we’ll see that looking for contentment in food, stuff, and our own logic will only keep us going in circles. Just as they experienced, we’ll discover that we arrive at God’s promised land of peace and contentment only when we trust and obey. I pray that together we will learn lasting contentment as we discover more of our incredible God, who truly is more than enough. Only He can fill that ache inside us and help us focus on His provision and purpose in the midst of the joys and pains of life.

### **Options for Study**

Before beginning the study, I invite you to consider the level of commitment your time and life circumstances will allow. I have found that what I put into a Bible study directly correlates to what I get out of it. When I commit to do the homework daily, God’s truths sink deeper as I take time to reflect and meditate on what God is teaching me. When I am intentional about gathering with other women to watch videos and have discussion, I find that this helps keep me from falling off the Bible study wagon midway. Also, making a point to memorize verses and dig deeper by looking at additional materials greatly benefits my soul.

At other times, however, I have bitten off more than I can chew. When our faith is new, our children are small, or there are great demands on our time because of difficult circumstances or challenges, we need to be realistic about what we will be able to finish. So this study is designed with options that enable you to tailor it for your particular circumstances and needs.

**1. Basic Study.** The basic study includes five daily readings or lessons. Each lesson combines study of Scripture with personal reflection and application (**blue-green boldface** type indicates write-in-the-book questions and activities), ending with a suggestion for talking with God about what you've learned. On average you will need about twenty to thirty minutes to complete each lesson.

At the end of each week, you will find a Weekly Wrap-Up to guide you in a quick review of what you've learned. You don't want to skip this part, which you'll find to be one of the most practical tools of the study. This brief exercise will help your take-aways from the lessons to "stick," making a real and practical difference in your daily life.

When you gather with your group to review each week's material, you will watch a video, discuss what you are learning, and pray together. I encourage you to discuss the insights you are gaining and how God is working in your own life.

**2. Deeper Study.** If you want an even deeper study, there is an optional "Weekly Reading Plan" that will take you through the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy is a review of the wilderness story and will provide greater context and learning alongside the study of Numbers. You'll find the chapters for the week listed in the margin at the beginning of each week. Feel free to read them at your convenience and pace throughout the week.

Also, Digging Deeper articles are available online (see [www.AbingtonWomen.com/NumbersDiggingDeeper](http://www.AbingtonWomen.com/NumbersDiggingDeeper)) for those who would like deeper exploration of the text and themes; and memory verses are provided for each week of study so that you may meditate on and memorize key truths from God's Word. (Though the verses relate to the specific theme of the week, they are not necessarily from the Book of Numbers.)

**3. Lighter Commitment.** If you are in a season of life in which you need a lighter commitment, I encourage you to give yourself permission to do what you can. God will bless your efforts and speak to you through this study at every level of participation.

**Bonus: Contentment Project Challenge.** Whichever study option you choose (basic, deeper, or lighter), you also may want to participate in this bonus challenge—whether you are making an individual commitment or your group is making the commitment together. There are two parts to the commitment. First, you will wear a bracelet or wristband every day; and every time you complain (whether in your thoughts or words), you will move it to your other wrist. Whenever you do this, identify

one thing in your life you are content with. If you like, you can order an adjustable “content” bracelet online at [www.mudlove.com/contentment](http://www.mudlove.com/contentment). Fifty percent of the cost of the bracelet will go directly to Visiontrust—a Christian organization that serves at-risk children in developing nations ([www.visiontrust.org](http://www.visiontrust.org)).

The second part of the challenge is to spend five minutes alone each day (outside if possible) listening to one worship/praise song or hymn and focusing on God’s character. During this time there is no answering texts, checking e-mail, or thinking about other things; just focus on God’s attributes in worship and be still.

A pilot group of over two hundred women from across the United States who participated in this challenge as I was writing the study found that the bracelet exercise and the time spent focusing on God’s character significantly enhanced their contentment journey. I’ll be sharing some of their feedback throughout the study.

Take time now to pray and decide which study option is right for you, and check it below. Consider also whether you plan to do the bonus Contentment Project Challenge.

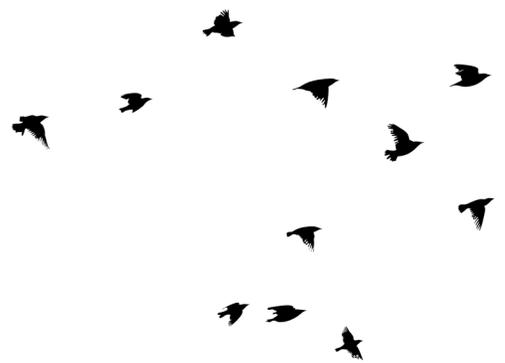
- 1. Basic Study**
- 2. Deeper Study**
- 3. Lighter Commitment**
- Bonus: Contentment Project Challenge**

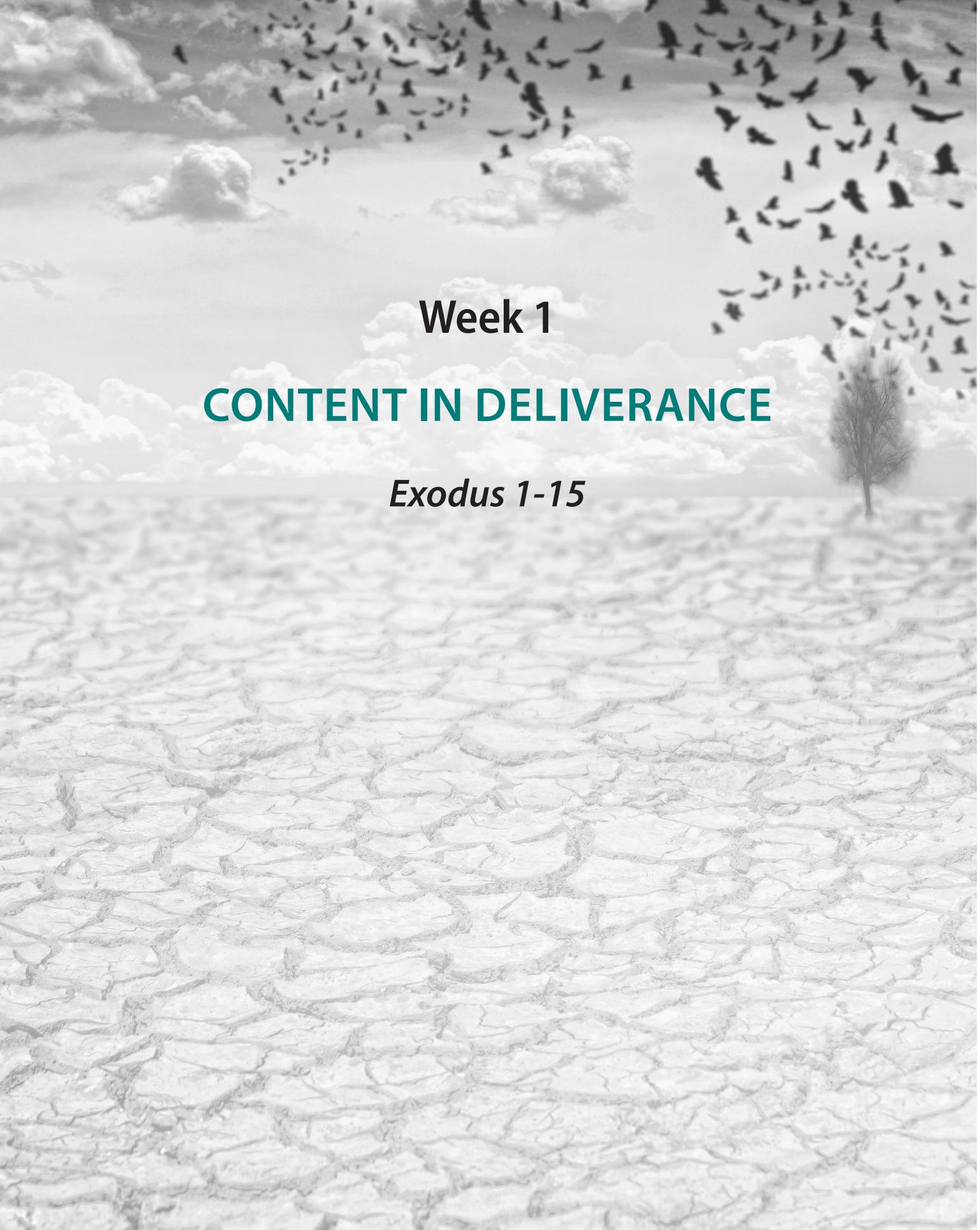
Be sure to let someone in your group know which option(s) you have chosen to do so that you have some accountability and encouragement.

## **A Final Word**

As we begin this journey together, remember that the goal is not temporary behavior modification but long-term heart change. We want to begin asking different questions. When it comes to learning contentment in all things—including completing the lessons in this workbook—no longer ask yourself “How did I do?” but “Who am I becoming?” We long to be more like our Lord Jesus Christ, who spent time with the Father, was obedient, endured hardship, and cried out in prayer about the difficulty of His mission. Yet He never complained. My prayer is that as we finish this study, we will come out on the other side transformed by God and able to be content—even in a culture obsessed with more.

*Melissa*





**Week 1**

**CONTENT IN DELIVERANCE**

*Exodus 1-15*

## Memory Verse

*The LORD is my strength and my song;  
he has given me victory.  
This is my God, and I will praise him—  
my father's God, and I will exalt him!*  
(Exodus 15:2)

---

# DAY 1: ACCUSTOMED TO SLAVERY

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Have you ever been so accustomed to something difficult in your life that it became the norm for you? I have friends who can't imagine life without migraines or back pain. Others have miserable marriages or children who are addicted to drugs. Life is hard for all of us. Certainly the Israelites were not immune to hardship.

Before we begin our study in the Book of Numbers, we need some background from the Book of Exodus to understand why the people of Israel ended up complaining in the wilderness. In the coming weeks we will relate with these men, women, and children who were struggling to learn contentment. So, who were they? Where did they come from? Why were they longing to go back to slavery?

The story of the Israelites began with a family that included Abraham and his son Isaac. Isaac had twin boys, and one of them was named Jacob. After Jacob wrestled with God one night, God changed his name to Israel (Genesis 32:28). The twelve tribes of Israel descended from this family had settled in the land of Canaan. When a famine ravaged the land, God had already divinely prepared a place for them in the land of Egypt through Jacob's son Joseph. The Book of Genesis ends with God's rescue of His people, who were then living in the land of Goshen in Egypt with the favor and support of Pharaoh.

However, it didn't take long before things began to change for the Israelites.

**Read Exodus 1:6-14 and answer the following questions:**

**What changes took place in Egypt after Joseph died?**

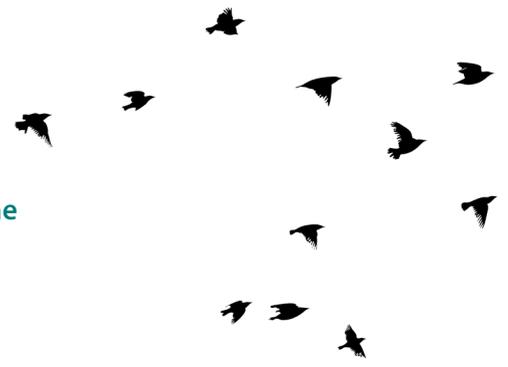
**What were the concerns of the new Egyptian king regarding the Israelites?**

## Weekly Reading Plan

Numbers 1-12

## Today's Scripture Focus

Exodus 1 and 3



## **What became the daily realities for the people of Israel?**

If we were to keep reading in Exodus, we would find that a later pharaoh not only enslaved the people but even ordered that all newborn boys be killed in attempt to quell the Israelite population (1:15-22). When we begin digging into the Book of Numbers, we will find a man named Moses leading the people in the wilderness after having brought them out of slavery in Egypt. But long before he became a leader, his mother hid him in a basket as a baby in order to save him from execution.

As a mother, grandmother, aunt, sister, or friend, can you imagine the hardship and stress that every pregnant Israelite woman must have experienced? If she delivered a girl, the baby would live. Otherwise, the child that had grown in her womb for nine months would be killed. These were dark times for God's people.

According to Exodus 12:40-41, the Israelites had lived in Egypt for over four hundred years (though there are disagreements about the exact time frame in other biblical passages). Nevertheless, a world of slavery was all they were accustomed to when Moses returned to lead them out of bondage. We need to remember this history as we see the Israelites complain about God's deliverance. Getting out from under slavery would shake the status quo. It would mean venturing out into the unknown.

Like them, sometimes we must learn to accept difficult circumstances. However, when God intervenes for our rescue, we then must learn to respond with faith rather than discontent.

**If you could cry out to God to deliver you from one thing or circumstance right now, what would it be?**

**If you were in charge of your own rescue, how would you want God to bring this deliverance?**

What can be difficult for us is that often we aren't sure of what God's plan is. Is God calling us to accept tough times and learn through them, or does He want us to follow Him in faith as He makes big changes in our

lives? This challenging question can foster discontentment. If God wants us to learn through our trials, we will be tempted to complain about the need to persevere. And if God says it is time for our deliverance, we may not like the changes and risks that will accompany it.

Contentment comes as we learn to listen for God's instructions and follow them because we believe He has our best interests in mind. Sometimes it's hard to reconcile that the best thing might be a wrecked car, autoimmune disorders, concussions, and fighting kids. These are the things that have hit home for me in the last few months. So, how can we know whether to sit tight and accept our circumstances or to get moving and pursue change? To help answer that, let's see how the people of Israel transitioned out of Egyptian oppression.

**Read Exodus 3:1-15, and choose one of the two options below:**

**Draw a picture of the scene here, using speech bubbles to sum up what Moses and God said to each other:**



**OR**

**Summarize the gist of this passage in 3-4 sentences:**

God communicated with Moses in a *burning bush*. Boy, do I sometimes wish God would be that dramatic in giving me instruction! But for most of us, the bush doesn't burn. Even though God's instructions were difficult and Moses didn't feel qualified or excited to lead God's people, he knew what

**Contentment comes as we learn to listen for God's instructions and follow them because we believe He has our best interests in mind.**

God was asking him to do. God said to him, “I have promised to rescue you from your oppression in Egypt. I will lead you to a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live ” (Exodus 3:17). It would be a long, difficult journey, but the instructions were pretty clear.

I desire that burning bush clarity, but I can easily forget what is available to help me discern God’s directions. God has not changed. He is still “I AM WHO I AM.” God said to Moses, “This is my eternal name, / my name to remember for all generations” (Exodus 3:15). That includes *our* generation! God heard the cries of His people in Egypt, and He hears our cries as well. God still speaks to us today.

When I was in high school, I worried that I would not find God’s will. What if I went to the wrong college or married the wrong person? My pastor at the time shared this statement that greatly helped me as I sought to listen for God’s voice:

“If you do God’s will, you can’t help but find His will.”

He explained that the Bible is full of instructions and examples of things we know are God’s will for us to do:

- pray
- listen
- study His Word
- seek the Holy Spirit’s help in applying God’s Word
- be a part of a church community
- serve the poor
- find wisdom in a multitude of counselors

The list could go on and on. The reality is that I often neglect the things I know God has called me to do, and then I worry I won’t find my way in the decisions of life. What about you? Here’s what we need to remember: If we will walk closely with God, we can be assured that the great I AM will lead us.

While God has never used a burning bush in my life, He has used His Word, the counsel of others, the peace of His Spirit (or the lack thereof), experiences, and opportunities to guide me. So, if you aren’t sure whether you are called to be content in your trials or content in following God to a place of deliverance, then simply start with what you do know.

**Look at the bulleted list of things that are God’s will above, and put a star beside anything you would like to pursue more wholeheartedly. Now spend a moment in reflection, asking God**

**to help you identify one action step you might take in that area in order to hear His voice more clearly.**

**My action step for today to do what I already know is God's will:**

One time I cried out to God, asking Him what He wanted me to do, and I felt a Holy Spirit nudge when I looked up and noticed the overflowing dishes in the sink. I wanted Him to say, "Start some new project" or "Volunteer to feed the homeless." Instead, He reminded me that before I could handle more, I should start with the things I already knew needed to be done. Each of us can start with one simple act of obedience and then build on it with another and another. This will dispel our apathy and discontent as we follow God's directions one step at a time.

Let's not grow too accustomed to "slavery" as the Israelites did. God will rescue us from all of our trials, whether in this life or the next. For now, we need to listen closely for His voice so we can know what next steps to take.

Won't you join me in clinging to the great I AM and listening for His direction? As we do God's will as laid out in Scripture, we will discover God's personal will for our lives.

### **Talk with God**

Spend a few moments focused on God's character. He is the great I AM.

**Brainstorm other names for God that come to mind:**

Now ask God to help you discern your next steps regarding the thing or circumstance you identified earlier, asking Him to give you contentment with His plan as He reveals it to you. If you want, write your prayer or the steps God reveals in the margin.

---

## DAY 2: WHEN LIFE GETS HARDER

---

My identical twin daughters both have forms of alopecia, which is an autoimmune disorder that causes hair loss. The older twin has no hair,

### **Today's Scripture Focus**

Exodus 4–6

eyebrows, or eyelashes. She lost her hair when she was twelve years old, and now at sixteen she has grown accustomed to wigs and makeup. The younger twin started to lose hair at thirteen but has managed to keep it these past three years. A few times she has developed bald patches, and she has seen a dermatologist to receive injections in hopes of regrowth.

Recently I went with my younger daughter for injections, and for whatever reason, my mind wandered to my older daughter, thinking, “What if she were to get her hair back, too?” Pictures of her as an elementary-age girl flashed through my mind as I tried to envision what she would look like now as a young woman with hair. I quickly stopped myself from traveling too far down this path. Tears brimmed in my eyes as I fought the battle for my mind. I believe God can do anything, but I don’t want to waste mental and emotional energy wishing and whining. I also know that hoping for something that isn’t likely to happen can be all-consuming.

*Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a dream fulfilled is a tree of life.*  
(Proverbs 13:12)

**Read Proverbs 13:12 in the margin. Write a few sentences about a time you found this verse to ring true in your life:**

We can all relate to hoping for things that haven’t happened yet. Maybe we thought we were going to get a promotion, adopt a child, or get some financial relief, but it just never materialized on the timetable we expected. Our hope was deferred, and our hearts were sick. This is where we find the Israelites today. Even though they had grown accustomed to slavery, they began to hope when God sent Moses with a message of deliverance.

Even though Moses heard from God as the “I AM” in the burning bush, he still struggled with self-doubt.

**Read Exodus 4:1-17 and answer the following questions:**

**What were Moses’ concerns about telling the Israelites about God’s deliverance?**

**How did the Lord equip and assist Moses in tangible ways?**

**After hearing how God would help him, how did Moses respond?**

## Extra Insight

“The kings of Egypt believed they were descended from the pagan god Ra, so Pharaoh thought it beneath his dignity to humble himself before the God of the Israelite slaves.”<sup>1</sup>

The Lord called Moses to give the message of deliverance, but he wanted someone else to do it. He was not content in his calling to assist others in need of deliverance.

**Describe a time when you felt that God wanted to use you to help others but you weren't excited about it:**

**What were some of the reasons you didn't want to get involved?**

Getting involved in helping others can be scary. What if they don't want help? What if people are critical of how we serve? What if the commitment lasts longer than we anticipated?

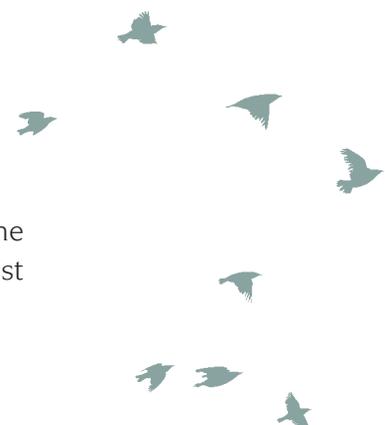
I can think of times when I wasn't sure I wanted to get involved in ministry. When I became a small group leader for middle school students at my church, I knew it would mean sacrificing one night every week. It also meant that parents of these teens might complain about what I taught or how I led. If I decided it wasn't working out, I knew I would feel bad about stepping down. Self-doubt can keep us from the important work God has appointed us to do.

I knew God was calling me to get involved. He reminded me that He would assist me, guide me, and use me. Recently I got together with four girls who were in my small group during their middle school years and now are entering their senior year of high school. What a blessing it was to see where they are headed in life and to realize that I've played a small role in pointing them toward Christ.

**How have you seen God bless you as you've gotten involved in the lives of others?**

Whether it's Sunday school students, friends, people in your Bible study or small group, neighbors, or family members, God chooses to use us as His hands and feet as we help others along the path to freedom.

Moses found that, initially, the Israelites welcomed his assistance.



**Read Exodus 4:29-31, and describe in a few words the reaction of the people to the message and miracles of Moses and his brother, Aaron:**

Can you imagine what it must have felt like to hear that, after hundreds of years of slavery, God saw their misery and was concerned for their welfare? This is one of the ways God calls us to help one another: to remind each other that God sees and cares.

When suffering is long, we can easily lose sight of hope and forget that our God is a deliverer. But He hasn't forgotten about us. We must learn contentment in seasons of waiting, recognizing that God's plan doesn't always make sense and certainly isn't always easy. In fact, many times life seems to get more difficult just before a time of deliverance.

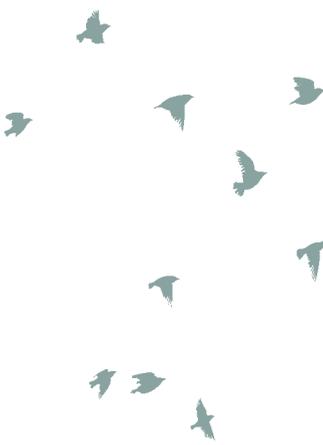
While the people of Israel initially welcomed Moses' message of deliverance from Egyptian bondage, they quickly changed their posture at the first sign of increased hardship. Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and asked him to let the people go to the wilderness to worship God for a special festival. Pharaoh responded that he didn't recognize the Israelite God and that Moses and Aaron were distracting the people from their work.

**According to Exodus 5:6-9, what did Pharaoh do in retaliation for this request?**

On the heels of their newfound hope that God saw and cared about them, the Israelites found that their burdens increased.

**Can you think of a time when you were encouraged by God's promises but then soon found life getting harder rather than easier? If something came to mind, jot it below:**

After going to a retreat or conference, I often float home on a spiritual high only to find fighting kids, a broken appliance, or something much more



serious testing my faith. Contentment in deliverance means staying the course in believing God despite major setbacks. Like the people of Israel, we are likely to lose faith when things don't happen the way we thought or on the timetable we expected.

**Read Exodus 5:19-23, and note the responses to the new brick quota by the following people:**

**The Israelite foreman's words to Moses:**

**Moses' words to the Lord:**

The people and Moses responded with complaints when deliverance didn't come right away, and life got harder. It would have been unrealistic for them to respond with joy over having to meet new and seemingly impossible demands. But we see that God welcomes our heartbreak and disappointment. We can go to Him about our feelings with authenticity.

**Listen to God's response to Moses' complaints as you read Exodus 6:1-9, and write below any information God reveals about Himself in these verses (names or character traits):**

God didn't shame Moses and the people for being upset. He encouraged them to believe Him as the powerful, all-sufficient God of their ancestors. In the midst of fiery trials, God reaffirms who He is and what He will do. Through His names, God reveals His character. God was calling the people to redirect their attention from their present sufferings to His character and love.

We will never be content by focusing on our trials. Complaining doesn't actually make anything better. Complaining is like a rocking chair: It gives us something to do, but it doesn't get us anywhere. Only by shifting our focus from daily struggles to God's goodness and sovereign plan will we learn contentment through our trials. Paul reminded the church in Corinth of this very concept.

## Extra Insight

"Straw was an essential ingredient in Egyptian brick making, as it was the bonding agent that held the clay together."<sup>2</sup>

**Complaining is like a rocking chair: It gives us something to do, but it doesn't get us anywhere.**

*For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.*

*(2 Corinthians 4:17-18)*

**Read 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 in the margin. According to these verses, where are we to fix our gaze?**

God wants us to remember that present troubles aren't forever. When we are in the midst of them, it feels as if we will never be free. No doubt that's how the Israelites must have felt. They struggled to believe God would come through for them, and God encouraged them by reminding them of His character and His promises. By calling Himself Yahweh, He was again saying, "I AM WHO I AM." I am greater than you can even imagine. Yahweh is also translated *Jehovah*, which means "self-existent One."<sup>3</sup> In other words, God isn't created, controlled, or limited. He is who He is. Not only that, but He is *El Shaddai*, the all-sufficient One.<sup>4</sup> We can trust that He will do what He says He will do, even when life circumstances are screaming the opposite. That is when we must shift our focus from all the bad that is happening to all that God is.

No one would get excited that they had to do more work in the same amount of time, deal with harsher treatment, or endure more slavery. Yet God called His people to focus on His promises rather than surrender to despair. The people had a choice to listen to God, but they refused because they were overcome with discouragement. We have all been there from time to time. Even so, God didn't give up on them. And He doesn't give up on us.

As my older twin struggled with her hair loss, I grieved along with her. At times she has become discouraged and frustrated over her condition. We've talked often about how even though we don't understand it, she can either give in to despair or focus on the good things she has in the midst of it. Those are really the only two options. Each of us faces these same choices every day.

**How can you practically focus your mind on God as *Yahweh* and *El Shaddai*, rather than give in to discouragement this week? Write one or two practical ideas that will help realign your thinking:**

In the Introduction I explain the Contentment Project Challenge, which is a bonus option you may choose as part of your study. In addition to wearing a bracelet that you move every time you complain, another part

of the challenge is to listen to a worship song every day for five minutes, outdoors if possible. The idea is to clear away all other thoughts, be still, and worship God. Whether or not you have chosen to do this challenge throughout the study, I want to encourage you to participate in the daily worship song aspect of the challenge for the remainder of this week. (You'll find song suggestions on my website, <http://melissaspoelstra.com/contentment-project/>, if you are looking for some new ideas.) If you can't get outside to do this, at least get alone somewhere and focus on God for five minutes each day.

Focusing on our eternal God rather than our temporary struggles gives us perspective and hope as we grow in contentment. God's ways can be puzzling at times. His rescue doesn't usually come in the time and way we expect. So we must train ourselves to rehearse His attributes, especially in seasons when life is harder. It's a habit you'll never regret!

### **Talk with God**

Take a few minutes right now to clear away all thoughts other than God. If possible, play a worship song or hymn, or sing one from memory. Remember that God is Yahweh—He is the Great I AM, the self-existent One, El Shaddai, the all-sufficient One. He sees your struggles and will deliver you at just the right time!

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## DAY 3: THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

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*Can nothing ever go right?* As I'm writing this, I confess I just asked that question to myself after receiving news of a large expense I hadn't anticipated. Things break, requests are denied, and at times life can feel like one struggle after another. I wonder if the people of Israel had similar thoughts when Pharaoh increased their burdens.

Some of my greatest blessings in life are my children, and the word *labor* doesn't do justice to the hours of anguish required to bring them into this world. Olympic athletes accomplish amazing athletic feats, but not before grueling hours of practice and training. Whether it's having a good marriage, developing strong character, or earning an academic degree, most accomplishments come through some sort of struggle. As we make connections between events from Scripture and our own daily lives, we find a resounding truth that many good things in life are birthed through sweat, blood, and tears.

**Focusing on  
our eternal God  
rather than  
our temporary  
struggles gives us  
perspective and  
hope as we grow  
in contentment.**

### **Today's Scripture Focus**

Exodus 7-10, 12

## Extra Insight

*Exodus* means “exit,” “departure,” and is of Greek origin. The Hebrew name of the book comes from the first words of the text, “And these are the names of:”<sup>5</sup>

**Identify one or two good things in your life that have come through difficulty:**

**The people of Israel faced a “no” repeatedly when Moses asked Pharaoh to release them. Read Exodus 7:1-5, and write below what God said the Egyptians ultimately would know:**

We find this phrase repeated throughout Scripture: “then they will know that I am the LORD.” We serve a God who wants to be known. He even wanted Pharaoh to know who He is. We see this in His words to Pharaoh, spoken through Moses, regarding the plagues.

There were ten plagues in all, and many commentators couple the first nine plagues into three sets of three. The following three statements to Pharaoh were spoken at the beginning of each new set of plagues:

Before plague 1: “I will show you that I am the LORD.” (Exodus 7:17)

Before plague 4: “Then you will know that I am the LORD and that I am present even in the heart of your land.” (Exodus 8:22)

Before plague 7: “Then you will know that there is no one like me in all the earth.” (Exodus 9:14)

The first three plagues were irritations.

**Write the first three plagues below:**

**Exodus 7:20**      1. \_\_\_\_\_

**Exodus 8:2**      2. \_\_\_\_\_

**Exodus 8:16**      3. \_\_\_\_\_

These plagues affected the entire land of Egypt. Pharaoh at first pleaded for relief, but as soon as each plague passed, he continued to refuse to allow the people to go and worship in the wilderness.

Discomfort can be a stimulant that helps us soften toward God. However, once the irritation has passed, we too often return to our own ways.

**Can you identify one irritation in your life right now that God might want to use to get your attention? If so, write it below:**

God longs to show us His loving character and will go the distance to get us to a place of freedom, no matter the cost.

**The next three plagues were plagues of destruction. List them below:**

**Exodus 8:24**      4. \_\_\_\_\_

**Exodus 9:6**      5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Exodus 9:9**      6. \_\_\_\_\_

Plagues seven, eight, and nine carried with them a theme of death, but the people of Israel were protected. The land of Goshen where the Israelites lived did not have to endure them.

**Write these three plagues below:**

**Exodus 9:23-25**    7. \_\_\_\_\_

**Exodus 10:13-15** 8. \_\_\_\_\_

**Exodus 10:22-23** 9. \_\_\_\_\_

Many of these supernatural events hit right at the heart of Egyptian religion. Some commentators have argued that all ten plagues corresponded to individual Egyptian gods, while others question that position. In any case, there are some connections we can make between the plagues and the false gods of Egypt:

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| Hapi    | The god of the Nile would have been mocked by the first plague turning the water to blood.   |
| Hekat   | This goddess of childbirth had the head of a frog, and the second plague filled the land with them.                                |
| Osiris  | The god of the dead, which was intimately connected with grain, would be seen as powerless when hail wiped out the crops of Egypt. |
| Amon-Re | The plague of darkness could be connected with Egypt's paramount sun god. <sup>6</sup>   |

**God longs to show us His loving character and will go the distance to get us to a place of freedom, no matter the cost.**

One commentator offers this observation, “The entire phenomenon of the plagues certainly made a mockery of Egypt’s religious system, for the pagan gods were powerless to protect their worshipers.”<sup>7</sup> As we follow the people of Israel throughout the Book of Numbers, it will be important to remember how they have seen the Lord, Yahweh, at work in powerful ways. Not only did He strike down their oppressors, but He also shielded their own families from the worst of the plagues.

Our God is not weak. He is the one and only true God. When people make up false gods—whether out of frogs or rivers or something else from the Creator’s work, such as the human spirit itself—hope in them will be disappointed. They are fakes. Only Yahweh could save the Israelite people, and only He can save us. Our slavery may look much different than theirs, but all of us have sins and struggles and circumstances that keep us in bondage. As with the Israelites, only His powerful arm can free us (Exodus 6:6). God asks that we seek Him and learn to be content with His methods and timing for our rescue.

God calls us away from counterfeits to believe what He says, even when life’s circumstances scream the opposite. This isn’t easy, but it is our only hope.

*“Therefore, say to the people of Israel: ‘I am the LORD. I will free you from your oppression and will rescue you from your slavery in Egypt. I will redeem you with a powerful arm and great acts of judgment.’”*  
(Exodus 6:6)

**Read Exodus 6:6 in the margin, and take a moment to pause and remember that the God you serve has the power in His right arm to help you. Write a few words to describe God below:**

God is committed to deliverance, and He asks us to trust Him in the process. It can be hard to understand what God is doing, but let’s remember that He wants to be known. As we devote the rest of our time today to the last plague against Egypt, we will be reminded that the freedom that God offered then and offers now wasn’t free. It came at a high price.

**Read Exodus 12:21-30. What was the tenth plague that finally convinced Pharaoh to let the Israelites go?**

**What did God ask the Israelite people to do for protection against the death angel?**

## **Why were the people to continue to observe the Passover ceremony when they entered the Promised Land?**

The Passover became an observance that involved the people physically. They had to shed the blood of a lamb and apply the blood to their doorframes—an activity that didn't necessarily make sense at first. And we will see that the people annually recreated this important moment in their history so that they would not forget what God had done for them.

We too can struggle to remember how God has delivered us in the past when we are faced with new challenges.

## **What are some religious observances or practices that have been helpful to you in calling to mind what God has done for you?**

## **In what way does this habit help you realign with God's ultimate truth in the midst of changing circumstances?**

## **With the fullness of time and revelation, we know that Passover was a foreshadowing of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Before we peek at a few New Testament passages, what connections can you make between the Passover and Jesus' death? Write anything that comes to mind below:**

The New Testament sheds more insight into the relationship between Christ and Passover. In his letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul urged the church to turn away from sin because, "Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7b). The prophet John the Baptist recognized Jesus as "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29), and the Apostle Peter links the lamb without defect (Exodus 12:5) with Christ, whom he calls a

**God is committed to deliverance, and He asks us to trust Him in the process.**

## **Extra Insight**

Jesus entered Jerusalem five days before Passover, the time when traditionally the lamb was chosen. And, according to the first-century historian Josephus, the Passover lamb was slaughtered around 3:00 p.m. This was the exact time of day when Christ died on the cross.<sup>8</sup>

**If we find nothing else to be content about in life right now, we certainly can come together in our appreciation that Christ has cleansed us from sin to worship the living God.**

“lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Peter 1:19 NIV). And in Revelation, John the apostle sees Jesus as “a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain” (Revelation 5:6 NIV).

**Now read Hebrews 9:13-15, and record below what Christ has done for us:**

If we find nothing else to be content about in life right now, we certainly can come together in our appreciation that Christ has cleansed us from sin to worship the living God. He sets us free from the penalty of sin. He is saving us from the power of sin in our lives. One day, He will set us free from the very presence of sin. His blood causes judgment to “pass over” us who call on His name for deliverance. If we continue to read in Hebrews 9, we find these verses at the end of the chapter:

*Just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.*

(vv. 27-28)

Soak that in for a minute. Christ truly is our Passover Lamb, the perfect Son of God who gave Himself up for us. Through His blood, He gave us the greatest blessing we could ever imagine. He delivered us from the slavery of sin.

Just as God displayed His great power in Egypt through the plagues to deliver His people, He wants to rescue you through His mighty power. He is Yahweh, Jehovah, the self-existent One. And He sent His only Son to be the final sacrifice to purchase your freedom. So if you, like me, are asking today, “Can nothing ever go right?” then cling to the fact that through Christ we have salvation from sin. That certainly is something that is going right for you today, even if everything else is going wrong!

### **Talk with God**

Spend a few minutes in prayer, telling God that you are eagerly waiting for Him. Thank Him that He is coming not to deal with our sins but to bring us salvation. While we anticipate His return, we also can rejoice in the contentment and peace He brings us in this life as we walk in close relationship with Him through the blood of Christ.

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## DAY 4: WHEN GOD SHOWS UP

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So far we have related with the people of Israel in their bondage, struggling to believe God would do what He said He would do. God's ways are mysterious and don't always make sense to us. One moment it seems that we will be stuck with the same burdens forever, and the next we are full of faith and see deliverance on the horizon.

L. R. Knost, independent child development researcher and best-selling author, writes, "Life is amazing. And then it's awful. And then it's amazing again. And in between the amazing and awful it's ordinary and mundane and routine. Breathe in the amazing, hold on through the awful, and relax and exhale during the ordinary. That's just living heartbreaking, soul-healing, amazing, awful, ordinary life. And it's breathtakingly beautiful."<sup>9</sup>

**How can you relate to these words about having an amazing, awful, ordinary life? Identify something going on in your life that fits each of these categories:**

**Amazing:**

**Awful:**

**Ordinary:**

Today we will find the people of Israel having some amazing experiences with God. After the Passover took place, the Egyptians couldn't get rid of them fast enough. They wanted no more of these plagues that had devastated their families.

**Read Exodus 12:33 in the margin. What did the Egyptians urge the people of Israel to do, and why?**

**Fill in some of the details about their departure by looking up the corresponding verse to complete the following statements:**

**They left without putting \_\_\_\_\_ in their bread, and they packed up their kneading boards. (Exodus 12:34)**

### Today's Scripture Focus

Exodus 12–14

### Extra Insight

When the people left Egypt, Moses took the bones of Joseph with them as he had requested over four hundred years earlier (Exodus 13:19).

*All the Egyptians urged the people of Israel to get out of the land as quickly as possible, for they thought, "We will all die!"*  
(Exodus 12:33)

The Israelites asked the people of Egypt to give them clothing and articles of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. (Exodus 12:35)

There were about \_\_\_\_\_ men plus women and children who left Egypt, putting their number well over a million people. (Exodus 12:37)

Some non-Israelites accompanied the Israelites, along with their \_\_\_\_\_. (Exodus 12:38)

The Israelites did not take the main \_\_\_\_\_; God led them in a roundabout way to the Red Sea. (Exodus 13:17-18)

The Lord guided His people with a pillar of \_\_\_\_\_ by day and a pillar of \_\_\_\_\_ by night. (Exodus 13:21)

The Egyptians changed their \_\_\_\_\_ and decided to chase after the Israelites. (Exodus 14:5-7)

The people of Israel \_\_\_\_\_ and complained that it was better to be a slave than a corpse. (Exodus 14:10-12)

Moses encouraged the people with some words that we all need to hear when we find ourselves discontent with God's methods of deliverance. Like them, we are so prone to see things from a human perspective. I know I don't like the roundabout way that God often seems to prefer. I want the direct route, the bottom line, and deliverance on my terms.

**Read Moses' words to the people below, circling any words that you need to hear in your life right now:**

***But Moses told the people, "Don't be afraid. Just stand still and watch the LORD rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again. The LORD himself will fight for you. Just stay calm."***

**(Exodus 14:13-14)**

Later God would call His people to fight battles with physical weapons, but on this day He asked them, through Moses, to just stay calm and watch Him fight on their behalf. At this point, the Israelites were no match for the chariots and skill of an Egyptian army. Fighting would be futile. Instead God called them to stand still.

## **Worry is just complaining in advance.**

When I have panicked over financial setbacks, relational conflicts, or my children's health, I have found myself fretting over things I can't control. Can you relate? What fears have been rolling around the corners of your mind lately? One woman I know explained her understanding of the link between worry and discontentment this way: "I didn't think complaining was my issue; my issue has always been worrying. I came to realize that worry is just complaining in advance."

When we face battles that we know we cannot win, worry is just complaining in advance. In order to learn contentment, God may be asking us to believe that He will fight for us. Staying calm isn't easy when we feel like an army is chasing us, but God tells us it is possible when He is on our side.

God's very next words to Moses were, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the people to get moving!" (Exodus 14:15). Here we see the interplay of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. We can stay calm because God will do the heavy lifting, but we must lean into Him to hear His instructions for us and then act on them in obedience.

**Is there an area where God is asking you to quit talking about change so you can get moving? (For example, think about battles with food choices, exercise, prayer life, debt, anger, or time management.)**

**What is a first step you can take toward freedom in that area?**

Moses raised his staff over the water, and God parted the Red Sea so that all of the people could pass through. Once the Israelites were safe, these same waters then drowned the Egyptian army in pursuit. God showed up in a huge way to deliver His people.

While we don't have Red Sea experiences every day—because life has a lot of ordinary and awful in the midst of the amazing—we do serve a very powerful God. He is able to part the waters to get us where He is calling us to go.

**We must remember the times when God shows up in a huge way so that during the awful and ordinary times we don't forget how amazing He is.**

**Can you recall a time when you saw God show up in a huge way in your life? If so, describe it below:**

I remember finally getting pregnant after a miscarriage and almost two years of infertility. I even got an extra blessing when I found out we were having twins ten days before they were born. Another time one of my daughters was very sick as a five-year-old and almost died. God was so fully present with me during that time, and His Word was truly alive and active during our fifteen-day hospital stay. More recently I've seen God part the waters in helping us walk through my teen daughters' alopecia, providing for my son's college, and giving this shy girl the confidence to speak in front of crowds.

We must remember the times when God shows up in a huge way so that during the awful and ordinary times we don't forget how amazing He is.

Worship is one way we can keep God's love and power on our minds no matter what kind of day or season we are experiencing. While I was writing this study, two hundred women across the country agreed to participate in a pilot Contentment Project Challenge. As part of that challenge, each woman spent five minutes each day focusing on God's character while being still and listening to a worship song or hymn, pushing aside all invading thoughts. After the challenge ended, I received such positive feedback from the women, saying that the experience had fostered contentment in them as they praised. Worship helps us curb our complaints knowing that our powerful God is on our side. He will rescue us from whatever we are facing if we will rely on Him.

The Israelites did just that after they saw God's display of power. The Scripture says, "They put their faith in the LORD and in his servant Moses" (Exodus 14:31). Then the whole community sang a song. Imagine over a million people—and who knows how many flocks of livestock with them—worshiping God at the edge of the wilderness! I can imagine it was a sight to behold.

**Read their song of deliverance in Exodus 15:1-18, and write below any words or phrases that resonate with you:**

The people sang about many things, but did you notice their mention of God's right hand in verse 6? Yesterday we saw in Exodus 6:6 that God promises to use His powerful arm to deliver His people, and now His delivered people are praising His powerful right hand (15:6). When I picture God, I don't envision Him with arms and hands. We are created in His image, and we have arms and hands; so I'm not sure why I've never thought of Him that way. Whether this is a metaphor or God truly has some killer biceps, the picture of God's powerful arm and hand is repeated throughout the pages of the Bible. Let's look at just a few examples.

**Circle each instance of the word *arm* or *hand*, and underline any word that denotes power:**

*"So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and powerful arm, with overwhelming terror, and with miraculous signs and wonders."*

**(Deuteronomy 26:8)**

***Powerful is your arm!***

***Strong is your hand!***

***Your right hand is lifted high in glorious strength.***

**(Psalm 89:13)**

***"I will steady him with my hand;***

***with my powerful arm I will make him strong."***

**(Psalm 89:21)**

***But LORD, be merciful to us,***

***for we have waited for you.***

***Be our strong arm each day***

***and our salvation in times of trouble.***

**(Isaiah 33:2)**

***"O Sovereign LORD! You made the heavens and earth by your strong hand and powerful arm. Nothing is too hard for you!"***

**(Jeremiah 32:17)**

By resting in God's strong arms, I know He will deliver us from whatever trials are threatening to overtake us. He is calling us to stay calm and lean

hard into His strong and loving arms. Nothing is too hard for Him. He may ask us to stop standing around and get moving when the enemy presses in, but He is coming to our rescue. As we fix our minds on Him in worship, we will rediscover the awe and wonder of Yahweh’s amazing power and presence!

### **Talk with God**

Spend five minutes in worship now (let this be your time to worship with song today, if you like). Think about nothing else but God’s powerful arm and hand of deliverance. If you are so inclined, write some words to your own personal song of deliverance in a notebook or journal.

## **Today’s Scripture Focus**

Exodus 15

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## DAY 5: NEW CHALLENGES

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On the heels of God working in big ways, we often face the depressing journey of typical days or new challenges. Even though we’ve just seen God do something amazing in our lives, we can quickly forget His past faithfulness when we face the next setback in life.

Yesterday I mentioned that one of my daughters almost died when she was five years old. I remember the day she came home after fifteen days in the hospital. She had survived septic shock and a life-threatening blood clot. Throughout the scary days in intensive care, I had felt God’s nearness and the support of the body of Christ. But when we came home, I began to be plagued by thoughts—and even dreams—such as, “What if I had taken her to the hospital sooner?” and “If only it hadn’t taken the emergency room staff nine hours to figure out how serious her condition was.” My logical mind knew these were useless mental pursuits, but I felt unsettled and at war within my own head. Can you relate to a time like that in your life?

The Lord had brought us through near-death challenges and walked with us as my daughter’s health improved with each passing day. Yet on the other side of the trial, I hadn’t expected to struggle so much, especially with thoughts that could accomplish nothing. I know fatigue and many days of stress contributed to my difficult journey, but the discontentment on the other side of God’s healing work was unexpected.

**If you’ve ever experienced unexpected struggles on the heels of God working in a big way in your life, describe it below:**



This situation wasn't the only time I've felt I was in the valley right after a mountaintop event with God. I've found similar patterns in ministry, finances, friendships, marriage, and parenting. Throughout Scripture we see many similar examples in the lives of biblical characters such as Joseph, Elijah, David, and even Mary the mother of Jesus.

Yesterday we read about the Israelites' miraculous escape from Egypt with God parting the Red Sea and drowning the Egyptian army. Yet three days later, we find God's people with short-term memory loss regarding the power of Yahweh to take care of them.

**Read Exodus 15:22-24. Why did the people complain?**

**Now before we judge them, list two or three things you have complained about this week:**

Women from the pilot Contentment Project Challenge explained that often their discontent came from superficial places such as these:

- traffic
- inconveniences (someone in my way or taking up my time)
- being hot or tired
- housework
- lack of time or money
- rushed schedules
- kids fussing

One of the gals said she found a lot of her complaining surrounded slight annoyances such as family clutter or even dog hair wafting around even though she had just vacuumed the day before.

Even though the Israelites had just seen God part the waters of the Red Sea, three days without a sip of water for over a million people made for an angry mob turning against Moses. For us reading the story, it can be easy to say, "What is your problem? Can't you see that nothing is too hard for your God and that He will take care of you? He parted a sea three days ago!" I want to judge them, but then I remember how God has always taken care of my family yet I am prone to freak out over unexpected trials.

We must constantly realign ourselves with the character of God, especially when it doesn't seem He is going to come through for us. Then we can learn contentment by trusting Him to meet our needs.

**We must constantly realign ourselves with the character of God, especially when it doesn't seem He is going to come through for us. Then we can learn contentment by trusting Him to meet our needs.**

**The people of Israel were asking the question “What are we going to drink?” when they found the water at Marah was bitter (Exodus 15:24). How would you phrase a similar question to God regarding a need in your life right now?**

“Lord, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_?”

Perhaps you struggled to write a question because your life is pretty smooth sailing right now. But you probably know someone close to you who has complained about circumstances in her or his life.

**Recall one thing someone close to you has been venting about lately, and write it below:**

**According to Exodus 15:25, how did Moses respond to the people’s complaint?**

Whether it’s our own questions or the complaints of others, we can learn from Moses to take our problems directly to the Lord. We can cry out to Him when we are thirsty, frustrated, or hit with unexpected expenses, health issues, or conflicts. When others come to us with their complaints, we can pray for their rescue. Moses couldn’t fix the problem of no water, so he poured out his heart to the One he knew could help.

During the pilot Contentment Project Challenge, women were asked, for one week, to move a bracelet from one arm to the next every time they complained. Then they were to identify one thing they were content with that God had provided. As I participated in the practice of identifying my complaints, I sometimes struggled to sort out the difference between authentic statements of facts (we have no water) and complaining (I don’t like this water). If you are participating in the challenge during this study, you may be having a similar struggle. But I can tell you that as time went on, the difference between facts (or needs) and complaints became more and more obvious to me.

God doesn't ask us to pretend we aren't in need. Instead, He welcomes us to cry out to Him. After all, He is all-powerful. He is Yahweh, the self-existent One. He is El Shaddai, the all-sufficient One. Through His names we remember why we should cry out to Him first. Rather than complain to our friends or family members, God asks us to present our needs to Him.

**Read Philippians 4:6 in the margin and list the instructions Paul gave the church regarding our worries:**

**Don't** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instead** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tell God** \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank Him for** \_\_\_\_\_

Once we've gone to God first, then we can share with others our concerns without a spirit of bitterness.

As we read the last two verses in Exodus 15, we find God revealing more about His power to the Israelites through another "I am" statement.

**Read Exodus 15:26-27, and complete this statement: "I am the God who \_\_\_\_\_ you."**

This is the name *Jehovah Rapha* in Hebrew. While Christians have different views about the specifics of physical healing, what we know for sure from God's name is that He has the power to heal. How and when He chooses to exercise that power can be a mystery to us at times.

God reveals Himself through Scripture so that we can learn to rely on Him. We know that He has the power to take care of all the new challenges that lie in front of us. So it can be discouraging after God delivers us in a mighty way to soon face a new situation and be in need of assistance again. We would like a little reprieve to revel in the parting of seas or the defeat of enemies. I'm sure the Israelites would have preferred that as well.

At Marah, God asked the people to do three things (Exodus 15:26):

1. Listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God.
2. Do what is right in His sight.
3. Obey his commands and keep all His decrees.

Then He promised again that He would take care of them. Not only would He provide for them, but He also would be their healer. In the next few chapters of Exodus, we see that God miraculously fed the people with manna and quail and provided water from a rock. In chapter 20, God gave

*Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.*

*(Philippians 4:6)*

**Once we've gone to God first, then we can share with others our concerns without a spirit of bitterness.**

## Extra Insight

*The Pentateuch* is a term that describes the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These books are also sometimes referred to as the books of Moses.

Moses the Ten Commandments to help guide them. God promised to be with them and gave them instructions for the Tabernacle, Sabbath, and offerings. Then in Leviticus, the next book of the Pentateuch, the laws and regulations were expounded upon in detail so the people would not be unaware of God's expectations but would be equipped to listen and obey.

Just as God asked the Israelites to stay the course in trusting Him, He calls us to follow Him through the amazing, awful, and ordinary times. When they were thirsty, God used a piece of wood to sweeten the bitter waters. Then He brought them to a place with twelve springs and seventy palm trees to camp (Exodus 15:27). Whatever bitter circumstances threaten your contentment today, remember that God welcomes your cries. He longs to deliver you. He is a God who wants to be known. By revealing Himself through His names, we see that God is an all-sufficient Healer.

**Take a moment to cry out to God now. Bring Him your thirst, your hunger for justice, your problems with your leaders, your health issues, or whatever may be causing you to complain. Write your prayer below:**

**God calls us to fix our eyes on Him and remember His deliverance in times past to help us learn to be content with His plan.**

As we embark on our study of Numbers in the coming weeks, our understanding of where the people of Israel were coming from will give us context for their journey in the wilderness. This week we saw them struggle to be content in their deliverance, complaining about these specifics of their rescue: labor, leaders, enemies, and thirst. Though they sang a song of deliverance, it only took a few days for them to express discontentment again. So, as they began their journey to the land of promise, God called them to prepare.

Seasons of waiting and preparation can be difficult times to practice contentment. Yet God calls us to fix our eyes on Him and remember His deliverance in times past to help us learn to be content with His plan.

### **Talk with God**

End the day asking the Lord to help you grow in contentment as you meditate on Galatians 5:1: "Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law."

## Weekly Wrap-Up

As we end this week, take a moment to review what we've studied. Flip back through the lessons and write something from each day that resonated with you that you can apply in your life. I've done the first one for you as an example, though your answer may vary.

### Day 1: Accustomed to Slavery

Example: God's methods of rescue don't always make sense to us.

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### Day 2: When Life Gets Harder

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### Day 3: The Price of Freedom

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### Day 4: When God Shows Up

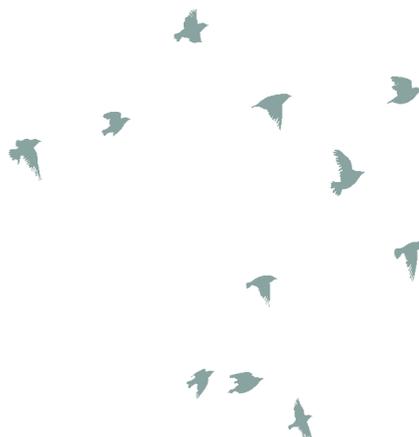
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### Day 5: New Challenges

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## Digging Deeper

Have you ever wondered about the many different names for God used throughout the Scriptures? What do we learn about God's character through names such as "I AM," El Shaddai, Jehovah, and many others? Check out the online Digging Deeper article for Week 1, "The Names of God" (see [AbingdonWomen.com/NumbersDiggingDeeper](http://AbingdonWomen.com/NumbersDiggingDeeper)) for more insight into various names used for God in the Old Testament.



# VIDEO VIEWER GUIDE: WEEK 1

Contentment Clue Word: **Focused**

*We learn contentment by staying focused on God and being intentional in worshiping Him.*

*Philippians 4:11-13 – The secret of contentment*

Focusing on God's \_\_\_\_\_ rather than our ever-changing \_\_\_\_\_ is what helps us to discover contentment.

*Exodus 3:12-15 and John 8:58 – Remember who God is: the great I AM*

In God's plan of deliverance, sometimes things get \_\_\_\_\_ before they get easier.

*Exodus 5:22-23 – Things got harder for the people of Israel*

God calls us to participate in the rescue operation by \_\_\_\_\_.

*Exodus 14:13-15 – God told them to get moving*

Contentment is \_\_\_\_\_ so that we listen to inspiration rather than spin our wheels in perspiration.

If we \_\_\_\_\_ God's will, we will \_\_\_\_\_ it.

*Jude 5 – It was Jesus, the great I AM, who delivered the people of Israel*

