**Living Life Together**

**Living Together as the People of God**

**Ephesians 3:17-18** - *so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,*

*together with all the saints…*

3 principles to help us understand the way our God frequently works:

**I. God Wants to Build and Multiply a Group of People Who Will be His Visible Representation on His Earth**

A. Two key verses in the book of Exodus

**Exodus 1:7** - *But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them.*

**Exodus 19:5-6** - *Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.*

B. Setting Exodus in its overall Old Testament context

* God’s plan has always been to create a people for Himself to be His visible representative on His earth. They are to fill (multiply in) the earth and represent Him to the entire created order and also to rule over the works of His hands, i.e. His creation (Genesis 1:26-27).

**Genesis 1:28** - *God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

* God started with Adam and Eve. They and their descendents became corrupt and God wiped out the entire population (except righteous Noah and his family) through the flood (Gen 6-9).
* God again wanted Noah and his family after the flood to “be blessed and be multiplying” (Gen 9:7) fulfilling His original plan.
* Noah’s descendents gathered and rebelled to make a name for themselves instead of God (Gen 11). God judged them again (not with a flood because He promised never to do that again). He split them into various people groups (nations, Gen 10) according to their confused languages to curtail the spread of sin.
* Yet, God’s purpose would not be thwarted, He revealed Himself to a pagan, idolater, nomad named Abraham. God promised him land, seed, and blessing in order to make him a great nation of God’s people who would fulfill God’s purposes (Genesis 12:1-3). Abraham responded in faith to the revelation of God and obeyed. The defining mark of God’s people now in a sin cursed world would be that they would be a nation of people of Abrahamic type faith in the creator God of the universe (Genesis 12-22).
* The descendents of Abraham, were small in number and were challenged with many threats that had the potential to destroy the small clan on their way to fulfill God’s plan. In all of these threats (from Gen 12-50) God shows Himself faithful to His promises.
* One threat to Abraham’s descendents was being wiped out by the physical challenge of famine (Gen 42:1-2). Even more significant, the small clan that was supposed to be characterized by Abrahamic faith in the one true God was threaten by assimilation into the pagan culture—notice Judah’s intermarrying with the Canaanites in Genesis 38.
* God specifically orchestrated the Joseph story (Gen 37-50) to bring His people down to Egypt to preserve them from 1) famine, and 2) from assimilation. They would not starve because God had sent a forerunner (Joseph) to plan well for the years of famine. Secondly, they would not be assimilated in Egypt through intermarriage because the Egyptians hated shepherds and nomads which was the essential lifestyle of the Abrahamic clan (Gen 43:32; 46:33-34).
* Egypt was, in a sense, like a mother’s womb where a baby grows.  God preserved, protected, and multiplied His people in the “womb of Egypt” until they grew to be a numerous people.  God’s people would grow strong in Egypt until they became a numerous people. Then they would go back to the land that God promised them to fulfill His purpose for them.

1 Peter 2:4-5 - And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

**II. God Often Uses Trials and Suffering as a Means of Taking His People to the Next Step in Their Journey**

A. Harsh labor

**Exodus 1:13-14** - *The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them.*

**Hebrews 12:5-6** - *and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.”*

**Hebrews 12:11-14** - *All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.*

**Exodus 1:12** - *But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel.*

**Romans 8:31** - *…if God is for us, who can be against us?...*

B. Murder

**Exodus 1:16** - *and he said, “When you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth and see them upon the birthstool, if it is a son, then you shall put him to death; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live.”*

**Exodus 1:17** - *But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live.*

**Exodus 1:20-21** - *So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. Because the midwives feared God, He established households for them.*

**III. God Uses Individuals at Every Level in the Accomplishment of His Plan**

**Exodus 1:15** - *Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other was named Puah;*