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Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is
God the Provider
Exodus 16-18
October 29, 2017, Jeff Germo

For those of you who are just joining us, what we are doing Sunday mornings is traveling through the entire Bible in the next year or so, stopping at some of the major scenes along the way so we can get a bird's eye view of what God has been up to in biblical history, and then connect the dots to see what he is up to right now in Campbell River.

Last week Duane Bakken walked us through the great showdown in the heavenlies between the one true God, Yahweh, and the so-called Egyptian gods. They had numerous gods that they worshipped. Each of these gods, the ancients believed, had to be appeased. It was believed that human beings were at the mercy of these gods who were capricious in their demands, which is why they people in fear, never knowing if they had done enough to appease the anger of the gods.

They believed in a plurality of gods. There was, as Duane said, Hapi, the god of the Nile River. They had a god of bugs, and a god of frogs, and darkness, just to name a few. They also believed that the pharaoh, their king, was a god. Upon death, he would be mummified to preserve his body for the afterlife. He would have all his possessions buried with him. Some of his servants would even be sacrificed and placed in the tomb with him so they could serve him in the afterlife.

You can see that this battle between God and the gods of the Egyptians was much more than God deciding he was going to be mean enough so the pharaoh would let his people go. This was a cosmic battle where Yahweh would show that he is above all gods. When he was done with all the plagues there would be no doubt that he is the one true God.

We need to remember who the main character in this narrative is. It is not Moses. It is God. And as Duane said last week, it is his glory that he is most concerned about. As we have been saying since the beginning of this series, there are three threads that weave their way through all Scripture, and through all history. In order to understand Scripture and the purpose of our lives on earth we need to know these things:

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- 1. God is up to something. He is restoring his creation back to the *shalom* that was lost in the garden.**
- 2. Satan is up to destroying what God is up to.**
- 3. Except for the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, you and I naturally move away from God.**

We need to keep these three truths uppermost in our minds as we go through this series and as we live our lives. If we don't know this, we will miss the point of everything we read in Scripture, and we will miss the point of our lives and waste our time living a meaningless existence thinking that the main point of our lives is to be comfortable.

So, God is up to something. He called Abraham and Sarah to be the start of a nation who would gather people fully committed to his plan to restore God's *shalom*. That same theme carries on through the rest of the Bible.

These descendants of Abraham ended up as slaves in Egypt. There were over two million men, women, and children being brutally oppressed by the Egyptians. After over four hundred years God finally calls Moses to be his spokesperson to deliver them. And through a series of miracles God liberates them.

Many times when we hear sermons about Moses and some of the other men and women God used to do history making things, we hear them held up as an ideal to which we should aspire. We look at Moses as a leader and pull some leadership principles from his life. The truth is that Moses was an ordinary human being just like you and me. He failed in many ways. He showed his insecurities and human weakness over and over again. Truth be told, Moses was a bit of a pessimist.

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Winston Churchill said,

"A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."

The only difference between an obstacle and an opportunity is our attitude. Much of the time, Moses showed that he saw the glass half empty instead of half full. And yet, God used him in spite of himself. I hope that is encouraging for you, that God can use each of us, no matter what you think your limitations are, no matter how you think you have failed in the past, to do something greater than you could possibly dream up.

That's what Paul told the Ephesian Jesus followers.

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Ephesians 3:20–21 (NLT)

20 Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. 21 Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

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So, God used this insecure pessimist, Moses, to lead the greatest mass rescue mission in the history of the world. The whole nation of Israel left Egypt, free for the first time in over four hundreds years. If you have yet to read this, I would very much encourage you to do so because there is a whole bunch of backstory that we have not had time to include.

If you have read the account of the Exodus, there might be a recurring phrase in it that is troubling to you, where God says several times that he will harden Pharaoh's heart. This is a very troubling statement because if God hardens Pharaoh's heart why does he hold him morally accountable for his disobedience? Doesn't that fly in the face of God's justice?

Let's quickly deal with that before we go on. It relates very much to what we have talked about thus far, the battle in the heavenlies, in which God would reveal himself to be the one true God.

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Exodus 4:21 (NLT)

21 And the Lord told Moses, “When you arrive back in Egypt, go to Pharaoh and perform all the miracles I have empowered you to do. But I will harden his heart so he will refuse to let the people go.

This is the first time God tells Moses that he is going Pharaoh’s heart. God is foretelling what will happen. How did you feel when you first read this? If you are like most people a sense of injustice would rise up in you. Let me try and explain this.

The Bible makes it clear that God did not harden Pharaoh’s heart contrary Pharaoh’s own will. Pharaoh hardened his own heart first. Seven different times in this narrative it says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Here is the first:

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Exodus 7:13 (NLT)

13 Pharaoh’s heart, however, remained hard. He still refused to listen, just as the Lord had predicted.

Seven separate times, Pharaoh hardened his heart: **7:13; 8:15; 8:19; 8:32; 9:7, 34, 35**. It was only later that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. As a matter of fact a different Hebrew word is used for when Pharaoh is the agent of the hardening than when God is. When Pharaoh is the one hardening his own heart the word **kabed** is used. When God is doing the hardening **chazaq** is used.

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Chazaq means to strengthen or encourage. That’s interesting, isn’t it? So, what is God doing? He is strengthening only what Pharaoh intended to do anyway. He is not taking away his will to choose. He is helping him do what he was going to do anyway, so the one true God would be victorious over all the other man made gods of the Egyptians who were actually controlled by the demonic world and were hell bent on destroying the *shalom* of God. They were against God’s purposes to restore his *shalom* on his creation.

So, the Pharaoh let God’s people go. But then, once more, he changed his mind and pursued them with his military, racing after them on their chariots. The Israelites were terrified, of course, because they were on the shores of the Red Sea with the Egyptian military bearing down on them. They whined and complained to Moses. Now, they did have something to fear. It’s not that they should have pretended everything was okay. It was their attitude that was the problem.

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Exodus 14:11–14 (NLT)

11 and they said to Moses, “Why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness? Weren’t there enough graves for us in Egypt? What have you done to us? Why did you make us leave Egypt? 12 Didn’t we tell you this would happen while we were still in Egypt? We said, ‘Leave us alone! Let us be slaves to the Egyptians. It’s better to be a slave in Egypt than a corpse in the wilderness!’ ”

They have very short, selective memories.

13 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. 14 The Lord himself will fight for you. Just stay calm.”

And that's what happened. The Red Sea parted. The Israelites crossed on dry land. When the Egyptians tried to follow them, the sea closed in on them and they died. Yahweh was again victorious.

God continued to provide for them. And they continued to complain. They complained that they didn't have enough water. God turned some bitter water into fresh water to quench their thirst. And again, it's not that they should have died of thirst without calling out to God. It was their attitude that was the problem. It's okay to tell God your needs. Paul tells the Philippian Jesus followers that if they want God's peace they need to give God all their worries.

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Philippians 4:6–7 (NLT)

⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Expressing to God your needs is important. A whiny complaining attitude is something that does not allow God to be glorified. The distinction between the two attitudes is that one trusts God and knows he loves us and wants to care for us. The other shows a lack of trust and believes, like the one servant in the Parable of the Talents, that God is capricious and doesn't have our best in mind.

About a month after leaving Egypt, being free for the first time in over 400 years, they complained yet again. God continued to provide and Israel continued to complain.

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Exodus 16 (NLT)

¹ Then the whole community of Israel set out from Elim and journeyed into the wilderness of Sin, between Elim and Mount Sinai. They arrived there on the fifteenth day of the second month, one month after leaving the land of Egypt. ² There, too, the whole community of Israel complained about Moses and Aaron.

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³ "If only the Lord had killed us back in Egypt," they moaned. "There we sat around pots filled with meat and ate all the bread we wanted. But now you have brought us into this wilderness to starve us all to death." ⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Look, I'm going to rain down food from heaven for you. Each day the people can go out and pick up as much food as they need for that day. I will test them in this to see whether or not they will follow my instructions.

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⁵ On the sixth day they will gather food, and when they prepare it, there will be twice as much as usual." ⁶ So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, "By evening you will realize it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt. ⁷ In the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaints, which are against him, not against us. What have we done that you should complain about us?"

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⁸ Then Moses added, "The Lord will give you meat to eat in the evening and bread to satisfy you in the morning, for he has heard all your complaints against him. What have we done? Yes, your complaints are against the Lord, not against us." ⁹ Then Moses said to Aaron, "Announce this to the entire community of Israel: 'Present yourselves before the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.'"

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10 And as Aaron spoke to the whole community of Israel, they looked out toward the wilderness. There they could see the awesome glory of the Lord in the cloud. 11 Then the Lord said to Moses, 12 “I have heard the Israelites’ complaints. Now tell them, ‘In the evening you will have meat to eat, and in the morning you will have all the bread you want. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.’ ”

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13 That evening vast numbers of quail flew in and covered the camp. And the next morning the area around the camp was wet with dew. 14 When the dew evaporated, a flaky substance as fine as frost blanketed the ground. 15 The Israelites were puzzled when they saw it. “What is it?” they asked each other. They had no idea what it was. And Moses told them, “It is the food the Lord has given you to eat.

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16 These are the Lord’s instructions: Each household should gather as much as it needs. Pick up two quarts for each person in your tent.” 17 So the people of Israel did as they were told. Some gathered a lot, some only a little. 18 But when they measured it out, everyone had just enough. Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough. Each family had just what it needed.

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19 Then Moses told them, “Do not keep any of it until morning.” 20 But some of them didn’t listen and kept some of it until morning. But by then it was full of maggots and had a terrible smell. Moses was very angry with them. 21 After this the people gathered the food morning by morning, each family according to its need. And as the sun became hot, the flakes they had not picked up melted and disappeared.

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22 On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much as usual—four quarts for each person instead of two. Then all the leaders of the community came and asked Moses for an explanation. 23 He told them, “This is what the Lord commanded: Tomorrow will be a day of complete rest, a holy Sabbath day set apart for the Lord. So bake or boil as much as you want today, and set aside what is left for tomorrow.”

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24 So they put some aside until morning, just as Moses had commanded. And in the morning the leftover food was wholesome and good, without maggots or odor. 25 Moses said, “Eat this food today, for today is a Sabbath day dedicated to the Lord. There will be no food on the ground today. 26 You may gather the food for six days, but the seventh day is the Sabbath. There will be no food on the ground that day.”

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27 Some of the people went out anyway on the seventh day, but they found no food. 28 The Lord asked Moses, “How long will these people refuse to obey my commands and instructions? 29 They must realize that the Sabbath is the Lord’s gift to you. That is why he gives you a two-day supply on the sixth day, so there will be enough for two days. On the Sabbath day you must each stay in your place. Do not go out to pick up food on the seventh day.”

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30 So the people did not gather any food on the seventh day. 31 The Israelites called the food manna. It was white like coriander seed, and it tasted like honey wafers. 32 Then Moses said, “This is what the Lord has commanded: Fill a two-quart container with manna to preserve it for your descendants. Then later generations will be able to see the food I gave you in the wilderness when I set you free from Egypt.”

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³³ Moses said to Aaron, “Get a jar and fill it with two quarts of manna. Then put it in a sacred place before the Lord to preserve it for all future generations.” ³⁴ Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded Moses. He eventually placed it in the Ark of the Covenant—in front of the stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant. ³⁵ So the people of Israel ate manna for forty years until they arrived at the land where they would settle. They ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

Again, make sure you read the rest of the narrative in chapters 17 and 18 if you haven’t already done so. It is a good read, and again, showing that God is the protagonist in the story. The story is the same all the way along. God miraculously meets the needs of Israel. It seems to never be enough for them. They continuously miss the big picture. They think the story is about them and their comfort. God promised that he would rescue them, and instead of cooperating, and learning to trust they made choices to disbelieve God.

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With every obstacle we face, with every fork in the road, with every need we have, we have a choice as to whether or not we will bring our requests to God and believe he is big enough; or wallow in the muck and mire of self pity, believing that God does not care and probably won’t help us.

So, the Israelites ended up wandering in the wilderness for forty years until that entire generation had died off, never having learned to trust God.

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I have been to that wilderness where they wandered. It is pretty desolate. On one hand, I can understand their complaint. I can’t honestly say that if I were in their shoes, I wouldn’t have complained. Perhaps I would have been just like them.

On the other hand, though, they had just seen God perform miracle after miracle: the ten plagues; the parting of the Red Sea; manna from heaven; quail that would fly into camp every day so they could have enough protein to feed them all; poisoned water made fresh; water flowing from a rock; and among many other miracles, their clothes never wore out, for forty years. They should have been able to look back at all these ways in which God met their needs and said, if God did it then he can do it again. With each miracle, their faith in God as their provider should have been strengthened.

Read Psalm 78 sometime. The whole thing is about how Israel missed their opportunity to remember God and his deliverance. Here’s just one verse from there:

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Psalm 78:42 (NLT)

⁴² They did not remember his power and how he rescued them from their enemies.

It goes on in detail about all the opportunities they missed to trust God, but instead chose to disbelieve. Both trust, and disbelief are choices.

That is why it’s important to look back at our lives and remember what God has done. If you don’t keep a journal, I would highly recommend you do. I have kept a journal for over thirty five years. A couple times a year I look back and remind myself of how God has been faithful, and in doing so my faith muscles grow stronger.

Here is what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth about the people of Israel:

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1 Corinthians 10:1–13 (NLT)

¹ I don't want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground. ² In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptized as followers of Moses.

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³ All of them ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all of them drank the same spiritual water. For they drank from the spiritual rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ. ⁵ Yet God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. ⁶ These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did,

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⁷ or worship idols as some of them did. As the Scriptures say, "The people celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry." ⁸ And we must not engage in sexual immorality as some of them did, causing 23,000 of them to die in one day. ⁹ Nor should we put Christ to the test, as some of them did and then died from snakebites.

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¹⁰ And don't grumble as some of them did, and then were destroyed by the angel of death. ¹¹ These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age.

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¹² If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall. ¹³ The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.

We are no different than the people of Israel. We are prone to wander away from God, and if we think we aren't, we are on dangerous ground. Our walk with Jesus is all about learning to trust him. It's about building our faith muscles.

Each time we encounter a situation we know we can't handle we have a crisis of faith. We are faced with our human limitations and we have to decide if we are going to trust God and cooperate with him, or if we are going, instead, believe he doesn't care, whine and complain, and take matters into our own hands.

Abraham and Sarah came to these types of crossroads many times in their journey of faith. Many times they took matters into their own hands and sometimes they chose to trust. All through the Bible we see this happening. We saw it with Adam and Eve, Cain, Jacob, Joseph and his brothers, Moses, the children of Israel and on and on and on.

And we see it in our own lives. Is there something going on in your life right now that is causing you anxiety and you don't know how to deal with it? It could be a problem with a relationship. I might be illness, or finances, or a sense of loneliness, or isolation, or some limitation you have.

¹³ The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.

We are all in the same boat. We are each in different places on the same journey. We all want our faith built so we don't worry about the things we normally worry about. What happens when we worry? We lose our peace. Remember the definition of *shalom*? It's that sense that everything is okay. God is good! God is all-powerful! There is nothing he can't handle, and he loves me unconditionally, meaning, there is nothing I need to do to make him love me any more than he already does and nothing I can do will make him love me and less. He simply loves me, and you. He is our great provider.

Whatever it is that you are feeling anxious about, that is the very thing he wants to use to build your faith in him. Take it to the Lord in prayer and ask him, "What is the next right thing to do?" And then do that thing. And then trust him.

God rarely gives you two steps down the road. He will give you the next step, then you need to trust him and take that step of faith. Once you do that, your faith is built stronger, and as you continue doing that your faith muscles will continue to grow.

That is the journey of faith. We will never arrive at the place, on this side of heaven, where we will not require faith. That means we will always be in the cheap seats. We won't be able to see the complete picture. Only God is in the good seats. That means we will need to trust that he can handle our lives.

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1 Corinthians 13:12 (NLT)

¹² Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely.

What's the big lesson in the story of Moses delivering the Israelites from Egypt? The big lesson is that God is the protagonist in our story. He is up to something. He will accomplish his purposes. You can trust him with your story.

Here is one more Psalm in closing:

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Psalm 95:7–9 (NLT)

⁷ for he is our God. We are the people he watches over, the flock under his care. If only you would listen to his voice today! ⁸ The Lord says, "Don't harden your hearts as Israel did at Meribah, as they did at Massah in the wilderness. ⁹ For there your ancestors tested and tried my patience, even though they saw everything I did.



Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is

God the Provider

Exodus 16-18

Week of October 29, 2017

Objective of this study: To grow in our belief that God cares, and we can trust him with our lives.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalm 116:1-9** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you. **Did anything “jump out at you”?**

Welcome (5 minutes)

What's the worst meal you were served at a restaurant?

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

Word (30-45 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read Exodus 16
 1. Describe their situation. What about it would have been difficult?
 2. Would you have felt like complaining in their situation?
 3. What was God's problem with their complaining?
 4. How had God previously shown his faithfulness to them?
3. Read Psalm 78:4-16
4. Read Philippians 4:6-7
 1. What are the components for receiving the peace of God?

Work (30-45)

1. Think about a recent time when you felt like complaining. What were your underlying beliefs? What were you thinking about God? Life? Yourself? The purpose of life?
2. Read Psalm 116:1-9. The writer of this psalm had some really bad experiences. He didn't pretend he wasn't suffering. What did he do instead of complaining? Look for as much as you can find in this psalm, things he did instead of complaining.
3. What can you remind yourself of when you feel like complaining?
4. Do you have a practice of journaling? For those of you who journal, what benefit have you seen? For those who don't yet, would you consider putting this spiritual discipline into practice?

a. This week journal some evidence of God's faithfulness from your personal experience and share with the group next week. You might use Philippians 4:6-7 as a format for your journaling.

5. Spend some time in prayer. Start by worshipping God for who he is.

6. Here are some things you can pray about for the church:

A. That, as a church, we would actively and purposefully engage in the mission of Jesus in Campbell River.

B. Our church board and staff as they lead us to live out the mission of Jesus

C. River Kids ministry as they reach out to kids in our community.

D. Our church finances. We are about \$40,000 behind. Pray that God would supply our needs so the mission can be carried on in Campbell River and around the world.

E. **Our missionary of the month:** - Ngorika Children's Home in Kenya - check them out on our website and on the big chalkboard in the foyer. Pray about how you might be a part of supporting them.

F. **Our missionary of the week:** Pierre and Hanna Jutras in Poland

G. **Local CR church:** Quadra Island Bible Church - they are searching for a pastor. Pray that God would bring the right person for the job.

Reminder: This year as God leads us forward, we want to **Connect - Engage - Grow**. To get started, would you commit to **Connecting** with newcomers, by introducing yourselves to at least one person you don't know yet, each Sunday morning. Don't worry if you don't know who is a newcomer. Start by introducing yourself. Discuss in your group how you could do this.