

Dr. John Oswalt, Exodus, Session 3, Exodus 5-6 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Oswalt, Exodus, Session 3, Exodus 5-6, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This is a transcript of a lecture by Dr. John Oswalt on Exodus chapters 5-6. **The lecture focuses on Pharaoh's hardening of heart**, arguing it wasn't solely God's action but a consequence of Pharaoh's own choices and self-deification. **Oswalt also addresses the Israelites' request to leave Egypt for worship**, clarifying it wasn't deceptive and highlighting the importance of worshipping God over valuing freedom. **He then examines Moses's questioning of God's motives** and the inclusion of a genealogy to establish the priestly lineage's significance. **Finally, the lecture explores the nature of God's character** as revealed in these chapters, emphasizing His power, covenant faithfulness, and relational love.

2. 22 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, Exodus, Session 3 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Pentateuch → Exodus).



Oswalt_Exodus_Session03.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Oswalt, Exodus, Session 3, Exodus 5-6

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on Exodus 5-6:

Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on Exodus 5-6

I. Introduction & Prayer:

- Dr. Oswalt begins by emphasizing God as the source of joy and acknowledges God's passionate love and concern for His people. He prays for deeper understanding of scripture and for transformation of lives to serve the world.
- He notes that the session will address the difficult topic of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, a common question he encounters.

II. The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- **Pharaoh's Character:** Pharaoh is portrayed not as a reasonable man, but as a self-proclaimed god, a military dictator accustomed to absolute power and making laws on a whim. Oswalt highlights that "Pharaoh was not a friendly fellow who could be easily convinced to do the right thing. Pharaoh considered himself to be God."
- **Multiple Perspectives on Hardening:** The text describes three aspects of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart: God hardening his heart, Pharaoh's heart simply being hard, and Pharaoh hardening his own heart. There are multiple references to his heart being hard in chapter 7 & 8.
- **Pharaoh's Choice:** Oswalt stresses that God does not force Pharaoh against his will. Instead, Pharaoh's hardening is a result of his own life choices and entrenched belief in his own divinity. "God has made the world in such a way that we become fixed in our choices. And we no longer have the freedom to do anything else."
- **Loss of Freedom:** Through long-term choices, Pharaoh has lost the freedom to act generously or justly, becoming trapped by his own pride and ego. This is likened to students who never do extra work and struggle to adapt to new expectations.
- **Economic Considerations:** Pharaoh also hardened his heart because he realized he would lose the Israelite labor force. The text notes in chapter 14: "Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, what have we done? We have let the Israelites go and lost their services."

III. The Purpose of the Exodus: Worship, Not Just Freedom

- **Moses' Request:** Moses' initial request is for the Israelites to be allowed to go into the wilderness to hold a festival, specifically to worship God. This is not deceptive but accurately reflects God's intention for their freedom. "This is precisely why they are being delivered so that they can go into the wilderness and worship the one God who is God."
- **Worship as Primary:** Oswalt emphasizes that freedom is not the ultimate goal but a means to an end: worship. The promised land is secondary. "We were made to worship God." This contrasts with the modern emphasis on freedom as an end in itself, which Oswalt argues is detrimental. "What has happened in America is we have come to worship freedom, and it's killing us."
- **God's Sovereignty:** The plagues are not just about releasing the Israelites but about revealing God's identity and sovereignty to Pharaoh, and teaching him who Yahweh really is. Oswalt states, "If getting the people out of Egypt was what it was all about, then one big plague would have done it. Boom, they're out of here. The issue is, who is Yahweh?"

IV. Pharaoh's Rejection of Yahweh & Implications for the Secular World

- **Ignorance of Yahweh:** Pharaoh's question, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" is not just a challenge to authority but a declaration of ignorance and disbelief in God's existence. "I don't know any Yahweh."
- **Secular Perspective:** This mirrors the secular worldview that dismisses spiritual concerns as fabrications because they don't acknowledge God. Oswalt says: "They don't know God. Therefore, he doesn't exist. We're making it up for our own personal ends. It's just a crutch."
- **No Need for God:** The secular world does not seek God and often rejects the notion of an authority to which they would be accountable. "We don't ask for one."

V. Increased Hardship & Israelite Discouragement

- **Increased Oppression:** Pharaoh, in response to Moses' request, intensifies the Israelites' workload by removing their supply of straw for brickmaking. This shows that following God does not guarantee ease.
- **Overseers' Response:** The Israelite overseers turn to Pharaoh for help, rather than to God, indicating a lack of true knowledge of or faith in Yahweh.

- **Blame on Moses and Aaron:** The Israelites blame Moses and Aaron for their increased hardship, wishing they hadn't stirred up trouble. Oswalt suggests, "A really contemporary version would say, 'God damn you.'" They prefer familiar bondage to the challenges of deliverance. They are unwilling to be held accountable for the potential difficulties that come with following God.
- **Trouble after Salvation:** Oswalt emphasizes that accepting Christ may initiate, not end, troubles. "Accept Jesus, and the trouble is just beginning."
- **Testing & God's Purposes:** God allows this increased difficulty to test the Israelites' faith and demonstrate His power more fully. "God, does God have enough freedom in my life to bring hardship if that will make his grace more evident?"

VI. Moses' Questioning & God's Response

- **Moses' Doubt:** Moses questions God's motive and goodness, wondering if God sent him to make things worse. Oswalt explains the Hebrew word "rah" which means "evil" but can also mean "trouble." Moses is asking if God is a "good guy" for allowing or causing this difficulty.
- **God's Freedom:** God's purpose is for His character to be made evident to a watching world. Oswalt suggests, "Does God have the freedom to bring hardship into my life? Trouble into my life in order. That who he really is may be made more evident to a watching world."
- **Self-Centeredness:** Often, we are more concerned with comfort than with God's glory. Oswalt critiques "name it and claim it" theology and calls for a trust in God's goodness to do with our lives as He sees fit, even through hardship.

VII. God's Revelation of His Name

- **Yahweh's Declaration:** God declares, "I am Yahweh," and tells Moses that He appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty but did not make himself fully known to them by His name Yahweh.
- **Problem of Genesis:** The name Yahweh is used in Genesis, particularly in the Abraham narrative, causing questions for scholars.
- **Two Possible Solutions:** **Option 1:** They did not know the *label* Yahweh until Moses' time.

- **Option 2 (Oswalt's Preference):** They knew the *label* Yahweh but not His *character and reputation* as the covenant-keeping, tabernacling creator God. Oswalt contends that "Name, in the Old Testament, is much more than label. Name is character, reputation."
- **Key Point:** The key is knowing and experiencing who God truly is. "But you're going to."

VIII. God's Character Revealed in Chapter 6

- **Power:** God reveals His power to force Pharaoh to let the Israelites go.
- **Revelation:** He is the revealing God who keeps His promises.
- **Covenant-Keeping:** He is a covenant-keeping God who acts out of care for his people. Oswalt states, "He's covenant-keeping because He is caring. This is not just a legal deal."
- **Relational Love:** He is a God of relational love who will take them as His people and give himself to them. "You will be my people, and I will be your God, who runs through the Old Testament as a thread."
- **Faithfulness:** He is faithful and trustworthy, using trials to further reveal Himself.

IX. Israelite Rejection & Moses' Objection

- **Rejection:** The Israelites, discouraged, reject Moses' message. They prefer comfort to change.
- **Moses' Objection:** Moses questions why Pharaoh would listen if his own people wouldn't, pointing out his "uncircumcised lips", which is interpreted as either a speech impediment or, possibly, spiritual uncleanness. He seeks excuses to avoid responsibility. He does say he has "unclean lips."
- **Moses' Excuses:** Oswalt suggests that Moses' is making excuses, noting that his training in Egypt should have made him a skilled speaker.

X. Genealogy & God's Purpose

- **Genealogy's Purpose:** The genealogy in Chapter 6, particularly the lineage of Levi, highlights the importance of the priesthood and the focus on worship. The genealogy is framed by statements from God about his intent to free Israel which create an inclusio.
- **Chosen Leadership:** Aaron and Moses were chosen by God to bring the Israelites out of Egypt, and this establishes that they are not just random choices but are part of God's plan and connected to a family designated for worship leadership. Oswalt notes, "These are not just Johnny-come-latelies...these are the ones God chose to accomplish his purposes."
- **God's Sovereignty:** Despite their weaknesses, God uses them for His purposes. This is a testament to God's ability to use imperfect people for His divine plan. "God doesn't have you where you are by accident."
- **No Chance:** Oswalt rejects the idea of chance, advocating that all events are orchestrated by God's design, though not in a deterministic fashion. He sees evidence of God's hand guiding and directing all of history, even in the midst of struggles and opposition.

XI. Conclusion:

- Oswalt concludes with a prayer, expressing gratitude for God's ability to use people despite their flaws, for his faithfulness, and for his hand in their lives. He reaffirms the desire to know God fully, even through difficult circumstances.

This detailed briefing document covers the main themes and points of Dr. Oswalt's teaching in Exodus 5-6. It highlights the complexity of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, the true purpose of the Exodus, and God's revelation of His character and nature. It also notes the doubts and failures of the Israelites and the challenges in Moses' calling, ultimately underscoring God's sovereignty and faithfulness.

4. Study Guide: Oswalt, Exodus, Session 3, Exodus 5-6

Exodus Study Guide: Session 3 (Exodus 5-6)

Short Answer Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. How does Dr. Oswalt describe Pharaoh's character and worldview, and how does this relate to the concept of a "hardened heart?"
2. Explain the three different ways in which the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is described in the text and what that indicates about the nature of God's actions.
3. According to Dr. Oswalt, what is the primary reason God is delivering the Israelites from Egypt, and how is this reflected in Moses's request to Pharaoh?
4. What is Pharaoh's initial reaction to the request to let the Israelites go, and what does his response reveal about his worldview?
5. How does Pharaoh's reaction relate to how Dr. Oswalt suggests secular people view the spiritual concerns of believers?
6. Describe the change in circumstances for the Israelite overseers after Moses's and Aaron's encounter with Pharaoh, and how does this change impact their perception of Moses and Aaron?
7. How does Dr. Oswalt interpret Moses's response in Exodus 5:22, and how does this question reflect a tension in the narrative?
8. Explain how the immediate outcome of Moses' actions made the Israelites' situation worse rather than better. How does this relate to Oswalt's comments on salvation preaching?
9. According to Dr. Oswalt, what is the significance of God's statement in Exodus 6:3, particularly in relation to the prior use of the name Yahweh in Genesis?
10. What is the purpose of the genealogy included in Exodus 6, and why is it positioned where it is within the narrative of the exodus?

Answer Key

1. Dr. Oswalt describes Pharaoh as a military dictator who considered himself a god, with absolute authority. This means Pharaoh would always act according to his own will, creating a situation where his heart was hardened by his own choices.

2. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is described in three ways: God will harden his heart, his heart was hard, and Pharaoh hardened his own heart. This indicates that God's actions are not forcing Pharaoh against his will, but rather that God works within the consequences of Pharaoh's long established patterns of behavior.
3. The primary reason for the deliverance is for the Israelites to worship God in the wilderness. This is evident in Moses's request, which was not for freedom or an end to oppression, but to allow them to go worship Yahweh.
4. Pharaoh dismisses the request, declaring that he does not know Yahweh, the God of the Israelites, and he accuses them of inventing the religion as an excuse to get out of work. This response shows that Pharaoh's worldview is that he believes himself to be the ultimate authority, and he rejects the existence of any god he does not know.
5. Pharaoh's dismissal is similar to how secular individuals may see religious belief as a fabrication rather than genuine faith. They lack a concept of God, so any religious claim is viewed as disingenuous.
6. The overseers now have to gather their own straw, which makes their labor much harder, and their immediate reaction is to blame Moses and Aaron for making their lives worse rather than better. They believed their current situation was the result of obeying Yahweh and not because of their own oppression.
7. Moses questions God's motives and goodness, asking if God sent him to bring trouble on the people. This shows the tension of God's intentions and the harsh realities of the deliverance.
8. Moses's actions resulted in increased hardship and oppression for the Israelites rather than freedom. Dr. Oswalt explains that salvation through Christ may come with additional hardships.
9. Dr. Oswalt argues that while the name Yahweh appears in Genesis, it was not fully revealed to them as it would be to the Israelites. He posits that the patriarchs did not know the full character and covenant-keeping nature associated with Yahweh.
10. The genealogy establishes the lineage of the priesthood. This shows that the chosen leaders are part of the line set aside for worship, which is the very reason why God is bringing them out of Egypt in the first place.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Develop a well-structured essay response to each of the following questions, drawing from the provided source material.

1. Analyze the concept of "hardening Pharaoh's heart" as discussed by Dr. Oswalt, exploring the complexities of free will, divine sovereignty, and the consequences of ingrained patterns of behavior.
2. Discuss the relationship between knowing Yahweh and obeying Him as presented in Exodus 5-6, paying attention to the contrast between Pharaoh's rejection and the Israelites' initial excitement followed by disappointment.
3. Explore the theme of deliverance in Exodus 5-6, examining how the narrative presents a counter-narrative to a simple "easy salvation," and how hardship and challenge become a part of the deliverance process.
4. Assess the significance of God's self-revelation in Exodus 6, particularly the idea of revealing His name, and how this underscores the nature of his character and relationship with his people.
5. Evaluate how the narrative of Exodus 5-6 addresses the problem of suffering and doubt, drawing upon Moses's response in 5:22, the Israelite's disappointment, and God's assurance in 6:1, and explain how these elements create a richer understanding of faith.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Yahweh:** The personal name of God in the Old Testament, often translated as LORD in English Bibles. Dr. Oswalt emphasizes this is much more than a label, but is instead a revelation of God's character.
- **Pharaoh:** The ruler of Egypt, in this context, portrayed as a tyrannical figure who considers himself a god.
- **Hardening of the Heart:** A concept referring to Pharaoh's stubborn refusal to release the Israelites, which is presented in three ways: God hardening his heart, his heart being hard, and him hardening his heart. Dr. Oswalt explains this is not against Pharaoh's will, but is a consequence of his own ingrained will.
- **Covenant:** A binding agreement or promise between God and His people. God's covenant with Abraham is a key element of the backdrop to the Exodus narrative.
- **Inclusio:** A literary device where a passage begins and ends with similar statements, forming an envelope around other material. The genealogy in chapter six of Exodus is given as an example.
- **Elohim:** A Hebrew word for God, often used in the Old Testament, especially in Genesis.
- **Idolatry:** The worship of idols or anything other than the true God. Dr. Oswalt suggests that wanting a God who serves one's own desires is a form of idolatry.
- **Uncircumcised Lips:** A term used by Moses to describe his own speech impediment or inadequacy. Dr. Oswalt suggests it could also imply some moral uncleanness.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, Exodus, Session 3, Exodus 5-6, Biblealearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Exodus 5-6 and the Nature of God

1. **Why is Pharaoh so resistant to letting the Israelites go, and how does God's role in "hardening his heart" fit into this resistance?**
2. Pharaoh's resistance stems from his self-deification and belief in his absolute authority; he views himself as god and thus cannot be commanded by anyone else, especially a deity he doesn't recognize. The Bible uses three ways of explaining Pharaoh's heart: that God would harden his heart, that his heart *was* hard, and that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. It's not that God forces Pharaoh against his will; rather, Pharaoh's lifelong choices to prioritize his power and disregard any other authority have led him to a place where he no longer has the freedom to choose otherwise. God's command to let the Israelites go creates a situation where Pharaoh's pre-existing hardness is amplified, revealing the limits of his self-proclaimed divinity. Ultimately, it highlights the truth that consistent choices forge a kind of captivity.
3. **When Moses and Aaron initially ask Pharaoh to let the Israelites go to worship in the wilderness, is that a deceptive request, and what is the true purpose behind God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt?**
4. The request to go worship God in the wilderness is not deceptive; it is the core reason for the Exodus. While freedom from oppression is certainly part of God's plan, the ultimate goal is for the Israelites to know and worship Yahweh, their true God. The promised land is a secondary outcome of this worship. The request is a genuine representation of God's purpose. The focus is not simply about physical liberation, but spiritual liberation and relationship with God.

5. **Why does God send multiple plagues if the sole purpose was to free the Israelites?**
6. The plagues serve a larger purpose than merely securing the Israelites' release; they are designed to reveal Yahweh's power and sovereignty to Pharaoh and the Egyptians. The series of plagues is a means to demonstrate who Yahweh truly is and show that He, not Pharaoh, is the ultimate authority. The intent is to move Pharaoh from ignorance to recognition of the true God. If freeing the Israelites was the only goal, one mighty act of deliverance would suffice. But, it is also about showing His glory.
7. **How does Pharaoh's question, "Who is Yahweh?" reveal a key disconnect in understanding spiritual concerns in a secular world?**
8. Pharaoh's question highlights the fundamental inability of secular worldviews to grasp spiritual realities. For Pharaoh, if he does not know or recognize a god, that god does not exist, and anyone who claims otherwise is being disingenuous. This echoes the common secular belief that spiritual claims are fabrications for personal gain or comfort because they cannot conceive of anything beyond the physical. There is a rejection of the spiritual because the spiritual is unknown.
9. **Why do the Israelite overseers blame Moses and Aaron when their situation worsens after speaking to Pharaoh?**
10. The overseers blame Moses and Aaron because their obedience to God has led to increased hardship. It is the same sentiment as when people blame the whistleblowers who reveal a problem. They fail to understand that these difficulties are part of the process of deliverance. It's easier to cling to the familiar misery than to embrace the potential challenges of freedom, even when that freedom is sought for the sake of worship. This indicates an unwillingness to be held accountable to God and to accept that real change involves struggle.
11. **Why does Moses question God's goodness after the Israelites' situation worsens?**

Moses questions God's goodness because the immediate outcome of God's plan is increased suffering for the Israelites. He uses a Hebrew word that can mean trouble or evil to express how God has made things "bad" and challenges God's motives and integrity. This struggle is a very human reaction that questions the reasons for pain and suffering in the presence of an all good God. The key point, though, is the question leads to an even greater revelation of God.

1. **How does God's statement in Exodus 6:3, that he "did not make myself fully known to them" by the name Yahweh to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, reconcile with the fact that the name Yahweh is used in Genesis?**
2. There are two possible answers: First, the text might indicate that those prior to Moses may not have used the label or word "Yahweh". The other explanation is that while the patriarchs may have known *the label* "Yahweh," they did not know the full depth of His *character* and nature revealed through the Exodus. They did not fully understand His covenant-keeping faithfulness, His relational love, His power, and other aspects of who he is. The Exodus provides a more complete revelation of what that name means. This idea suggests the patriarchs had a very limited knowledge of who God really is compared to what is experienced by Moses and the Israelites.
3. **What is the purpose of the genealogy in Exodus 6, especially given that it is sandwiched between statements of Moses's inability to speak?**
4. The genealogy in chapter 6 serves to emphasize the legitimacy and divine appointment of Moses and Aaron. It shows they are not random people but belong to a lineage chosen for God's work, specifically the priestly line of Levi, connected to worship. By placing the genealogy between Moses's two concerns about his speaking abilities, it creates a literary structure (*inclusio*) that frames their role within God's plan. God can and will use imperfect individuals to accomplish his purposes, and that God does not make mistakes in selecting his people.