

engage

Welcome to the smiley happy fifth issue of **engage**. As usual, it's packed with top quality Bible teaching and some brain-scramblingly challenging articles. Check out what's in store for you in this issue...

* **DAILY READINGS** Each day's page throws you into the Bible, to get you handling, questioning and exploring God's message to you — encouraging you to act on it and talk to God more in prayer.

THIS ISSUE: God lays down His ground rules in **Exodus**; mind-blowing truths about Christianity from **Romans**; **Luke** tells us about Jesus' early years; and David sings from the heart in **Psalms**.

* **TAKE IT FURTHER** If you're hungry for more at the end of an **engage** page, turn to the **Take it further** section to dig deeper.

* **STUFF** Articles on stuff relevant to the lives of young Christians. This issue: what does the Bible have to say about **alcohol and drugs**?

* **TRICKY** tackles those mind-bendingly tricky questions that confuse us all, as well as questions that our friends bombard us with. This time: **What happens to people who have never heard the gospel?**



* **ESSENTIAL** Articles on the basics we really need to know about God, the Bible and Christianity. This issue: **The Bible – can we trust it?**

* **REAL LIVES** True stories, revealing God at work in people's lives. This time — **A teenage Christian with a serious illness**.

* **TOOLBOX** is full of tools to help you wrestle with the Bible and understand it for yourself. This issue we look at the Bible and say **'So what?'**

All of us who work on engage are passionate to see God's word at work in people's lives. Do you want God's word to have an impact on your life? Then open your Bible, and start on the first engage study right now...

HOW TO USE **engage**

- 1 Set a time you can read the Bible every day
- 2 Find a place where you can be quiet and think
- 3 Grab your Bible, pen and a notebook
- 4 Ask God to help you understand what you read
- 5 Read the day's verses with **engage**, taking time to think about it
- 6 Pray about what you've read

BIBLE STUFF

We use the NIV Bible version, so you might find it's the best one to use with **engage**. If the notes say '**Read Exodus 16 v 1–12**', look up Exodus in the contents page at the front of your Bible. It'll tell you which page Exodus starts on. Find chapter 16 of Exodus, and then verse 1 of chapter 16 (the verse numbers are the tiny ones). Then start reading. Simple.

In this issue...

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ENGAGE BRAINIACS

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Exodus

The big clean-up

You've finally left home. And you're about to start sharing a house with your best friends in the whole world, Barry and Flo — it's going to be great! But there are a few issues you need to sort out first...

HOUSE RULES

To begin with, the house is a total mess; in fact it's a disaster zone. There's no way you could live there until some serious cleaning takes place. Barry, bless him, hasn't ever grasped the concept of washing up and wouldn't know which end of a vacuum cleaner was which.

And there's also the matter of setting some ground rules, like taking it in turns to buy the milk, how to pay shared bills and who cleans the bathroom. But once things are clean and you've sorted out the house rules, it's going to be awesome living with these guys!

You're probably thinking: *'What does this have to do with the second half of Exodus??!'*

THE STORY SO FAR

God's people have been rescued from slavery in Egypt with some astounding displays of God's power. But what have they been rescued for? Well, God intends to fulfil all His promises to Abraham — promises of a land to live in, a great nation of people and blessing. As God starts to do that, one big part of the blessing is that He will live among them.

However, just like Barry and Flo, the Israelites have got some serious cleaning up to do before a pure and holy God can live with such a sinful bunch of people. And God is going to give them some ground rules about how it will all work.

So read on to see how this incredible 'house share' began.



1

Short-term memory

It's six weeks after Operation Exodus when God rescued His people from slavery in Egypt. Under Moses' leadership, the Israelites are headed for the Promised Land. But it's not going to be a straightforward journey...

Read Exodus 16 v 1–12

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ▷ *Why are the Israelites grumbling? (v3)*
- ▷ *What are their rose-tinted memories of Egypt? (v3)*

Hang on a minute! Is this the same place we're talking about? The one where you were in terrible slavery, where the country's ruler wanted to kill all your baby boys? Get real!

GET ON WITH IT

Be honest with yourself. Do you ever catch yourself thinking: *'Life would be so much easier if I wasn't a Christian. I could get drunk, date that guy/girl or sleep with them, spend my money on whatever I wanted, sleep in on Sunday mornings...'*? Missing your old sinful ways? Don't fool yourself — life without God is slavery and it ends in death. Don't slip into that way of thinking; it's very dangerous.

- ▷ *Who are the people grumbling about? (v2)*
- ▷ *Are you sure? (v8)*
- ▷ *What might you expect God's reaction to be?*
- ▷ *What is His reaction? (v4, v12)*

How amazing is that? Instead of blasting them into oblivion, God kindly provides them with bread and meat.

- ▷ *What does He want the Israelites to remember? (v12)*

PRAY ABOUT IT

Do you know that the LORD is your God? Really know it? Think about who He is — kind and gracious, compassionate and slow to anger — and then thank Him that trusting in Jesus means He is your God too.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Don't wish for life without God.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

Escape from slavery on page 108.



2

Birds and bread

All that grumbling must have given the Israelites an appetite. Just as He promised, God provides quail — a posh sort of pheasant — and supernatural bread from heaven. Dig in!

Read Exodus 16 v 13–36

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- What food does God provide in the evening? And the morning?*
- What instructions does Moses give about collecting the manna? v16:*

v19:

v22–23:
- What happens when the people don't follow those instructions?*
- What is God trying to teach His people about Himself? (v28-29)*
- How long will it take them to learn that? (v32, v35)*

We might think that the Israelites were incredibly slow on the uptake — of course God knew what they needed and of course He would provide for them as He'd promised.

Why on earth didn't they trust Him?

PRAY ABOUT IT

Take a minute to ask yourself the same question and answer it honestly. Why don't you always trust God? Talk to God about your answer and ask Him to help you trust Him more.

GET ON WITH IT

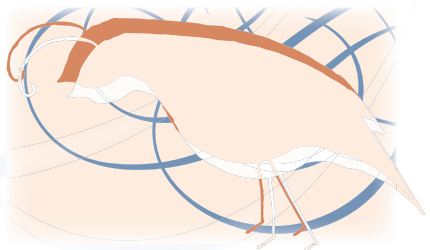
Is there something in your life that you know God wants you to do or stop doing? Will you take Him seriously and obey Him?

THE BOTTOM LINE

Trusting God means doing what He says.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

Get your daily bread on page 108.





3

Rock on!

Imagine the situation. You've seen God do amazing miracles to rescue you. He's guiding you personally by day and night and is providing wonderful supernatural food for you every day. Then you get a bit thirsty..

Read Exodus 17 v 1–7

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- Read verse one again. *What should the people have done?*
- What did they do? (v2)*
- Again, who are they really having a go at? (v2, v7)*
- Why is v7 so shocking?*
- What is Moses' response to the situation? (v4)*

Pray or pout? Turn to God or turn against him? Every time they encounter a difficulty the Israelites just moan. That's not to say there wasn't a real need, but their response was all wrong. Moses gets it right — he takes his problems straight to God. And notice he's not doing so in a calm and super spiritual manner — he's complaining too. BUT Moses addresses his complaints to the One who can do something about them!

PRAY ABOUT IT

Are you tempted to complain rather than pray when things are tough? Spend some time now asking for God's help with the difficulties you face. Say sorry for the times you moan about life.

- Sum up in a word God's response to these grumblers in v6–7:*

Incredibly God once again meets the needs of this bunch of moaners and in a very strange way — did you notice v6? In some way God is present there in front of Moses and provides the water they need to live — more on this in the *Take It Further* section.

THE BOTTOM LINE

If you want to complain — take your complaints to the top, to God.

TAKE IT FURTHER

More on talking honestly with God on page 108.

4

Hands up!

The Israelites faced lack of food and water and God provided for their needs every step of the way. But in these next few verses they face a new threat.

 **Read Exodus 17 v 8–16****ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN**

- ▷** *What danger does Israel face in v8?*

The Amalekites were a nasty bunch — one of their preferred strategies was to lurk behind straggling travellers and attack the old and weak (Deuteronomy 25 v 17–18).

- ▷** *What is the outcome of the battle and how does it come about?*

It's not quite clear what Moses is doing with his hands in the air — he could be praying or he could be signalling the troops to advance rather than retreat. Moses mentions that it's the staff of God he's holding, which makes it very clear that he is relying totally on God.

- ▷** *What is God's promise to Moses about Israel's enemy? (v14)*

- ▷** *Who does Moses give all the credit to? (v16)*

Moses put his trust firmly in God to rescue His people and defend them. He calls the Lord his banner — maybe our equivalent would be a football scarf or a t-shirt that shows where your loyalties lie.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Ask God for His help to stand firm, trusting in Him for everything today. Thank Him for other Christians you know who help you to stand firm.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Is the Lord your banner?

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

Wave your banner on page 108.



5

In-laws and outlaws

No major crisis for the Israelites today — phew! At last, they can concentrate on normal stuff like family reunions and daily business.

Read Exodus 18 v 1–12

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

Who turns up to see Moses?

What does Moses' choice of names for his kids tell us about:

- a) God?
- b) Moses' attitude to God?

We don't know much about Jethro's religion, despite him being called the 'priest' of Midian. But he certainly ends up worshipping the Lord here.

What is so great about the topic of Moses' and Jethro's conversation (v7-12)?

SHARE IT

Have you ever tried telling others about the amazing things God has done for you both now and in the past? Not just your Christian mates, but all your friends?

Read verses 13–27

Why is Moses' father-in-law so dumbfounded? (v14)

What is Moses doing (v13, v15–16) and why is it so full-on?

What is Jethro's advice? Do you think it sounds sensible?

Sometimes we're not keen to take advice from people — how do we know they're right? What if they're not even Christians? Notice the key thing about Jethro's advice: not only is it sensible (Moses is headed for exhaustion), but it's God-centred (see v19-21, v23).

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank God for people who look out for you and give you good advice.

THE BOTTOM LINE

God should get the glory in the big things and the small things.

TAKE IT FURTHER

For a reminder, turn to page 109.



6

Get ready

Chances are you've heard of what happened on Mount Sinai (if not, read on), so we know from v2 that something pretty special is coming up, but the build-up alone in this chapter is mind-blowing. Check it out...

Read Exodus 19 v 1–6

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- 1) *What does God remind the Israelites about Himself in v4–6?*
- 1) *What does He promise them in those verses?*
- 1) *How would you describe this relationship?*

This is amazing stuff — God is offering these people an incredible privilege, not because they are anything special but because He loves them. That's what the Bible calls **grace** – God's undeserved kindness.

Read verses 7–25

- 1) *How do the people respond? (v8)*
- 1) *What strikes you most about the preparations which need to be made for God to communicate with human beings? (v10–24)*

God is incomprehensibly holy. He is so perfect that without limits and safety barriers, we would be destroyed by His burning perfection. All of the descriptions used — thunder, lightning, darkness, earthquakes, fire and loud noise serve to highlight how immensely powerful and terrifying God is.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Do you realise that God is like this? Spend some time reflecting on these verses again as you talk to Him.

PRAY ABOUT IT SOME MORE

And yet God wants to communicate with us; this terrifying God is the same one who calls His people His *'treasured possession'*. Thank Him.

THE BOTTOM LINE

God is holy. He's a God of grace. Praise Him.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

There's more on page 109.



7

Starter for ten

We might think we know the Ten Commandments: ‘Thou shalt not blah, blah, blah’. But look again at the way they begin. Everything God expects of His people is based on understanding His character and His relationship with them.

Read Exodus 20 v 1–6

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

1x *List the three things God says about Himself in verses 2, 5 & 6.*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

When you see ‘*the LORD*’ in the Bible, it means the special name of God which He revealed to Moses – ‘*I Am*’. It means the only God, the eternal God, who is the same yesterday, today and forever.

1x *What words would you use to define the relationship God has with His people? (v5–6)*

1x *What does God forbid them to do?*

GET ON WITH IT

Do you have any gods or idols that you worship in the place of the true and living God? Is there something that gets in the way of loving God

wholeheartedly? Popularity? Sport? Entertainment? Friends? A boyfriend or girlfriend? Or even your own selfishness? Pray for God’s help and get rid of them – ruthlessly.

1x *Why do you think God is so serious about the consequence of not putting Him first? (v5)*

The statements that God makes about Himself in v5 and v6 seem very different. But God is good and holy (not overlooking sin) as well as being compassionate and faithful (showing love to a thousand generations).

PRAY ABOUT IT

Ask for God’s help to love Him and keep His commandments — not just these ten but everything that Jesus summed up in these words: ‘*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength*’ and ‘*Love your neighbour as yourself*’.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

More about sin on page 109.



8

Remember God

Here's some more guidance on how God wants His people to live. Once again, remembering Him is at the heart of it all.

Read Exodus 20 v 7

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

Why is God's 'name' so important?

We've already seen how God's name told the Israelites about His character — who He was. To misuse it or treat it lightly shows contempt for who He is.

GET ON WITH IT

Hopefully it shocks you or makes you uncomfortable when friends or family use Jesus' name as a swear word. Can you think of something to say that shows how offensive it is to you without sounding judgmental?

Read verses 8–11

What should the Sabbath be like? (v9–10)

Why is the Sabbath special? (v11)

Interestingly the command about the Sabbath isn't repeated in the New Testament, but while not all Christians believe we have to have a special day as the Jews did, the principle to have a day of rest and time to meet with other Christians is still a good one.

Do you work hard?

Do you get enough rest?

Are you making meeting other believers a priority?

TALK IT OVER

Why is it so important for Christians to meet together regularly? Chat it through with an older Christian — look at Hebrews 10 v 24–25 as a starting point.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Remember God.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

Take a break on page 109.



9

The final six

God's top ten countdown is nearing its end.
More of the big ten now...

Read Exodus 20 v 12–17

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

God's blueprint for how His people were to live covers thoughts, words and deeds.

- Can you spot examples of each in these verses?
- Do you think Christians have to obey the Ten Commandments today?

Remember that the Israelites had already been rescued by God. The Ten Commandments and all the other laws that followed were to help them live after they had been rescued. So for us, following these or any other rules won't get us into God's good books — it's trusting Jesus that rescues us. In fact the Ten Commandments often show up how rubbish we are and how much we need the rescue that Jesus offers.

But Jesus didn't abolish these commands, so they are not irrelevant — in fact He took them even further. Take a few moments to read **Matthew 5 v 17–48**.

- What have the Ten Commandments taught you about God?

PRAY ABOUT IT

Have these commands of God highlighted any areas of your life where you're not pleasing Him? Pray about that now.

THE BOTTOM LINE

God wants to be God of our thoughts, words and actions.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

A little more on page 109.

