

# Lessons With Introductory Commentaries

Commentaries written by Rev. Nolan Gingrich

---

## FIRST LESSON: Exodus 6:2–11

Time and again we read this story, or see it pictured, and give little thought to the reality: that the people of God came from a place of slavery; of non-identity. Long before, though Joseph's extended family were welcomed into Egypt during the great famine, they had remained long enough to end up becoming a source of cheap labour to Egypt's rich and powerful. How often does it happen that guests are offered hospitality for a while, but in time become a nuisance?

However, in their distress, God speaks to Israel through Moses: "I will take you as my people, and I will be your God." And not only will they be freed from a slave-condition, they will once again be landowners as were their ancestors. It is like the African-American leader, Reverend Jesse Jackson speaking to a crowd of marginalized African Americans at Operation Breadbasket in Chicago, telling them to repeat after him, "I AM SOMEBODY!"

Might these words also be spoken by Indigenous people, women in abusive relationships, or those who are enslaved by human trafficking?

Now listen to the ancient story once again as told in **Exodus 6**.

*God also spoke to Moses and said to him: 'I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name "The Lord" I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they resided as aliens. I have also heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are holding as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the Israelites, "I am the Lord, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord."' Moses told this to the Israelites; but they would not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and their cruel slavery. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, 'Go and tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his land.'*

## SECOND LESSON: Galatians 3: 26–29

Galatia, located in the central region of modern day Turkey, was inhabited by Celtic people. The Galatian Celts were warriors, and known to deal in slaves.

In this letter, the early Christian apostle points toward a non-violent society in which tyrants, or disciplinarians, are no threat. Baptised into such a society, a Christian is claimed by Christ as a worthy and empowered person—a somebody who is loved by God and never considered trash!

As we listen to these words, and remember again that all people are God's children, what biases must each of us face?

This is the way Paul tells it in **Galatians 3**.

*For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.*

## GOSPEL: John 8:31–38

(Read by person reading the National Bishop's sermon, sermon will provide commentary)

*Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.' They answered him, 'We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, "You will be made free"?'*

*Jesus answered them, 'Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there for ever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you look for an opportunity to kill me, because there is no place in you for my word. I declare what I have seen in the Father's presence; as for you, you should do what you have heard from the Father.'*

