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**The Plagues**

**God's Power on the Line against Pharaoh**

***Exodus 7:8–10:29***

**Purpose:** To recognize the futility of trying to withstand God.

(*This is a long section to study. Emphasize the skill of reading for major trends. There is not time to discuss many interesting details*.)

God's authority is on the line anytime a world leader like Pharaoh decides to take charge. It's also on the line when his children decide to play the game their own way. We have the benefit of looking at a historical book like Exodus to tell us the futility of resisting God. But somehow we find ourselves engaged in a recurring battle in our lives, not too dissimilar to Pharaoh's. Pharaoh opposed God, with devastating consequences. God will also challenge your right to do as you please. This lesson shows that it's futile to resist.

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**1.** In what circumstances have you recently been in a tug-of-war with God?

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**2.** Read Exodus 7:8–25. What was the sign of God's supremacy (vv. 8–13)?

What would this have done for Moses and Aaron?

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***Question 2.*** *Humanistic explanations of the plagues on Egypt abound. For those who want to explore answers from scholars who accept the biblical text at face value, point out various reference works such as the New Bible Dictionary, 2d ed., J. D. Douglas, ed. (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1982).*

*The Nile River was the heart of Egypt's economy and worship. The Egyptian magicians counterfeited some of the plagues, but they were powerless to stop God's judgment. Two of the magicians are named in 2 Timothy 3:8. They used Satanic powers to oppose God.*

*The first three plagues were over all the land, and they affected both Israelites and Egyptians. The next six were on the Egyptians only and not over the land of Goshen where the Israelites lived.*

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**3.** What was the condition of Pharaoh's heart (vv. 13–14, 22)?

How would such a spirit be manifested today?

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***Question 3.*** *Several times in this story God is said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart (4:21; 10:1, 20, 27). This was not done against Pharaoh's will. God could have softened Pharaoh's heart, but he simply let him be. In New Testament terms, God gave him over—let him be what he himself wanted to be; let him have his own way—so that in the end God's power would be plain for all to see (see Rom 1:18–32; 9:17).*

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**4.**  Read Exodus 8. How did Pharaoh react to these “mighty acts of judgment,” as God called them (7:4; 8:8, 25–32)?

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**5.** What was the basic issue between God and Pharaoh (7:5, 17; 8:10, 22)?

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**6.** What new disclosure does God make to Pharaoh about his power (vv. 22–23)?

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**7.**  In what matters is God in conflict with earthly powers today?

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**8.**  Read Exodus 9. Some of the Egyptians responded positively to this outbreak of judgments (v. 20). How do people interpret natural disasters today?

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***Question 8.*** *The point is not to conclude that all natural disasters are God's judgment, but to explore reasons why many people prefer to talk about “bad luck,” as if there were no personal God controlling the universe he made.*

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**9.** What pattern of behavior has by this time become well established in Pharaoh (8:15, 30–32; 9:34–35)?

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**10.** Read Exodus 10. Pharaoh tried to make deals with God (vv. 11, 24). How have you tried to offer God less than full surrender to the totality of his demands?

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***Question 10.*** *Pharaoh wanted to keep his hold on the Israelites by giving them part of what they asked. He suggested four compromises (8:25, 28; 10:11, 24) to keep them in or near Egypt. God's enemy, Satan, uses the same strategy with God's children today, suggesting compromises rather than full obedience, to prevent them from enjoying the fullness of God's blessing.*

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**11.** When you are humbled by God, how can you regain your self-confidence and your trust in God?

Think of someone you know who has been humbled by God. How might you lift him or her up to Christ?

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***Question 11.*** *Do not accept glib answers. Take time for the group to probe for a number of serious responses.*

*End with the redemptive emphasis of the study's final question, so people will be aware of the needs of others.*

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