

God Hears His People

Sunday Plan

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 1–2

MEMORY VERSE

Exodus 14:13–14

OPTIONAL VIDEO

Exodus 1–18 Overview

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/exodus-1-18/>

God heard his people because he keeps his promises.

For the Teacher

Read this before you teach. This quarter walks through Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy — God rescuing his people from Egypt and forming them into a holy nation. Today is the setup: how Israel ended up enslaved, and the moment when God begins his response. The students need to leave with one idea firmly in place.

KEY TRUTH

God heard his people because he keeps his promises.

The covenant matters. Back in Genesis, God promised Abraham that his family would become a great nation and that through them all peoples would be blessed (Gen 12:1–3, 15:13–16). By Exodus 1, Abraham has been dead four hundred years, his descendants are slaves in a foreign country, and from the outside it looks like the promise has died with him. Exodus 2:24 is the verse that breaks the tension: “God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.” God isn’t responding to suffering in general. He’s keeping a specific promise to specific people. That covenant fidelity is the engine of the entire book.

The four verbs in Exodus 2:24–25 are the heart of the lesson. God *heard, remembered, saw, and knew*. The Hebrew piles them up on purpose. After four centuries of silence, the text floods you with God’s attention all at once. Slow down when you read these verses. You want the students to feel the silence breaking.

Plant the covenant frame today; everything builds on it. The plagues, the Red Sea, Sinai, the Tabernacle, even the failure at the Golden Calf — all of it operates inside the covenant God establishes here. He has bound himself by oath to a particular family. The stakes of the rescue aren’t just “people are suffering”; the stakes are “will God’s word stand?” Lessons 4 (Red Sea), 5 (the Law), and 6 (the Tabernacle) will all return to this frame. Plant it well today.

What we’re skipping and why. Exodus 1–2 includes a lot more than 2:23–25. The midwives Shiphrah and Puah defy Pharaoh in chapter 1; Moses is born, hidden, drawn from the river, raised in Pharaoh’s house, kills an Egyptian, and flees to Midian in chapter 2. We’re skipping the midwives entirely (their courage will land better in Lesson 8, where fear and faith are the theme) and saving Moses’ birth and flight for Lesson 2 next week. Today stays focused on the question: did God forget his people? The answer in 2:24 is: no, and the rescue is already underway.

Pointing forward to Christ. Hebrews 4:14–16 picks up the language of God hearing his people and applies it to Jesus, the great High Priest who hears us in our weakness. Romans 8:26 names the Spirit groaning with us when we don’t know how to pray. The Israelites’ groaning in Exodus 2:23 is a kind of foreshadowing — the people of God have always cried out, and God has always heard. You don’t need to land all of this in class. But if a student asks “what does this have to do with Jesus?”, the honest answer is: the same God who heard Israel hears the church, and Jesus is the proof he keeps his promises.

Quarter memory verse. The students are working on Exodus 14:13–14 across Lessons 1–4 — “The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.” Today’s lesson plants the soil for that verse. Pharaoh is the threat. God has already heard. The fighting is about to begin.

The journal. Sunday is when students do the personal work of their faith with pen and paper. Three journal moments are scripted into today’s lesson — they write the bottom line at the top of a fresh page, copy the four verbs during The Story, and respond personally during The Work. Make sure students bring their journals; have a few spare ones available for guests or kids who forgot.

Repeat the bottom line. Say it at least five times across the lesson — at the start, after the text, in the discussion, in the journal reflection, and at the closing prayer. The students should leave able to recite it without hesitation.

MATERIALS

- Bibles for each student (or shared between pairs)
- Whiteboard and markers
- Student journals (with a few spares for guests)
- Pens for each student
- Optional: video access for the Bible Project Exodus 1–18 Overview

1. Gather

Welcome the students and tell them you're starting a new quarter today — Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. The story of how God rescued his people from Egypt and formed them into a nation. It's going to take thirteen weeks.

ASK

Have you ever felt stuck in a situation you couldn't change, or where you weren't sure anyone was listening?

Let them think for a moment, then turn to a partner and share. After about a minute, pull the group back and ask for two or three to share with the whole class. Keep it brief — this is the hook, not the substance.

That feeling — being stuck, being unheard — is exactly where today's story starts. The Israelites have been slaves in Egypt for four hundred years, crying out for help, and from the outside it looks like nothing's happening. Today the students will find out what God was actually doing the whole time. Write the bottom line on the board and have them say it back:

SAY

God heard his people because he keeps his promises.

Have students open their journals to a fresh page. They write today's date at the top, then the bottom line as the heading for the page. Everything they write in their journal today goes under that heading.

Today's date and the bottom line as the page heading: **God heard his people because he keeps his promises.**

2. The Story

Setting the Stage

Before opening the Bible, the students need a quick recap of where they are in the larger story. Don't assume they remember Genesis.

SAY

Way back in Genesis, God made a promise to a man named Abraham. He told Abraham that his family would grow into a huge nation and that through them, God would bless the whole world. Abraham had a son — Isaac. Isaac had a son — Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons. One of them, Joseph, ended up in Egypt and rose to become second in command of the country. During a famine, the whole family — seventy people — moved to Egypt to be near Joseph.

That was four hundred years ago. Joseph is long dead. The family of seventy has grown into a nation of more than a million. They're still in Egypt. But the new Pharaoh doesn't remember Joseph. All he sees is a foreign people group multiplying inside his country. And he panics.

Reading the Text

Have everyone open to Exodus 1:8. Either go around the circle reading a verse each through verse 14, or have one confident reader take the whole passage. Read slowly.

Exodus 1:8–14

After the reading, briefly recap together: Pharaoh tries to break the Israelites by working them to death. They build cities for him. They suffer. Their numbers keep growing anyway, which makes Pharaoh angrier, which makes him crueler.

The Israelites are trapped. They're being worked to death, and from where they're standing, it looks like God has forgotten them. Four hundred years of silence is a long time. But Scripture tells us something they couldn't see.

The Four Verbs

Have them turn to Exodus 2:23. Have a different student read 2:23–25 aloud — slowly. Then ask the class to read those same verses again silently and listen for four things God does.

Exodus 2:23–25

Have a third student read it aloud one more time. Then ask:

ASK

What four things does God do in these verses?

Write them on the board as the students find them in their Bibles:

God **heard** their groaning. God **remembered** his covenant. God **saw** the Israelites. God **knew** their suffering.

Have students copy the four verbs into their journals — just the verbs, in big letters they can come back to.

The four verbs from Exodus 2:24–25: **Heard. Remembered. Saw. Knew.**

Pause. Let them sit with the words. **After four hundred years of apparent silence, the text floods you with God's attention all at once.** He wasn't absent. He wasn't ignoring them. The moment the text says he "remembered his covenant," everything changes — because the rest of the book is God keeping that promise.

ASK

What does it mean that God "remembered" the covenant? Did he forget?

Allow a few responses. Then land the precise meaning:

SAY

"Remembered" doesn't mean God had forgotten. In Hebrew, "remembering" is biblical language for God acting on a promise. When the text says God remembered, it means he started moving. The rescue you're going to read about for the next twelve weeks begins right here, in this verse.

Object Lesson — The Triangle

Draw a triangle on the whiteboard. Label the three corners:

God (top) **Promise** (bottom left) **People** (bottom right)

SAY

At the top of the triangle is God. Down here on one side are his promises — the ones he made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Over here on the other side are his people, the descendants of those three.

SAY

Even when God's people are suffering, even when they think they've been forgotten, the line between God and his promises never breaks. He doesn't change his mind. He doesn't lose track. The triangle holds. What you're going to see for the rest of this quarter is God acting along these three lines — keeping faith with his promises, acting on behalf of his people, and tying every move he makes back to the covenant he swore to Abraham.

Trace the three sides as you talk. That's the engine of the whole book — and the bottom line for today: **God heard his people because he keeps his promises.**

3. The Point

Discussion

These questions move from what the text says to what it means. The italic answers are anticipated answers — your safety net, not the only acceptable response.

DISCUSSION

1. Why did Pharaoh enslave the Israelites?

→ *He was afraid of how numerous they were becoming and tried to break them through forced labor.*

2. The text says the Israelites' cry "went up to God" and that God "heard." What does that tell us about how God responds to suffering — even suffering that goes on for a long time?

→ *He hears it. He doesn't ignore it. The fact that God's response took four hundred years doesn't mean he wasn't paying attention.*

3. Why does it matter that the verse says God "remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" — instead of just saying God "felt sorry for them"?

→ *Because God's rescue isn't just sympathy. He's keeping a specific promise. The covenant with Abraham is the reason the rescue happens, and the rescue is proof the covenant holds.*

4. Some people today say, "If God really cared, he wouldn't let bad things happen." How does this story push back on that?

→ *God cared the whole time the Israelites suffered. He heard them. The presence of suffering didn't mean the absence of God — it meant the rescue hadn't arrived yet. God's silence is never the same as God's absence.*

5. Romans 8:26 says the Spirit groans with us when we don't know how to pray. How does that connect to what the Israelites were doing in Exodus 2:23?

→ *They groaned, and God heard. Romans says the Spirit still groans with us when we can't put our pain into words. The same pattern. God hears even what we can't say.*

Fear, Pain, Waiting, Hope

A whiteboard activity at the table. Divide the class into pairs or threes. On the whiteboard, write four words spaced out across the top:

Fear · Pain · Waiting · Hope

Each group picks two of the four words and finds one verse from Exodus 1–2 that fits each. They write the reference on the board under the right word and prepare to explain in one sentence what the

verse shows about God or about the people. Allow about five minutes of small-group work before walking through the words together as a class.

After the class walk-through, land the takeaway: **God is present and active in all four.** Fear, pain, waiting, hope — none of them are outside his attention. The Israelites felt all four, and in every one, God heard.

4. The Work

Journal Reflection

Have students turn back to today's journal page. The verbs are already there. Now they answer one prompt in writing — at least three to four sentences.

What's one situation in my life — or in the world — where I need to remember that God hears? Write it down. Then ask: which of the four verbs (heard, remembered, saw, knew) do I most need to remember God is doing for me right now?

Give about four minutes for writing and silent prayer. Don't fill the silence. Their journal is private — they don't have to share what they wrote unless they want to. After the writing time, invite anyone who wants to share one sentence to do so.

Closure

Exodus 2:23–25

Read it aloud one final time, slowly, with the class. Then close:

SAY

Heard. Remembered. Saw. Knew. When you feel forgotten this week — at school, at home, online — open your journal. Look at those four words. God hears his people because he keeps his promises. That's been true since Genesis. It's true today.

Preview next week briefly: *Lesson 2 — God Calls Moses. We'll see how God starts using a very ordinary person — actually, a person Pharaoh tried to kill as a baby — to rescue an entire nation.*

PRAY

Father, thank you for hearing us. Thank you that you don't forget the people you've made promises to. Help us trust you when we can't see what you're doing — to remember that your silence is not your absence. We pray for the people we know who feel unheard right now. Be near to them. In Jesus' name, Amen.