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*"It is not a matter of trying, but of trusting;
not of struggling, but of resting in Him."
[A.W. Tozer]*

ENGAGE & CONNECT

What is one thing you are really looking forward to about the summer? (i.e. being outside longer, family get together, more cookouts, eating popsicles)

BEGIN WITH PRAYER

Spend a moment praying this passage, beginning your time together in humility and gratitude!

*"I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken."
[Psalm 16:8]*

BIG IDEA

When we accept the gift of despair, we can move forward in dependence on God.

PASSAGE & DISCUSSION

Exodus 13:17-18

1. Why did God lead the Israelites through the wilderness instead of the shorter, easier route?
2. In the sermon we heard, *"Apparently, quicker and shorter does not mean better."* Share about a time that you chose the quicker or shorter way, but it was not what God wanted for you.

Exodus 14:10-14

3. What does this passage reveal about the Israelites' mindset when they saw Pharaoh's army approaching?
4. How did Moses respond to their fear? What did he instruct them to do?

Exodus 15:1-2 and 11

5. How does this describe the Israelites' response after their deliverance?
6. What are some common ways we as Christians try to "fix" despair through self-effort instead of turning to God?
7. How can despair be a merciful gift from God?

8. What are your default reactions when life feels like it's moving backward? What would dependence look like in those moments?
9. In the sermon we heard, "*We would rather live in the comfort of the familiar than live by the promises of faith.*" How is God inviting you to live by a promise of faith in this season of life?
10. How can we support one another when we feel trapped between "Egypt and the sea", stuck with no easy way forward?

STEP OF OBEDIENCE

God sometimes leads us into despair—not to destroy us, but to free us from self-reliance. Like Israel, we often want comfort or control, **but God wants our hearts**. Self-despair isn't the end—it's a gate. On the other side is joy, freedom, and worship. *As you consider your next step, here are two questions to reflect on:* 1) What is one area of your life where you are relying more on yourself than on God? 2) How would your perspective change if you saw a current hardship as a gate to deeper grace?

Possible Next Steps of Faith

1. Write a short prayer of surrender this week, naming one area of struggle where you're ready to move from self-effort to trust and dependence.
2. Share with a friend (or the group) one past moment of despair where God showed up. Create a memorial of His faithfulness.

PRAYER FOCUS

I Praise You Because ...

Praise is not simply a thank you, but an acknowledgement of who God is. We must constantly and regularly remind ourselves that God is awesome and glorious. When we do that, our hearts are molded to a way of living and loving. Let's end our time together by praising God for who He is by completing the sentence, "God, I praise you because ..." Here are a few examples:

- *"I praise you because you are able, and you can do anything, anytime."*
- *"I praise you because you are the creator, the maker of the heavens and the earth."*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Exodus 14-15 Devotional](#)
 - Use this for background and encouragement before your group gathers.
- [Giving Grace With Your Words](#)
 - This would be a good resource to use after your group gathers.