

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

"JEHOVAH NISSI: THE LORD IS MY BANNER"

EXODUS 17:8-16

This Week's Core Competency

Prayer – I pray to God to know him, to lay my requests before him and to find direction for my daily life. Psalm 66:16-20

*16 Come and listen, all you who fear God;
let me tell you what he has done for me.*

*17 I cried out to him with my mouth;
his praise was on my tongue.*

*18 If I had cherished sin in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened;*

*19 but God has surely listened
and heard my voice in prayer.*

*20 Praise be to God,
who has not rejected my prayer
or withheld his love from me!*

When was the last time you saw a banner? Most of the banners we see today are relegated to advertising. Our internet browsing is bombarded with web banners. Our commutes are littered with large vinyl signs informing us of the spectrum of everything urgent from "Grand Opening!" to "Going Out of Business!" Roadside banners are used to garner our votes, our contributions or even our sympathies. The commercialism and politicization associated with banners in our culture often numbs us to the messages they display. Most banners we see are considered merely a nuisance.

***Prayer is weakness leaning upon
omnipotence.***

– W. S. Bowd

A few weeks ago, I was walking in a nearby park and happened upon a squadron of new cadets training for the local police academy. Two dozen men and women were running in formation, looking very serious and accomplished in their matching navy blue running gear. They were chanting in cadence and moving slowly but methodically through the park. All other runners, pedestrians and cyclists cleared the path, yielding the right of way to this impressive group. Most eye-catching was the one cadet, running in front of the group, with a large white banner, waving in the breeze, proudly displaying the name of the troop and the city they served. I smiled. No one else in the park that day was running with a banner!

Groups run together all the time in the park. Some even run with matching outfits. But a group with a banner is different. The banner for this group of cadets gave them an identity. Everyone knew who they were and why they were there. The banner leading them through the park was attention-getting. The banner also gave the group a sense of focus. When tired or lagging, cadets were using the banner to keep themselves in step, a motivation to keep going. Most importantly the banner gave the group a presence of authority. No one spontaneously joined their ranks. They ran distinctly as the authorized police cadets of our city. Be careful how you run in the park when the cadets are there, banner and all!

Under what banner do you run? What do you focus on in your struggles? What flag do you wave when you win?

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

Exodus 17:8-16

Your Notes:

8 The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. 9 Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands."

10 So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. 11 As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. 12 When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. 13 So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

14 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven."

15 Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my Banner. 16 He said, "Because hands were lifted up against the throne of the LORD, the LORD will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation."

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Box the active party in v. 8.
- * Circle the recipients of attack in v. 8.
- * Underline the commands in v. 9.
- * Double underline the object in Moses' hands in v. 9.
- * Circle those who went on top of the hill in v. 10.
- * Draw a line between the contrasting actions of Moses in v. 11.
- * Connect with a line the word "they" in v. 12 with corresponding names in v. 10.
- * Underline the phrase showing the passing of time in v. 12.
- * Circle who speaks in v. 14.
- * Box the promise God makes in v. 14
- * Circle the word "altar" in v. 15 and draw a line to its name.
- * Double underline the repeated words in v. 16.
- * Count how many times "hand(s)" is used in this text.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. What started the battle between the Amalekites and the Israelites? (see Dt 25:17-19)
2. Before Rephidim, what other trials did the Israelites face after leaving Egypt? How is this trial (Ex 17:8-16) different?
3. When Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning. What did the uplifted hands have to do with Joshua's success?
4. If Moses' hands were powerful enough to bring victory against the Amalekites, why did his hands not have enough power to overcome his own fatigue?
5. Why was Moses instructed to write this story on a scroll?
6. Why did Moses build an altar and why the name?
7. What does the introduction of the concept of a throne reveal about God and Israel?
8. Who is at war in verse 15? What does this say about the character of this warring one?
9. How do you reconcile the claims about Amalek in verse 14 and 16?
10. How is the LORD your Banner today?

The ten plagues God brought upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians through his servant Moses are of epic proportion. The departure of thousands of slaves, weighted down with the wealth of Egypt, without a drop of shed blood defies all logic. The crossing of the Red Sea by a population larger than many modern cities while Egyptian chariots and horsemen drowned—who could have ever imagined something so miraculous? A generation of Israelites lived the wonder of God comprehensively solving their problems. No wonder Hollywood can't leave this tale alone.

Yet, after all this wonder, God chose to allow His people to face a number of challenges on the way to Mount Sinai. You would think that God would take care of all the needs of His people miraculously all the time without any delay. He is the LORD who is mighty, after all (Ex 7:3-5).

In strong contrast to the miracles of the Exodus, the LORD prepared his people with a number of faith-building episodes. Rather than supply a constant flow of water, twice God allowed his people to thirst (Ex 15:22-27; 17:1-7). He also allowed His people to go hungry (Ex 16:1-3). God allowed these deficiencies to increase the trust of His people in His provision. His people traveled three days without finding water and when they did find water it was undrinkable (Ex 15:22-27). Why would an Almighty God let His people go without water even one day, let alone three? Moses recorded that God allowed His people to experience such a shortage to "put them to the test" (Ex 15:25).

We need to trust God for our daily necessities (water, food, shelter, etc.). Sometimes this trust-building may require times of hunger or thirst. God has not failed me if my stomach growls or my throat is dry. Hunger and thirst should drive us closer to God who is our supply. Hunger and thirst should also increase the intensity of our thanksgiving when God does supply. Rather than murmuring and complaining about the pains we may feel when God delays provision, we should remind ourselves about what God has done for us in the past. Psalm 78 is a sad song about how quickly we forget God's goodness when we feel even the slightest pangs of an empty stomach.

Just as God challenged His people to trust Him for food and water, He also allowed His people to face the hatred and attack of enemies. Exodus 17:8-16 features

an account where God delivers His people after an attack, and not before by prevention. "The primary function of this section in its present location is the demonstration of yet another proof and benefit of Yahweh's Presence with Israel. The occasion for the demonstration this time is an attack from the outside instead of an internal complaint. The result, however, is once again an undeniable supernatural intervention of Yahweh. . . . Yahweh is present, when the need arises, to fight alongside and even on behalf of his people." (John I. Durham, *Exodus*, 234)

If God is only a God of prevention, how would we ever know of His deliverance? Just as God uses hunger and thirst to build our trust in Him, at times He may allow us to face hatred and attack from others so that we might find our strength and protection in Him. The Amalekites were the aggressors in Exodus 17. God did not circumvent the strike against His people. Moses described elsewhere the particularly heinous methods of Israel's first enemy encounter post Egypt (Dt 25:17-19). God, through Moses, instructed this tribe of brick makers to take up arms to defend themselves. Joshua was named Israel's first military captain (Ex 17:9). God chose to use the battlefield as well as the desert to show His power.

In this first of many battles to come, the people of God were shown that they needed more than inventive military strategy or superior firepower. When facing enemies, the people of God needed the power of God. The power of God is to be found in depending upon God. While Joshua was in hand to hand combat with the Amalekites, Moses was lifting up his hands, and perhaps God's staff (Ex 17:9). The success of Joshua as the result of Moses' uplifted hands shows that God was the provision and power for handling enemies. Need food—seek God. Need water—seek God. Need to overcome an enemy—seek God. Battles for God should drive us to call out to God for His help, His strength and His provision. Moses, Aaron and Hur became very inventive in demonstrating their dependence upon God while Joshua battled. Sometimes we may need to help each other to persevere in our pursuit of God's work in our lives.

When Joshua overcame the Amalekites (Ex 17:13), Moses was instructed by the LORD to remember his provision in battle and to remember that future battles would be victories for the LORD as well (Ex 17:14). Moses wrote down this account for posterity and

reminded Joshua verbally that God was the Victor this day, and like this day, would deliver victory to His people over their enemies.

Moses also memorialized this victory from God with the building of an altar and the proclamation of the altar's name—The LORD is my Banner. A banner is often used as something lifted high to rally an army around before a battle. The rally point for battle is often a flag or ensign lifted high for all the troops and even the enemy to see. Moses uses this same word to describe the pole used to lift up the brazen serpent that brings healing (Nu 21:8-9). Yet, in this initial battle, no banner is lifted up in advance to lead the troops into battle. Joshua goes out to fight the Amalekites (Ex 17:9) with no flags, no colors, no banners announcing his charge. The LORD, who is sought earnestly and with great perseverance, by Moses and his team, is the true banner, the true rally point, the true source of motivation and empowerment in Israel's battles. All future battles should be fought with the LORD as the true source of strength and solace.

Like the Israelites, we need food and water. Like Israel, we need to call out to the LORD for our daily needs. Like the people of the Exodus, we face adversaries. Our enemies may be spiritual or even physical. We may think that we are too educated or too sophisticated to truly have any enemies. But we are reminded by our Lord that we are not better than Him. We will encounter opposition (Jn 15:18-25).

Fighting such enemies in our own strength and strategy is futile. We need to call out to God for His strength, wisdom, protection and provision as we face those who would oppose our efforts to expand His Kingdom. We need the LORD as our Banner. He is lifted high above us and He is our rallying motivation and encouragement. We need to be strategic, calculated and creative in all we do for God. But we must never forget that we need God more than our strategy. We need Christ more than our calculations. Successful Kingdom advancement is more about our dependence upon God than our innovation or creativity.

When God does great things in your life, take time to write such victories down for yourself and others to read. Tell your family and friends about how God showed up in your struggles. Memorialize God's accomplishments in your life with things that will remind you of the times that God fought on your behalf. If the LORD is your Banner, wave Him high for others to see His power and His protection, even when attacked.

The Message of the Passage

In the struggles you face, call out to God for His help. Persevere in your pursuit of God's strength. Publically celebrate and memorialize His victory in your life!

day 4 **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to one the following *living* questions:**

How is God making himself known to you?– How does God want to change you?– How is God calling you to change your world?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 8 **Amalekites** "It appears that not only the peninsula, but the adjoining deserts towards the south of Palestine, were occupied by an extensive and powerful tribe of Bedouin habits, called Amalekites. These Amalekites were the posterity of Esau [Gen. 34] and were no doubt prompted in this assault by the hereditary hatred of that race which had become possessor of the birth-right and the blessing lost by their father. Their malice, which may be said to have run in the blood, was probably somewhat exasperated at this time by seeing the promises to Israel working towards an accomplishment" (George Bush, *Notes on Exodus*, 1: 218).
- v. 8 **Rephidim** "The name means rests or stays , i.e. resting places. The place lies in the march of the Israelites from Egypt to Sinai. Its site is not certain, but it is perhaps Wadi Feiran , a rather broad valley about 25 miles from Jebel Musa (Mount Sinai). Others place it in Wadi es Sheikh , an eastern continuation of Feiran, and about 12 miles from Sinai. Here the Israelites fought their first battle and gained their first victory after leaving Egypt, the Amalekites having attacked them; here also the people murmured from thirst, and Moses brought water for them out of the rock" (*Smith's Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Rephidim").
- v. 9 **Joshua** "The proper name of Joshua, who appears here for the first time in the service of Moses, was Hosea; he was a prince of the tribe of Ephraim (Num13:8). The name Joshua—'Jehovah is help' (or God-help), he probably received at the time when he entered Moses' service, either before or after the battle with the Amalekites (see Num. 13:16)" (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, 2: 78).
- v. 11 **Held up his hand** "Usually a military signal for beginning battle or for the advance. Presumably 'lowered his hand' could then be a signal for retreat. Otherwise the uplifted hand may be the sign of an oath (cf. Gen. 14:22, and in this chapter, verse 16) to put Amalek under the sacred 'ban' or 'curse', that meant utter destruction. However, the usual explanation (that it refers to prayer) may well be correct. In this case, to lower the hands would be to cease to pray, and thus to cease to depend on God for help. See Psalm 63:4 for lifting up of hands in prayer" (R. Alan Cole, *Exodus*, TOTC, 136-137).
- v. 13 **Overcame** "To discomfit [Hebrew *vayahalosh*] is to weaken. The Amalekites were weakened, but by no means demolished. That the victory was less than a total triumph can be judged by its aftermath. When the battle was over, there was no jubilation, no chant of glorious success . . . Moreover, far from rejoicing, Moses is instructed to inscribe in the Book of Remembrance and rehearse in Joshua's ears that the Lord will erase Amalek's memory from under the heavens and the Lord will wage war on Amalek from generation to generation (Ex. 17:16)" (Allan M. Langner, "Remembering Amalek Twice," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* [Oct 2008]: 251).
- v. 15 **Altar** "There is nothing said about sacrifices being offered upon this altar. It has been conjectured, therefore, that as a place of worship and thank-offering, the altar with its expressive name was merely to serve as a memorial to posterity of the gracious help of the Lord, and that the words which were spoken by Moses were to serve as a watchword for Israel, keeping this act of God in lively remembrance among the people in all succeeding generations" (Keil and Delitzsch, 79).
- v. 15 **Banner/Nissi** Moses used this word only here in Exodus (17:15) in connection with the name of God/Yahweh. Is used in Numbers (21:8-9) as a pole lifted high. God is seen as the one who is the source of victory. The name is used in memorial of God's victory as opposed to leading the charge into battle.
- v. 16 **Throne** "The Hebrew is difficult, particularly the word translated 'throne.' The Hebrew is *kes*, which appears only here in the Old Testament. Most commentators take it as a shortened form of *kisseh* (or *kisseh*), the common word for 'throne.' Assuming this to be correct, the rest is still not clear. Literally the Hebrew reads 'hand upon/against the throne of Yah.' Perhaps hand refers to the Amalekites show of force against God's throne. 'Hand' in the Old Testament commonly refers to military power. Or perhaps 'hand' refers to Moses' raised hands upon or toward Yahweh's throne (see vv. 11-13)" (Peter Enns, *The NIV Application Commentary*, *Exodus*, 351).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

I love parades! This year, my family and friends had a perfect spot for Arlington's Fourth of July parade. With donuts and coffee in hand, we watched eagerly as different groups passed by our row of chairs. Each float or group that came by had a banner. It was an announcement of who they are. The people who participated in that club and organization were proud to declare who or what they were representing on that beautiful sunny day in July. The only group I'm not completely sure about was the "Wheelin' Elvis" group. These men stole the show by riding around in Elvis wigs and white suits and riding miniature motorcycles. I think they were just representing fun! A banner tells other people who we are and we are the Lord's. He is our Banner. I have a sign that hangs on my porch by my front door. It reads, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15). It's a banner. It says that my house stands for the Lord. The Lord is a banner for us too. He is for us, will go before us, represents us to the Father. What an amazing truth that we belong to Him! He can trust Him to fight for us and love us with an everlasting love. Spend some time this week talking together about what the banner over your house says.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Exodus 17:8-16

1. What did Moses ask Joshua to do?
2. What did Moses do?
3. Who helped Moses when he was tired?

What Do You Think

When Moses trusted in God's power instead of his own, God provided victory. In what ways do you need to trust God to fight your battles?

What R U Going To Do

Make a family banner. List what your family stands for and words that represent your family. Hang it somewhere everyone can see it and give thanks to our great God who is our Banner!

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Prayer - I talk to God so I can know Him, ask Him for things and find out what He wants me to do.

Memory Verse

Psalm 86:9-10 - *All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O LORD; they will bring glory to your name. For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.

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