



One question I find myself asking more often than I would like is, “How did we get here?”

I have asked it at church after a service or ministry night didn’t go as planned. I have asked it while catering when an event suddenly went sideways. I have even asked it while driving after realizing I took a wrong turn and ended up miles from where I intended to be.

That question usually comes after arriving somewhere we never wanted to go. Somewhere along the way, a wrong turn was taken, a foolish decision was made, or a mistake changed the destination. Asking, “How did we get here?” forces us to look back and consider what brought us to where we are. As Exodus opens, I imagine the Israelites asking the same question.

How did we get here?

How did the family of Jacob, who came to Egypt under God’s blessing during Joseph’s lifetime, end up enslaved under a ruthless Pharaoh? The people who once found refuge in Egypt were now suffering under oppression.

The answer did not come from one bad decision. It was the result of generations of events unfolding exactly as God had said they would. Joseph had been sold into slavery by his brothers. A famine drove Jacob’s family to Egypt. Joseph’s influence eventually faded, and “there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph” (Exodus 1:8). What looked like disconnected events was setting the stage for God to reveal His power and faithfulness.

Sometimes we arrive in painful places because of our choices. Other times, like Israel, we find ourselves suffering even though God has been faithfully directing the story. Exodus teaches us that hardship does not mean God has abandoned His promises. Our present circumstances are often shaped by many decisions, relationships, and seasons that came before us. Sometimes we are living with the consequences of our own choices. Other times we are simply experiencing the brokenness of a fallen world. Either way, God is never surprised by where we are. Before Israel ever cried out for deliverance, God already had a plan to rescue them.

As we begin our series, **Leaving Egypt Behind**, Exodus 1 will help us understand how Israel got where they were, what faithfulness looked like while they were there, and how God was working even when He seemed silent. It will also help us examine the places in our own lives where we may have taken a wrong turn, made an unwise choice, or slowly drifted from where God wanted us to be.

Most importantly, we will see that no matter where we find ourselves, we must never take our eyes off God or His promises. Israel’s circumstances changed dramatically, but God’s covenant did not. The same is true for us. Our surroundings may change, our plans may fail, and life may take us somewhere we never expected, but God remains faithful to His people and always keeps His promises.¹

¹ Author’s Note.

ICEBREAKER

If someone were writing your family's history for future generations, what story, attribute, or family trait would absolutely have to be included?

READ IT

Read Exodus 1:1-22

EXPLORE IT

1. According to Exodus 1:1–7, how many members of Jacob's family went to Egypt, and what happened to the Israelites over time?
2. What concern did the new Pharaoh express about the Israelites in Exodus 1:8–10?
3. What methods did the Egyptians use to oppress the Israelites in Exodus 1:11–14? How did the midwives respond?

APPLY IT

"The Waiting"

As we look at this first chapter, we will read of the events that set the scene for the remainder of the book, particularly of God's marvelous redemption within the first fourteen chapters. Here we see the people of Israel enslaved and slaughtered under the cruel hand of Pharaoh, yet in the midst of such affliction, we are told again and again and again that God continued to make His people fruitful and strong....While none of this is explicitly restated here, Moses clearly expects his readers to be familiar with Genesis before entering into the story of the Exodus. Within Moses' own day, this was likely because many of the Israelites needed to be refamiliarized with their family

history. After all, spending four hundred years in a foreign country is not traditionally the greatest way to form a strong national identity. For us, we can take these words as a reminder that no one's life is lived in a vacuum. While we may not know the names of our great, great, great grandparents, we would not be here without all thirty-two of them. Of course, many today tend to believe in absolute personal autonomy to such a degree that they believe themselves to be untethered from the events of the past nor responsible for the events to come. Yet the reality is that, like the Israelites in Egypt, our lives have been shaped by those who have gone before us as well. But we will return to that thought a little later.²

4. What do you think Israel would have missed about God if they had forgotten the book of Genesis?

5. Who are the people that have faithfully passed God's story on to you? How are you helping pass that story on to the next generation?

6. How does remembering that your story is part of God's larger story change the way you view your current circumstances?

² Cole Newton, "Afflicted & Fruitful | Exodus 1," B. C. Newton, January 3, 2022, <https://bcnewton.co/2022/01/03/afflicted-fruitful-exodus-1/>.

And Joseph died: Joseph was the remarkable great-grandson of Abraham who saved Egypt – and the world – from terrible famine because he listened to God’s voice speaking through Pharaoh’s dream. Because of his wisdom and administration, he was lifted to high and honored office in Egypt. Yet eventually, Joseph died and the status his family enjoyed died with him.³

7. **What people or institutions are we tempted to trust for our security; whether political leaders, celebrities, employers, or even church leaders?**

8. **What does Joseph's death teach us about the limitations of every human source of power and security?**

“Refugee”

Four centuries had passed since God used Joseph's faithfulness to create blessings that his family enjoyed for decades. His influence brought favor with Pharaoh, provision during famine, and security in Egypt, demonstrating how one person's obedience can bless generations that follow. The same is true today. While none of us may hold Joseph's position or influence, our walk with God can leave a legacy that strengthens our families and shapes the lives of those who come after us.⁴

9. **Since every generation eventually passes, how can you intentionally become a "Joseph" in someone else's life this week?**

³ David Guzik, “Exodus 1 – Israel Multiplies in Egypt,” *Enduring Word*, accessed July 27, 2026, <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/exodus-1/>.

⁴ Author’s Note.

In verse 7 we see the Israelites following the command God had given in the garden to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28). God had later told Jacob, “I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation, indeed an assembly of nations, will come from you, and kings will descend from you” (Gen 35:11). Eventually, the Israelites filled Egypt (Exod 1:7,20). In Exodus 12:37 we read that their number expanded to six hundred thousand men, plus women and children!⁵

10. Sometimes we recognize God’s work only in hindsight. How does Israel's multiplication in Exodus 1:7 help us trust God's faithfulness when His promises take generations to unfold?

11. Israel's obedience to "be fruitful and multiply" probably felt ordinary day by day, yet it became one of God's greatest works in history. What ordinary acts of faithfulness might God be using today to accomplish extraordinary purposes?

Ironically, however, this divine blessing that Israel was experiencing evoked a crisis. These verses introduce a complication into the unfolding plot: Israel’s phenomenal population explosion was seen as a threat to national security by the new pharaoh. Israel’s alarming population growth served only to stir up paranoid fears. Whether Pharaoh was suggesting that they were simply expanding too rapidly, or were already threatening to outnumber the indigenous population, the net effect was the same: sooner or later the Israelites would be beyond Egyptian control.⁶

12. Tell about a time when someone else's success or blessing stirred jealousy or comparison in your heart. What did God teach you through it and how does Pharaoh's example serve as a cautionary tale?

⁵ Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Exodus*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014).

⁶ Paul R. Williamson, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 2 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2025).

“Free Fallin”

In verses 11-15 we see what one author says is old as human history:

Eighteen hundred years or so of Hebrew history, capped by a full exposition in Jesus Christ, tell us that God's revelation of himself is rejected far more often than it is accepted, is dismissed by far more people than embrace it, and has been either attacked or ignored by every major culture or civilization in which it has given its witness: magnificent Egypt, fierce Assyria, beautiful Babylon, artistic Greece, political Rome, Enlightenment France, Nazi Germany, Renaissance Italy, Marxist Russia, Maoist China, and pursuit-of-happiness America. The community of God's people has survived in all of these cultures and civilizations but always as a minority, always marginal to the mainstream, never statistically significant. (Eugene Peterson)

This continues right to the present day. Experts say that 1 in every 12 Christians is considered to be suffering from “extreme” levels of persecution, in countries like Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, Pakistan, and more. It is estimated that more people have been martyred for Christ in the past 50 years than in the church's first 300 years. Take North Korea, for instance. It's the nation where Christians experience the widest extent of persecution in the world. Many of the 300,000 Christians in North Korea are still suffering in prison camps, starving for lack of food rations and enduring hard labor for their faith in Jesus Christ.⁷

- 13. If following God has often made His people unpopular throughout history, why do we still expect faithfulness to earn the approval of our culture?**

“Runnin Down a Dream?...No a Nightmare!”

Frustrated by the utter failure of previous administrations to curtail the rapid growth of the Israelites, concern seemed to have turned to near panic. It was one thing to outnumber the Hyksos, a mere fraction of the population of Egypt. It was quite another to threaten the Egyptians themselves. The birth rate must be dramatically changed. To bring this about, the Pharaoh turned to the Hebrew midwives, two of whom are mentioned specifically here, either as specific examples, or as leaders.

Pharaoh's demands are incredible. First of all, this is an abominable act of violence against the innocent. Second, I am amazed that Pharaoh passes on all responsibility for the death of these Hebrew infants. He wants the midwives to solve this national dilemma of the Hebrew birth rate. The plan is virtually unworkable. How were the boy children to be “terminated”? Were the deaths to look accidental? How could Pharaoh expect any Hebrew woman to call for a midwife if it were known that all boy babies were somehow dying at their hand? I see here a poorly conceived (pardon the pun) plan, decreed by a desperate man. The midwives feared God more than Pharaoh, and so they refused to put the infant boys to death (1:17). This infuriated the Pharaoh, who summoned the midwives and demanded an explanation.⁸

- 14. How would you use the example of the Hebrew midwives to encourage a Christian who is being pressured to compromise at work, school, or within their family?**

⁷ Darryl Dash, “Suffering and Hope (Exodus 1:1–2:10),” *DashHouse*, February 18, 2018, <https://www.dashhouse.com/suffering-hope-exodus-11-210/>.

⁸ Robert L. Deffinbaugh, “Pharaoh's Fears and Israel's Faith (Exodus 1),” *Bible.org*, May 13, 2004, <https://bible.org/seriespage/1-pharaoh-s-fears-and-israel-s-faith-exodus-1>.

- 15. What are some warning signs that fear, jealousy, or the desire for control is beginning to shape our treatment of other people?**

“I Won’t Back Down”

Verse 22 is the chilling moment when an entire society is called to participate in evil rather than resist it. Whenever a culture normalizes the destruction of innocent life for the advancement of its own interests, it is walking the same path Pharaoh chose.⁹

- 16. Following the example of the Hebrew midwives, where is God calling you to courageously refuse to participate in evil while intentionally protecting or advocating for someone who is vulnerable?**

⁹ Author’s Note