



Things weren't going as I had expected, and certainly not how I had hoped.

In the middle of my high school years, our family moved and I transferred to a new school. I didn't like it at all. God was disrupting my life. I had a lot of good things going for me: I was becoming successful athletically, had built a solid reputation at my school, and had good friends there.

I couldn't understand why God would shake all of that up and make me start over halfway through high school with a new basketball program, a new school, new friends, and a new community. Not only did I not understand it; I was angry with God. I remember crying out to Him, asking why He would do all of this and wondering if He even cared.

One of my friends, Jessie, consistently encouraged me through the transition. She reminded me that God had a reason for what He was doing and that I needed to trust Him in the process. I remember looking out my window one day (cue the rain and sad music... you get the picture), thinking over the whole thing. I knew in my head that she was probably right, but I didn't want to believe it, and I definitely didn't want to buy in.

I went on like this for a few months before God began to change my attitude. Looking back now, while I certainly didn't enjoy it in the moment, that season became one of the most influential of my life. It shaped more of who I am today than I possibly could have imagined at the time.

Change rarely happens without some struggle along the way. God had bigger plans than I could see, and in the end, they were well worth the pain.

At this point in Exodus, Israel was learning some of the same lessons, though admittedly in far greater ways than my dramatic high school self ever did. In Exodus 5, God was shaking things up for His people in Egypt. He had bigger plans than *they* could see, but in the moment, things seemed to be getting worse instead of better. Their suffering increased so much that Moses cried out to God, asking why He had brought all this trouble on His people.

In chapter 6, we see God's response. He doesn't explain everything that is happening. Instead, He reminds Moses and Israel of who He is, what He has promised, and what He is going to do. When they couldn't see what God was doing, they needed to learn to trust God.¹⁵

¹⁵ Author's Note.

ICEBREAKER

What's something you were really skeptical about until you saw it actually work?

READ IT

Read Exodus 6:1-13

EXPLORE IT

- 1. What does God remind Moses that He has already done in verses 2–5?**
- 2. What does God promise that He will do for Israel in verses 6–8?
Make a list of the “I will” statements you find.**
- 3. How do the Israelites and Moses each respond to what God says in verses 9–12?**
- 4. What reasons does the text give for their responses?**
- 5. What does God command Moses and Aaron to do in verse 13?**

“You know, when we get into a pickle, usually what we want is a way out. We want a plan. We want a strategy. We want to see light at the end of the tunnel. We want something practical, you know, something nuts and bolts that will get us from A to Z, out of the mess that we are in. Isn’t it interesting that in this pickle, God stops and He says, Moses, let me tell you about Myself. And my friends, that is exactly what God wants us to know. When we get into a pickle, though we want a way out, a plan, a strategy, God wants us to know who He is, instead. Salvation begins with knowing who God is. It also ends with knowing who God is, but that is not the thrust here.

The point is, salvation begins with knowing who God is and so when he is preparing to do a great work, he begins by teaching his people about himself. That is why the most important thing that you could learn in your Bible study is who your God is.”¹⁷

- 9. Think of a difficult season when you desperately wanted God to show you what He was doing. What did you learn about God through that experience?**

- 10. How would you explain why knowing who God is can be more valuable than knowing what God is doing?**

¹⁷ J. Ligon Duncan III, “Revelation of the Divine Name,” sermon on Exodus 6:2–9, January 21, 2001, Reformed Theological Seminary, <https://rts.edu/resources/revelation-of-the-divine-name/>.

As we've seen, first God reminds Moses of who He is. Then God makes seven promises marked by seven "I will..." statements:

I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

I will deliver you from slavery to them.

I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.

I will take you to be my people.

I will be your God.

I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

I will give it to you for a possession.

Now God's people would come to know Him not only as the promise maker, but as the promise keeper. Calvin said, "Free promise we make the foundation of faith, because in it faith properly consists."¹⁸ By reiterating His promises to Israel, God was giving them firm ground for faith even in their greatest moment of affliction. Their hope could not rest in themselves. It could not rest in Moses or Aaron. Their hope had to rest securely in God. They were learning that faith rests not in the performance of God's servants, but in the promises of God Himself. It is God who remembers. God who acts. God who redeems. God who saves His people.¹⁹

11. How would you explain the difference between trusting God's promises and expecting God to do whatever we want Him to do?

12. What are some things we mistakenly treat as promises from God that He has never actually promised?

¹⁸ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, 3.2.29, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, CCEL edition.

¹⁹ Author's Note.

As we move into verse 9 we come across a sad scene. Moses does as God tells him to do and he shares God's promises with Israel. Surely in our greatest moments of anguish and affliction we will take hold of God's promises, right? Not so much for the people of Israel. We are told that they didn't listen to Moses because of their "broken spirit and harsh slavery". Everyone was losing heart!

Even Moses has bought into the despair of the people when God sends him before Pharaoh, wrestling with the fact that if even Israel wouldn't listen to him, why would Pharaoh? If God's own people were so overwhelmed with their suffering that they struggled to even hear the good news, why would Pharaoh even bat an eye?²⁰

- 13. What are some warning signs that discouragement is beginning to shape the way you see God and your circumstances? Which do you recognize most in yourself?**

- 14. If you were walking alongside someone whose suffering had left them struggling to even hear God's promises, how would this passage shape the way you cared for them?**

²⁰ Author's Note.

Notice how God responds to Moses' objection. He doesn't coddle him and validate his discouragement and despair. Essentially God tells Moses and Aaron that He wasn't asking, He was telling. It says He gave them a charge. He commanded them "to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt." The people didn't believe it. Moses wasn't buying in. But their discouragement would not derail God's deliverance.²¹

15. How would you explain the difference between being responsible for obedience and being responsible for the outcome?

16. What is one act of obedience you need to take this week regardless of what outcome you expect?

²¹ Author's Note.