



PACKET 1

EXODUS

LEAVING EGYPT BEHIND

SMALL GROUP LESSONS

PACKET 1

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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



The biggest events in history sometimes turn on the smallest hinges. Kaiser Wilhelm II was the king of Prussia and the last German emperor. He ruled from June 1888 to November 1918. He was ambitious and volatile, and his aggressive policies (many historians say) were at least partly to blame for World War I, which most historians think was an entirely avoidable war.

Back in 1889, when he had only been on the throne for a year, there was a special event taking place in Berlin: “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show”, which was touring through Europe. We in America like to send our very finest products all over the world, and Wilhelm was a big fan. At one point in the show, as was the custom, Annie Oakley would do all sorts of tricks with her Colt .45.

At one point in the show, she’d ask for a volunteer to hold a cigar—or, perhaps, put it in someone’s mouth—and she would pace off her steps and **she would shoot off the ashes of the cigar!** This was a joke line, and people didn’t volunteer. So people would laugh, and then her hapless husband would always come out and hold the cigar.

But on this particular day, after making the humorous announcement, an important man from the royal box walked into the arena and volunteered to hold the cigar. It was Kaiser Wilhelm! He was a fan, and maybe he wanted to show what a brave man he was. German policemen tried to stop him, but he waved them off. He wanted to hold the cigar. At this point, Annie Oakley felt like, “I can’t back out of this now. I’d lose face.” So she paced off her usual distance and prepared to shoot.

Here’s what one historian says: “Sweating profusely under her buckskin, and regretting that she had consumed more than her usual amount of whiskey the night before, Annie raised her Colt, took aim, and blew away the ashes from Wilhelm’s cigar.” The historian goes on to wonder how the world might have been different if she had missed the cigar and creased his head instead—not that he wanted an innocent person to be shot, of course, but wondering (as historians do) if we might have avoided World War I if she had been a worse shot on that day—just a little more whiskey, perhaps. Years later, after World War I had begun, Annie wrote to Wilhelm asking if she could take a second shot! God bless America.

The biggest events sometimes turn on the smallest hinges. In the 1930s, a portly English man walking late at night in New York City was hit by a cab driver. What if Winston Churchill had died instead of just sustaining injuries? How might World War II have been different? Sometimes the biggest events in history turn on the smallest hinges: just a few more degrees here, or a little different shot there.

We see that here in Exodus. Why is this story here? Most likely, the original audience for this book are the second generation of Israelites, who wandered in the wilderness because the first generation grumbled and complained. The first generation would die off before the Israelites went into the Promised Land. So Moses is compiling these books to retell their story. Surely they knew of Moses. Surely his story was widely known. This tells them where this special boy came from. He was a special baby with a special birth.

But there’s a larger point to the amazing story of Moses’ birth. It’s what the Israelites needed to know in the wilderness, and it’s what you and I need to be reminded of today as we wander in the world: God always has a plan, and he can use anybody to carry it out.¹⁰

¹⁰ Kevin DeYoung, “Three Women and No Funeral,” sermon on Exodus 2:1–10, University Reformed Church, September 13, 2015, <https://www.universityreformedchurch.org/sermons/three-women-and-no-funeral/>.

ICEBREAKER

Looking back over your life, what is one event that didn't make sense at the time but later became obvious that God was using it for your good!

READ IT

Read Exodus 2:1–25

EXPLORE IT

1. Why did Moses' mother hide him, and what did she eventually do when she could hide him no longer?
2. How did Moses' sister help preserve his life?
3. What role did Pharaoh's daughter play in God's plan?
4. Why did Moses flee Egypt?
5. What did Moses do during his years in Midian?
6. According to verses 23–25, what four things does God do after hearing Israel's cries?
7. What does the chapter reveal about God's activity even before Israel recognizes it?

- 11. Taking Luke 22:31-32 into consideration, how can our spiritual failures strengthen us and be used to strengthen others?**

God is in the business of using people who have failed. The Bible doesn't paper over the failures of its heroes. Noah got drunk and exposed himself. Abraham lied twice about his wife being his sister. Isaac did the same. Jacob deceived his father and cheated his brother out of the birthright. David sinned with Bathsheba and had her husband murdered. The disciples all abandoned Jesus at His crucifixion and then doubted the resurrection. Peter denied Jesus and later waffled on the gospel out of fear of the Judaizers. Mark bailed out on the first missionary journey. And in our text, Moses murders an Egyptian, is rejected by his countrymen, flees for his life, and lives in the desert for the next forty years. This story gives us hope that God can use us even after we've failed.

D. L. Moody said, "Moses spent his first forty years thinking he was somebody. He spent his second forty years learning he was a nobody. He spent his third forty years discovering what God can do with a nobody."¹²

- 12. Moses spent forty years in Midian before God called him back to Egypt. What do you think God was accomplishing in Moses during those years, and how might God use seasons of waiting in our own lives?**

- 13. Many people avoid silence and solitude, filling every moment with activity or entertainment. What keeps us from spending intentional time alone with God, and what blessings do we miss when we neglect this spiritual discipline?**

¹² Steven J. Cole, "How God Uses Failure (Exodus 2:11-25)," *Bible.org*, January 28, 2018, <https://bible.org/seriespage/2-how-god-uses-failure-exodus-211-25>.

The closing verses provide one of the most comforting descriptions of God's heart toward His people.

"God heard... God remembered... God saw... God knew."

None of those statements mean God had previously forgotten Israel. Rather, they remind us that God is fully aware of our suffering and acts according to His covenant promises.

God's silence should never be confused with God's absence.

Just because we cannot see Him working does not mean He is inactive. God is always working behind the scenes.¹³

14. How does remembering God's covenant faithfulness strengthen your faith during seasons when He seems silent?

15. Identify two specific ways you will actively hold on to God's promises in an area where you are tempted to feel forgotten.

16. How can our small group encourage one another to rest in God's providence during seasons of uncertainty?

¹³ Author's Note.



The years of slavery were long and grueling as God's chosen people endured oppression in Egypt. Their sons were massacred. The people groaned in desperation for help.

Meanwhile, a few hundred miles away, Moses was tending his father-in-law's sheep when he saw an unusual sight – a bush that was on fire but not being burned up. When Moses turned aside to investigate, the angel of the LORD – God Himself – called out to him from the midst of the bush, telling Moses to return to Egypt as His chosen instrument to deliver His people from their oppression.

Overwhelmed with questions and doubts, Moses pushed back, reluctant to accept the assignment. But God assured him of His presence and promised to bring the Israelites out of Egypt and take them to the Promised Land.

While Moses is a prominent character in this chapter, this particular scene, however, isn't primarily about Moses – it's about God. God, who hears and knows the afflictions of His people. God, who comes down and sends a deliverer to set them free. God, who is faithful to fulfill all His promises.

Throughout the rest of Scripture, the Exodus serves as a picture of God's salvation of people enslaved to sin. Rather than inserting ourselves into this story as Moses, searching for our own "burning bush moment", we should see our place in the story as the Israelites who are enslaved and oppressed, crying out for help and deliverance. And like the Israelites, God heard our cry and sent a greater Moses, Jesus, to save us from our sins.

Their story is our story, but the bigger story is God's. It is the story of how He saves His people.¹⁴

ICEBREAKER

What's the most unusual thing you've ever seen that made you stop and take a second look?

¹⁴ Author's Note.

READ IT

Read Exodus 3:1-22

EXPLORE IT

1. What first captures Moses' attention, and what causes him to turn aside to investigate? (vv. 1–3)
2. How does God identify Himself to Moses, and how does Moses respond? (vv. 4–6)
3. What reasons does God give for intervening on behalf of Israel? (vv. 7–10)
4. What concerns or objections does Moses raise when God calls him? (vv. 11–13)
5. How does God answer Moses' questions and reassure him? (vv. 12–17)
6. What does God tell Moses will happen in the future? (vv. 18–22)

APPLY IT

In Exodus 2:24, we read that God heard the people's groaning, He remembered His covenant, He saw the sons of Israel in their slavery, and He knew them. Then in Exodus 3:7, God tells Moses, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings." In case Moses missed it, God repeats (v. 9) that He has heard the people's cry and seen their oppression.

Why did God wait hundreds of years while Israel suffered before He delivered them? As we've seen, one reason was God's patience and mercy: the iniquity of the Amorite was not yet complete (Gen. 15:16). He allowed His people to suffer in bondage while He patiently withheld judgment on the corrupt Canaanites. There may have been other reasons that we don't know. His timing is not our timing. But we should never conclude that God's silence when we suffer implies that He doesn't hear our cry for help or that He doesn't care. As someone has said, "Never interpret God's love by your circumstances. Rather, interpret your circumstances by His love." We can't serve God effectively if we doubt His goodness, love, and care for us and for others.¹⁵

7. **God promised Abraham that Israel would spend 400 years in a foreign land before He delivered them (Genesis 15:13–16). What does this teach us about God's timing and His faithfulness when His promises seem delayed?**

8. **What truths about God's character in Exodus 3 give you confidence that He has not forgotten you, even when your circumstances haven't changed?**

¹⁵ Steven J. Cole, "How God Saves His People, Part 1 (Exodus 3:1–22)," *Bible.org*, February 18, 2018, <https://bible.org/seriespage/3-how-god-saves-his-people-part-1-exodus-31-22>.

“Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

Here we join Moses on holy ground! This is one of the most profound and mysterious revelations of God in Scripture! “I am who I am” is related in Hebrew to the four consonants that are probably pronounced “Yahweh.” (Most modern translations use Lord in small caps.) This is God’s personal covenant name, which He used in establishing His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15). God’s name represents His person, character, authority, power, and reputation (Walter Kaiser, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* [Zondervan], ed. by Frank E. Gaebeline, 2:321). He is the personal God of our salvation, with whom we can have a relationship. It refers to His absolute independence (C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* [Eerdmans], 1:75). He exists by Himself without the need of anyone else. It points to His absolute constancy and consistency (ibid.): He never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). It reveals His self-existence: He is uncaused; and to His eternality: there never has been a time when He was not and never will be a time when He ceases to be. F. B. Meyer wrote (*Devotional Commentary on Exodus* [Kregel], p. 53):

There is no was or will be with Him, but always the present tense. All that He was to the fathers, He is today; and all that He will be to their children, He is now. Nothing to learn: nothing to acquire: nothing to become. He alone is Reality, as contrasted with the vanities of heathen deities.¹⁶

9. When God reveals Himself as "I AM," what truths about His character become clear from this passage?

10. Jesus claimed to be the great "I AM" and then described Himself as the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Door, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and the True Vine. What do these statements reveal about who Jesus is?

¹⁶ Cole, “How God Saves His People, Part 1.”

In Exodus 3:8, God tells Moses what He (God) intends to do: "So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite." God did that literally for the Israelites who had been enslaved in Egypt for centuries.

But He does that spiritually for those who are enslaved to sin. As Paul says (Col. 1:13-14), "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." That's the best news in the world!¹⁷

11. What are some characteristics of a life lived in slavery to sin compared to a life lived in the freedom Christ provides?

12. Read Romans 6:15–23. Paul contrasts being "slaves of sin" with being "slaves of righteousness." What does it mean to become a slave to righteousness, and how is that different from the freedom the world often promises?

¹⁷ Steven J. Cole, "How God Saves His People, Part 2 (Exodus 3:1–22)," *Bible.org*, February 25, 2018, <https://bible.org/seriespage/4-how-god-saves-his-people-part-2-exodus-31-22>.

13. God already knew Pharaoh would resist, yet He also promised Israel would be delivered. What does this teach us about God's control over both obstacles and outcomes?

14. God doesn't promise Moses an easy mission, but a successful one. How does this distinction shape your evangelistic efforts today?

15. Pharaoh's resistance was part of God's plan, not a sign that God's plan was failing. How does that truth encourage you when following Christ is difficult or you face opposition?

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But the Lord promised Moses that this time, he would succeed. After God struck Egypt with the plagues, finally Pharaoh would let Israel go. And they wouldn't go out emptyhanded. Every woman would ask of her neighbor articles of silver, gold, and clothing, so that Israel would "plunder the Egyptians" (Exod. 3:22). This was exactly what God had promised Abraham (Gen. 15:14), "But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions."¹⁹

- 16. God promised Israel they would not leave Egypt empty-handed. How does our future inheritance in Christ far exceed the treasures Israel was to carry out of Egypt?**

- 17. How should the promise of God's "immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7) shape the way we live and what we treasure today?**

¹⁹ Cole, "How God Saves His People, Part 2."



In 1718, a Norwegian pastor's wife named Giertrud Rask received God's call to become a missionary. Her husband, Hans Egede, was preparing to leave their homeland and take the gospel to Greenland. But Giertrud was not ready to go, and with good reason. She was forty-five years old at the time, with four children to care for and the youngest barely a year old. It would be a dangerous journey for all of them, and Giertrud herself did not have a strong constitution.

The family's biographer reports that when Hans announced his plans, "his own and his wife's friends wrote to express their severest reprobation. . . . His mother-in-law further inflamed the feeling against him, and even his wife began to hint that she repented having attached herself to a man who by such plans was going to ruin himself and those belonging to him." Giertrud must have felt much the same way that Moses felt when God called him to lead Israel out of Egypt. "Send someone else, Lord! Let somebody else do it... anybody but me!"

In this chapter we come to the end of Moses' encounter with the God of the burning bush. The prophet had received his basic instructions. God had called him to go back to Egypt and tell Pharaoh to let God's people go. Moses had also raised some questions: "Who am I? Who are you? How will they ever believe me?"

These were only the first three of what turned out to be five objections in all. As objections go, they were not altogether unreasonable, and in his patience God was willing to answer them. But the longer the conversation went on, the more obvious it became that Moses simply did not want to go. His final two objections show that when it came right down to it, he wanted God to send someone else.²⁰

ICEBREAKER

What's the most reluctant or apprehensive you've ever been to go on a trip? Why did you feel that way?

²⁰Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory*, Preaching the Word, ed. R. Kent Hughes (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), chap. 9, "Here Am I . . . Send Someone Else (Exodus 4:10–17)."

READ IT

Read Exodus 4:1-17

EXPLORE IT

1. Which item common to shepherds and leaders (Numbers 17:1-3) does God ask Moses about? (v.2)
2. What three powerful signs does God give Moses to demonstrate to the Egyptians that God sent him? (vv. 1-9)
3. After he saw the first two signs demonstrated, why did the third sign require Moses to trust God? (v. 9)
4. What profound truth did God bring to Moses' attention after Moses criticized his own speaking abilities? (v. 11)
5. Which righteous emotion does God demonstrate when Moses runs out of excuses and asks God to choose someone else? (v. 14)
6. What additional resource does God give to Moses with which to carry out his ministry role? (v. 14-16)

APPLY IT

Moses Third Excuse: “They Will Not Believe Me.”

In response to Moses’ objection that Israel “will not believe me or listen to my voice” (v. 1), God gives him signs (vv. 8, 9). These serve as confirmations of God’s word and pictures of God’s power. As confirmations, they were meant to persuade Israel to “believe that the LORD . . . has appeared to you” (v. 5). As pictures, they demonstrate how God will act as Israel trusts him: as sovereign King he will seize the tail of Egyptian power (in the serpent). As the Redeemer he will purify his unclean nation (in the leprous hand). God condescended to Israel’s weak capacities in giving these signs to strengthen their hearts.

He continues to do the same for us today in his signs of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, signs that confirm his promises and picture his good news for us.²¹

- 7. Put yourself in Moses’ shoes. If God called you to take a trip with a confrontational public speaking role, what would be your reaction? What excuses might you give for not going?**

- 8. How would you rate your own confidence in bringing God’s truth to someone who might not want to hear it: red, yellow, or green? Why did you pick that color?**

- 9. Moses didn’t think people would believe him or his message, but his behavior showed that he had the same problem with disbelief! What is one excuse for not obeying that you are making to God right now?**

²¹ Bryan Chapell, ed., *ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019).

10. God provided the signs, “that they may believe that the Lord... has appeared to you” (v. 5). What other accommodating things has God done throughout salvation history to help people believe Him? Three stories you could check out include Gideon’s story (Judges 6:39-40), Mary’s story (John 2:1-11), and Thomas’ story (John 20:27).

Moses’ Fourth Excuse: “I Am Not Eloquent.”

Moses resists a fourth time, appealing to his inability to speak well (v. 10). To be “slow of speech and of tongue” may refer to a speech impediment or may refer simply to a lack of persuasive eloquence. The context supports the latter, since the Lord promises to teach Moses “what you shall speak” (not “how to speak,” v. 12; cf. comment on 6:10–12). Either way, the Lord is asking him to do something he feels unqualified to do.

The Lord meets Moses’ weakness with his own strength and presence. In terms of strength he is the sovereign King; he has made people’s mouths so they can speak, and he can make people deaf or mute, seeing or blind (v. 11). How much more can he do something as simple as enabling Moses to speak well! In terms of presence he promises, “I will be with your mouth”—the word “I” is emphasized in Hebrew—“and teach you what you shall speak” (v. 12). **What he requires of his servants he equips them to do.** Indeed, Moses’ two uses of “I” in verse 10 are met with the Lord’s two uses of “I” in verses 11–12. “Moses feels his ‘I’ is inadequate for the task; Yahweh responds by saying that it is his ‘I’ that is to be reckoned with.”²²

11. What do you feel is your most limiting factor in the area of serving God?

²² Jay Sklar, “Exodus,” in *ESV Expository Commentary: Genesis–Numbers*, vol. 1, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2025), commentary on Exodus 2:23–4:17.

12. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9. Why do you think God chooses to work through people who feel unprepared, like Moses and Paul, rather than waiting until they feel ready?
13. How would you explain stepping out in faith to an 8-year-old girl? Is there another story or verse from the Bible that you think would help them grasp the wisdom in trusting God?
14. In what ways has God overcome your most limiting factor in the past? In what ways can you pray for God to overcome that in the future?

Moses' Fifth Excuse: "Please Send Someone Else."

Moses does not embrace his call but resists a fifth and final time. Unlike with the first four instances, he now provides no excuse. He simply asks the Lord to send someone else—anyone but him. His refusal of the Lord's call is now clear (v. 13).

Whereas the Lord previously responded patiently, this time his anger is aroused (v. 14). The Lord is abundantly merciful with our weaknesses and lack of faith, but there comes a point when he says, "Enough! You must take me at my word!"

Even here, however, he accommodates Moses' fear by providing a support in the person of his brother, Aaron, three years his elder (7:7) and able to speak well (4:14). The mention of Aaron's being a Levite perhaps prepares us for his priestly role, or it may be a play on words anticipating Aaron's joining with Moses. The mention of Aaron's being glad when he comes assures Moses that Aaron still loves him after all these years and will be happy to work with him (v. 14). But even here the Lord reemphasizes his own empowering and guiding presence: "I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do" (v. 15b; cf. v. 12). The Lord's help remains his people's ultimate need.²³

- 15. God has entrusted Christians with the message of the Gospel. On a scale of 1 (Toe In) to 10 (All In), how urgently do you think people at Village Bible Church share the Gospel? What makes it hard to move closer to a 10?**

- 16. What are three ways to overcome your feelings of inadequacy in the area of sharing the Gospel?**

²³ Sklar, "Exodus," at Exodus 2:23–4:17.

17. Who is an Aaron in your life who supports you as you serve God? How do these kinds of relationships help?

18. Serving God doesn't have to mean preaching on a street corner. What's one definable step you can take this week to serve God, whether praying for a neighbor, reaching out to a friend with truth from God, or serving somewhere new? Pair up with 1 or 2 other people at small group to pray for God's power as you take that step.