



PACKET 2

EXODUS

LEAVING EGYPT BEHIND

SMALL GROUP LESSONS

PACKET 2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LESSON 5 What's Keeping You?.....	2
LESSON 6 Obedience Is Ours	10
LESSON 7 Outcomes Are God's	17
LESSON 8 When Bad Becomes Worse: Remember	24

EXODUS

WHAT'S KEEPING YOU?

One of the most defining moments of my life came in 2003 when I sensed God calling me into pastoral ministry. Looking back, I wish I could tell you that I immediately said, "Yes, Lord." The truth is, I had a long list of reasons why I wasn't the right person. I didn't think I had enough education. I wasn't old enough. I wasn't spiritual enough. I certainly wasn't wise enough. Every time I considered stepping into ministry, another excuse seemed to surface. I knew enough about myself to believe that ministry was a pathway to human failure. The weight of shepherding God's people felt far beyond anything I was capable of carrying.

What I've learned over the years is that our greatest obstacle to obedience is often not a lack of ability but an overwhelming awareness of our own inadequacy. We spend so much time focusing on what we aren't that we forget who God is. I wasn't wrong about my weaknesses, I simply underestimated God's strength. He never called me because I was enough. He called me because He is enough.

One of the greatest lessons God was teaching me during that season was that I couldn't do ministry for Him until I learned to do it with Him. My focus had become almost entirely about me: my education, my age, my experience, my wisdom, and all the reasons I believed I wasn't enough. Yet God was gently reminding me that His call had never depended on my qualifications. It depended on His presence. Ministry wasn't ultimately about what I could accomplish for Him, but about what He would accomplish in and through me as I learned to trust Him.

That realization completely changed the way I viewed ministry and honestly, the way I viewed life. Instead of constantly asking, "Am I enough?" I began asking, "Is God enough?" Instead of striving to become the man I thought God could use, I began learning to trust that He was shaping me into the man He wanted to use.

That is exactly where we find Moses in Exodus 4. For two chapters he has given God every reason why someone else should be chosen. He wasn't eloquent enough. He wasn't influential enough. He wasn't confident enough. He wasn't the right man for the job. Yet God answered every objection with the same promise: "I will be with you."

Moses has finally stopped making excuses and starts making the journey back to Egypt. But before God uses him publicly, He confronts an area of private obedience that Moses has neglected. It is a powerful reminder that God isn't looking for perfect people, He's looking for surrendered people. He delights in using ordinary men and women who stop focusing on their own inadequacies and begin trusting in His sufficiency.

As we continue our study of Exodus, our passage this week invites us to ask a simple but searching question: What's keeping me from fully obeying God? Is it fear? A sense of inadequacy? Comfort? A private area of disobedience? Whatever it is, this passage reminds us that God's calling has never depended on our sufficiency but on His presence. The God who called Moses despite all of his excuses is still in the business of using imperfect people for His perfect purposes and, ultimately, for His glory.¹

¹ Author's Note.

ICEBREAKER

If you could instantly become an expert at one skill you've always wished you had, what would you choose and why?

READ IT

Read Exodus 4:18–31

EXPLORE IT

1. According to Exodus 4:18–20, what steps did Moses take after God called him to return to Egypt?
2. What message did God tell Moses to deliver to Pharaoh in Exodus 4:21–23?
3. What happened to Moses on the journey in Exodus 4:24–26, and how did Zipporah respond?
4. How did Aaron, the elders of Israel, and the people respond to Moses in Exodus 4:27–31?

APPLY IT

The previous section (3:1-4:17) makes it possible for us to gain great insight into Moses' feelings about God's promises to his forefathers and about his own life. Moses had become thoroughly disillusioned. He regarded himself as a failure, the objects of his ministry (the Israelites) as hopeless, and God as unfaithful, uncaring, and even unable to deliver His people. He had learned his own inability to deliver Israel, but he did not yet believe in God's ability to do so. Even the miraculous revelation of God at the burning bush, and the miracles that God enabled Moses to perform, did not convince him of God's intention and power.²

- 5. How had Moses' forty years in Midian shaped the way he viewed himself, God's promises, and God's ability to work? How can seasons of disappointment shape our view of God today?**

So Moses went: When the fire faded from the burning bush and when the voice of God was silent across the desert, then it was upon Moses to obey, and to do what God told him to do. More than one person has had a spectacular burning bush type experience and then gone on to live as if nothing really happened. Did Moses have any idea what he was getting into when he agreed to take the LORD's call?...Did Moses have any idea what he was getting into?³

- 6. Moses couldn't see where one act of obedience would eventually lead. Why do you think God usually calls us to trust Him with the next step instead of revealing the whole journey?**

² Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Exodus*, 2025 ed. (Richardson, TX: Sonic Light, 2025).

³ David Guzik, "Exodus 4—Moses' Commission from God," *Enduring Word Bible Commentary*, <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/exodus-4/>

Moses' first act of obedience was not dramatic but honorable. Before returning to Egypt, he respectfully sought Jethro's permission to leave, demonstrating that obedience to God does not excuse us from honoring the human relationships and responsibilities God has placed in our lives. Faithfulness often begins with integrity in ordinary commitments before it is seen in extraordinary acts of service.⁴

- 7. Why do you think Moses honored Jethro before confronting Pharaoh? What does that teach us about the relationship between humility and obedience?**

- 8. What ordinary responsibility is God asking you to faithfully steward today that may be preparing you for something greater tomorrow?**

⁴ Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 124–25.

God had previously dealt with Moses' different areas of hesitation – now Moses carries with him the assurance of God's authority and power to grant him success in his mission. Ryken: Not only did Moses have his family at his side, but he also had his staff in his hand. Except that it was no longer his staff at all—it was “the staff of God,” the symbol of divine authority. Moses was going to deliver Israel by God's power. With God's staff he would perform miraculous signs to convince the Israelites that he was God's true prophet. Later God's staff would accomplish even greater wonders. It would bring disease and death upon the Egyptians, part the waves of the Red Sea, and draw lifegiving water from a rock.⁵

9. Throughout Scripture, God often uses ordinary people and ordinary things to accomplish extraordinary purposes. What do these passages say God can use and what do these examples teach us about the way God chooses to accomplish His work?

- 1 Samuel 17:40, 49–50

- 2 Kings 4:1–7

- John 6:9–13

- Numbers 22:28–30

- Matthew 21:1–11

- 1 Corinthians 1:18–25

⁵ Paul Apple, “Exodus 4:18–31,” in Expository Outlines of Exodus, <https://bibleoutlines.com/exodus/>

- 10. Instead of focusing on what you lack, what has God already placed in your hands that He may want to use for His glory this week?**

Exodus 4:21 raises one of the most challenging theological questions in all of Scripture. At first glance, it may seem as though God is forcing Pharaoh to reject Him or removing his ability to choose differently. Yet that is not what the Bible teaches. Throughout Exodus, we see both God's sovereignty and Pharaoh's responsibility working together. God is never portrayed as creating evil in Pharaoh's heart; rather, He gives Pharaoh over to the rebellion he has already embraced and uses even that rebellion to accomplish His redemptive purposes.

I love how Philip Ryken summarizes this difficult truth:

“Taken together, what these statements show is that Pharaoh’s heart was doubly hard. He hardened his own heart; nevertheless, God hardened his heart for him. Both of these statements are true, and there is no contradiction between them. Pharaoh’s will was also God’s will. God not only knew that Pharaoh would refuse to let his people go, but he actually ordained it. This is the paradox of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, which is not a puzzle to be solved but a mystery to be adored. As human beings made in the image of God, we make a real choice to accept or reject God, but even the choice we make is governed by God’s sovereign and eternal will.”⁶

- 11. How does God's sovereignty over Pharaoh's rebellion encourage you when you face people or circumstances that seem to stand in the way of God's purposes today?**

⁶ Ryken, *Exodus*.

One of the great themes of Scripture is that God's people are defined first by their relationship with Him, not by the circumstances they are experiencing. Israel may have been slaves in Egypt, but in God's eyes they were His beloved son. As Philip Ryken writes:

Israel's status as God's firstborn son explains why God had a quarrel with Pharaoh. To Pharaoh the Hebrews were lowly slaves, but to God they were beloved sons. Thus the problem with Pharaoh was not simply that he was a slaveholder (although that was bad enough), but that he was preventing God's children from serving their Father. Instead of being free to call God "Father," the Israelites were forced to call Pharaoh "Master." So in order to reassert his claim on Israel, God said to Pharaoh, "Let my son go that he may serve me" (4:23a). God demanded that Israel be released from Pharaoh's bondage so that his son would be free to serve him once again. More specifically, he wanted the worship of his firstborn son. This is the grand theme of the exodus: God saving his sons from slavery so that they could serve him.⁷

12. According to this passage, why did God want Israel to leave Egypt? What does this teach us about the purpose of our own salvation today?

13. Pharaoh wanted Israel to serve him, while God wanted His people to worship and serve Him. What "masters" compete for our worship and allegiance today?

⁷ Ryken, *Exodus*.

At this point in the story, everything seems to be moving in the right direction. Moses has finally obeyed God's call, received Jethro's blessing, taken "the staff of God" in his hand, and is on his way back to Egypt. Then, without warning, the story takes a dramatic turn. Before God confronts Pharaoh's rebellion, He first confronts Moses' own disobedience.

The issue wasn't Moses' ability or courage, it was an area of neglected covenant obedience in his own family. In an act of decisive obedience, Zipporah circumcises their son, bringing their household back into covenant faithfulness, and the Lord relents. While this passage raises difficult questions, its central message is clear: God takes obedience seriously. Before Moses could lead God's people publicly, he first had to obey God privately. This passage reminds us that God isn't looking for impressive people with polished resumes. He is looking for men and women whose private lives reflect the same faithfulness they profess publicly.⁸

- 14. Why do you think it's often easier to focus on serving God publicly than obeying Him privately? Are there areas of your life where your public profession of faith and your private walk with God need to become more aligned?**

After all the uncertainty, excuses, and obstacles, everything God promised Moses finally begins to unfold exactly as He said it would. Aaron meets Moses in the wilderness, the elders of Israel gather together, the miraculous signs are performed, and the people believe. Their response is immediate—they bow down and worship. Before a single plague has fallen, before Pharaoh has said yes, before the Red Sea has parted, and before their circumstances have changed, God's people worship because they believe God has seen their suffering and is acting on their behalf.

This beautiful ending reminds us that worship is not merely a response to God's blessings but to God's character and His promises. Israel worshiped because they believed God was faithful, even before they experienced their deliverance. Genuine faith learns to worship God not only for what He has done, but for who He is and what He has promised to do. As Matthew Henry writes, "If Israel welcomed the tidings of their deliverance, and worshipped the Lord, how should we welcome the glad tidings of redemption, embrace it in faith, and adore the Redeemer!"⁹

- 15. Why do you think the Israelites responded with worship before anything in their circumstances had actually changed? What does that reveal about genuine faith?**

⁸ Author's Note.

⁹ Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible, commentary on Exodus 4:24–31, Bible Hub, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/mhc/exodus/4.htm>



About five months ago, my son joined the Army. Let me tell you, his mom and I weren't exactly thrilled about that decision. But we love our son, and we wanted to support him and give him all the love and encouragement we could.

When he arrived at boot camp, they took away his phone. For about ten weeks, we had almost no contact with him. Then, one day, we finally got a phone call, but it lasted only about two minutes. Those two minutes felt pretty precious to us!

After he graduated from boot camp, we finally had the opportunity to sit down and hear about his experience. He told us about his drill sergeant, the things they were required to do, the intense training, and the importance of following the rules. He also told us about the times when other recruits didn't obey. Someone would get caught with something they weren't supposed to have, or someone would break a rule, and the entire platoon would be disciplined because of it.

My son is a rule follower. He liked his drill sergeant, followed the rules, did what he was told, and performed extremely well physically. He was even near the top of his class in things like running. So you might think that because he was doing everything right, he would receive some special privileges.

But he didn't.

In fact, the entire platoon was told that if they could stay out of trouble, they would be given a few minutes with their phones to call their family and friends. My son and the other recruits did what they were supposed to do. They followed the rules. They stayed out of trouble. But they never got that phone call.

Now, from my son's perspective, that probably didn't seem fair. He had done what was expected of him, yet he didn't get the outcome he thought his obedience deserved.

But here's the thing: the Army was in charge. The Army was in authority. My son wasn't in control of the outcome. His responsibility was simply to obey the orders he had been given. What happened after that was ultimately out of his hands.

And I think sometimes we can approach our relationship with God in much the same way.

We obey God. We do what His Word commands. We try to live faithfully. And sometimes, perhaps without even realizing it, we begin to think that God owes us something in return. *"God, I did what You told me to do, so why didn't things work out the way I expected?"* We can begin to think that our obedience should guarantee a certain outcome.

But that's not how our relationship with God works. Obedience does not put God in our debt. God is sovereign. He is in control. He sees what we cannot see, knows what we cannot know, and is working according to a plan far greater than our own.

And that's exactly what we see happening in Exodus 5.

Moses and Aaron obey God. They go to Pharaoh just as God commanded them. But instead of things getting better, things get worse. Pharaoh increases Israel's workload, their suffering intensifies, and Moses himself begins to question God.

Moses obeyed, but he didn't get the outcome he expected.

And that's where Exodus 5 teaches us an important lesson: **Obedience is ours. Outcomes are God's.**

Our responsibility is to faithfully obey what God has told us to do. God's responsibility is to determine what happens next. Sometimes obedience brings immediate blessing. Sometimes it brings opposition. Sometimes it makes things harder before they get better.

But regardless of the outcome, God remains sovereign, God remains faithful, and God remains in control.¹⁰

ICEBREAKER

Have you ever done what you believed was the right thing, only to have things get harder instead of easier? What happened!

READ IT

Read Exodus 5:1-23

EXPLORE IT

1. **What do Moses and Aaron do in verses 1–3? Why do they go to Pharaoh?**
2. **How does Pharaoh respond to Moses and Aaron in verses 4–9? What does he do to make Israel's situation worse?**
3. **How does Israel respond to the increased workload and suffering in verses 10–21?**

¹⁰ Author's Note.

4. Who do the Israelite foremen blame for their increased suffering in verse 21? Why?

5. How does Moses respond to God in verses 22–23? What questions does Moses ask?

APPLY IT

Many Christians think that if they're serving the Lord in some way, the Lord will bless them and life will be sweet. After all, they're seeking first God's kingdom. They're doing His work. Won't the Lord bless those who do His work?

That depends on how you define blessing. If you define blessing as hardship, sleepless nights, daily pressure, weaknesses, insults, distresses, persecutions, and other difficulties, yes, you'll be blessed. Those are just some of the things that Paul endured as he served the Lord (2 Cor. 11:23–28; 12:10). But if you define blessing as everyone loving what you're doing, no one ever criticizing you, and everything always going well in your life and ministry, I'd ask, "Have you ever read the Bible or church history?" There would be no such thing as persecution or martyrdom if God protected all of His servants from difficult trials.

The fact is, when you begin to serve the Lord, you've joined the infantry. The prince of darkness begins gunning for you. Often things don't become easier or go more smoothly in your life. Things get more difficult.¹¹

6. Why are we often tempted to think that if we are obeying God, our circumstances should immediately improve?

¹¹Steven J. Cole, "The Plan Isn't Working (Exodus 5:1–6:30)," *Bible.org*, March 11, 2018, <https://bible.org/seriespage/6-plan-isn-t-working-exodus-51-630>.

7. Have you ever been discouraged because doing what you believed God wanted you to do didn't produce the outcome you expected? What happened?

8. What can happen to our faith when we judge God's faithfulness by our circumstances?

Actually, sometimes obedience can make life more difficult! In the movie *The Christmas Story*, after Ralphie's friend Flick gets his tongue frozen to a pole, their teacher says:

Miss Shields: Now, I know that some of you put Flick up to this. But, he has refused to say who. But those who did it know their blame. And I'm sure the guilt you feel... is far worse than any punishment you might receive. Now, don't you feel terrible? Don't you feel remorse for what you have done? That's all I'm going to say about poor Flick.

Adult Ralphie: Adults love to say things like that. But kids know better. We knew darn well it was always better not to get caught.¹²

Ralphie knew that if he obeyed the teacher and told on his classmates things could actually get worse!

9. In Exodus 5, Moses and Aaron obey God's clear command, yet the immediate result is that life becomes significantly harder for God's people. Why do you think God sometimes allows obedience to make our circumstances worse before they get better - and how does that challenge the way we usually measure whether God is "with us"?

¹² [https://achristmasstory.fandom.com/wiki/A_Christmas_Story_\(Transcript\)](https://achristmasstory.fandom.com/wiki/A_Christmas_Story_(Transcript))

10. Sometimes when we take a step of obedience the enemy immediately targets you. Where have you seen this pattern in your own life or in the lives of other believers - where stepping out in obedience seemed to invite greater pressure, criticism, or difficulty rather than relief?

11. If we define “blessing” the way Paul does in 2 Corinthians 11–12 (hardship, weakness, persecution, etc.), how does that reshape the way we pray, the expectations we bring into ministry or obedience, and the way we encourage one another when following Jesus makes life more complicated rather than simpler?

Exodus 5:22 — “Then Moses turned again to the LORD and said, ‘O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me?’”

Moses was frustrated. He was confused. He didn't understand what God was doing. And while some of Moses' questions revealed a lack of faith, there was something he did right: **he turned to God.**¹³

12. What do you learn from the way Moses brings his frustration and questions to God?

¹³ Author's Note.

13. What is the difference between honestly wrestling with God and turning away from God?

14. When you are discouraged or confused by your circumstances, where do you tend to take your questions?

Some of you may not yet know Christ as your Savior and Redeemer. You can't serve (obey) Him until you know Him. Jesus promised ([John 5:24](#)), "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." That promise is for you!

Others of you may know Christ but you're not serving Him. Maybe you tried and got burned. Maybe you've drifted into living for yourself and collecting this world's stuff. You've lost your focus. Paul told Timothy ([2 Tim. 2:3-4](#)): "Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier." Serving as a soldier can be dangerous. Soldiers suffer casualties at times. But that's our calling: faithfully to serve our faithful, covenant-keeping Lord even in the face of opposition and setbacks. He enlisted you; now make it your aim to please Him.¹⁴

15. What are some areas where you are tempted to demand immediate results from God?

¹⁴ Cole, "The Plan Isn't Working."

16. What would it look like for you to faithfully obey God without knowing what the outcome will be?

17. Is there an area of your life right now where God may be calling you to trust Him and keep obeying even though the circumstances haven't changed?



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?**

APPLY IT

God was prepared to act. The same God that promised to their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the same God who was now going to follow through on those promises. “Now you shall see what I will do...” God says to Moses. The affliction and suffering experienced by God’s people was real and it was great, but it didn’t mean God’s plans had failed. Instead, it was setting the stage for one of the greatest displays of God’s power.¹⁶

6. Why are we so quick to interpret difficult circumstances as evidence that something has gone wrong with God's plan?
7. When life gets difficult, what are you most likely to question: God's goodness, His power, His presence, or His plan? Why?
8. How can we keep our circumstances from becoming the primary lens through which we interpret God?

¹⁶ Author's Note.

“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.



In Israel's world a person's genealogy had possible implications for his social standing. This was true in terms of family of origin, with wealthier families often having more social sway. But it was true also (for males) in terms of birth order, with firstborn sons being regarded as the "firstfruits" of a father's strength (Gen. 49:3) and entrusted with extra family responsibilities (cf. comment on 4:21–23).

In this genealogy, however, many key characters neither are the firstborn nor do they descend from the firstborn. The Levites play a crucial role at the all-important tabernacle but descend from Jacob's third son (6:14–16). The priestly family is the most important among the Levites but come from Levi's second son (6:16, 18, 20, 23, 25). And second-born Moses, not firstborn Aaron, is Israel's key leader. The same occurs elsewhere. The Lord chooses second-born Jacob over firstborn Esau (Gen. 25:23). He likewise chooses David, who is eighth-born and the youngest of his brothers (1 Sam. 16:6–12).

Such decisions make clear the Lord does not abide by society's rules when choosing those he will use. No matter our social status, family of origin, or place in our family, the Lord can use us as much as anyone else. If anything, the weaker we are in the world's eyes, the more God delights to use us, so that the world might see that someone far greater than us has chosen to work through us (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26–29).²²

ICEBREAKER

What's the most interesting thing you can remember about your own genealogy?

READ IT

Read Exodus 6:14–7:7

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 6:10–7:7.

EXPLORE IT

1. After mentioning Reuben (Ex. 6:14) and Simeon (Ex. 6:15), on which tribe does our passage stop to focus?
2. Which important message listed twice defined Moses and Aaron's legacy? (Ex. 6:26-27)
3. What was Moses' big fear, as recorded in Ex. 6:30?
4. Which six actions does God tell Moses He will take? (Ex. 7:3-5 ESV)
5. How old was Moses while engaged in this ministry of delivering messages from God? (Ex. 7:7)

APPLY IT

When Things Go from Bad to Worse, Remember Who You Are (Exodus 6:14-25)

This section transitions between the failed attempt at deliverance that led to the people's discouragement (5:1-6:9) and the coming display of the Lord's mighty hand that will lead to the people's departure (7:8-11:10). It comprises three parts.

In the first the Lord reissues his charge to Moses to go to Pharaoh, and Moses expresses his inability to do so (6:10-12). In the second the story is interrupted to provide Moses and Aaron's genealogy (vv. 13-27). This is significant information for the original audience (cf. discussion below) and appropriately placed for the central role Moses and Aaron are about to play. The third part resumes the story and gives an overview of the coming chapters, underscoring the Lord's coming deliverance of Israel (6:28-7:7). This should give the audience hope as the narrative turns to describe Moses and Aaron's confrontations with Pharaoh (7:8-11:10).²³

6. How far back can you trace your spiritual genealogy? What moments of obedience made a difference?

²³ Sklar, "Exodus," at Exodus 6:10-7:7.

7. This genealogy lists people with notable moments from Scripture. In those moments, some honored God, and some didn't. Choose one cross reference and write down what was done, and whether or not you think it honored God. Nadab and Abihu (Strange Fire): Leviticus 10:1–3; Korah (The Rebellion): Numbers 16:1–35, Phinehas (The Zealous Intervention): Numbers 25:6–13.

The genealogy in Exodus 6 is full of practical instruction for Christian work and worship. The lives of the men and women in Aaron's family teach us to remain faithful in our worship day and night and to stand up for what is right even when everything seems to be going wrong. At the same time, the tragic deaths in the family warn us not to seek our own way in the work or worship of the church.

Imagine if your own name appeared in the Biblical genealogies. What would they say about you? Would they be able to say that you were faithful in your ministry, no matter how large or small it may have been? Would they be able to say that even when everyone else got caught up in sexual immorality and spiritual adultery, you were zealous for God's glory? Or would they say that you offered strange worship and rebelled against the church's spiritual authority?

These questions are interesting to think about, but the question that really matters is this: What does God say about you? Is your name written in his family record, the Book of Life? Do you belong to him by faith in Jesus Christ? For no matter how faithful we are, we can only be saved by the grace that God has shown through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.²⁴

8. What sort of legacy do you want future descendants to remember about you?

²⁴ Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), chap. 15, "They Were the Levites (Exodus 6:13–27)."

9. What happens when an entire church starts to forget who they are in Christ? How can we combat that pitfall?

When You're Afraid of Failure, Remember God's Calling (Exodus 6:26-30)

For a man who complained that he couldn't speak, Moses sure had a lot to say! We have heard him raise this same objection before. He raised it back at the burning bush, when God first called him to be a prophet: "Moses said to the LORD, 'O Lord, I have never been eloquent.... I am slow of speech and tongue'" (Exod. 4:10). He said virtually the same thing at the beginning of chapter 6: "If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?" (v. 12). Now he says it again, trying to convince God that he was the wrong man for the job. Pharaoh would never listen to him because he was not a gifted speaker.

Perhaps this was a summary of what Moses said earlier rather than a separate conversation. But it seems more likely that Moses was dragging up the same old excuses again. It is easy to grow impatient with Moses for this, but what he did is not uncommon. People often come up with excuses for not doing what God tells them to do. Like Moses, we tend to use the same objections over and over. It takes some Christians years to get past their tired old excuses for not giving, not going, not witnessing, or not serving. We need to discover what Moses discovered: God's call is always accompanied by God's gift.²⁵

10. In what area of your walk with God are you afraid of failure?

²⁵ Ryken, *Exodus*, chap. 15.

11. Go back and read Exodus 6:12-13. There and in Exodus 6:30, Moses makes identical excuses. Why is it so easy to make excuses based on our own weaknesses?
12. Is there a gift God has given you that you aren't stewarding well? What would good stewardship of that gift look like?
13. What are the cultural or practical warning signs of a church that is burying its gifts instead of stewarding them well? Do you see any of those in our church? If so, what can be done about them?

When God Gives You a Hard Task, Remember He Has a Good Plan (Exodus 7:1-7)

The Lord then overviews the coming events (7:3–5). He begins by affirming his sovereignty over Pharaoh: “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart” (v. 3a), that is, he will take Pharaoh’s heart, which is already hardened in rebellion, and make it harder still (cf. comment on 4:21–23). This will lead to several results:

- (1) The Lord will multiply in Egypt his signs and wonders, which continually witness to Pharaoh and the Egyptians that he is the Lord and should be heeded (7:3b).
- (2) Despite the signs, Pharaoh will repeatedly refuse to heed the Lord’s words (7:4a).
- (3) Nonetheless, the Lord will put his hand on Egypt and bring his people out with great judgments on Egypt’s evil (7:4b; cf. 2 Chron. 24:24; Ezek. 5:9–10; 28:22–23).
- (4) Therefore, the Egyptians will know that he is the Lord (Ex. 7:5).

In short: “Moses and Aaron, your faithfulness will seem to have no effect, and for a time my mighty acts will seem to have no effect, but my purposes and power will prevail, so that I will lead Israel—my people!—out of Egypt, showing all Egypt that I am Yahweh, sovereign God and King!”²⁶

14. How might knowing the future make following Jesus easier? How does knowing the past make following Jesus easier?

²⁶ Sklar, “Exodus,” at Exodus 6:10–7:7.

The heart refers to the whole of the intellect, will, and emotions from which a person acts. The various Hebrew verbs used to describe the hardening of Pharaoh's heart all refer to a desire to act contrary to the Lord rather than in accord with him. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is referred to throughout chs. 4-14 with the implication that Pharaoh is answerable for his own actions (e.g., 8:15). However, the Lord states here that it is his sovereign hand that ultimately governs the events. This is also indicated by the recurring "as the LORD had said" (see 7:13; 8:15, 18; 9:12, 35). Though one might conclude that, if God hardens someone's heart, the latter is not answerable for his actions, this is not the biblical view, and certainly here the narrative is also careful to point out that Pharaoh also hardened his own heart (8:15, 32; 9:34). The sinner remains responsible for his sin.²⁷

15. As Pharaoh was exposed to God's power, glory, and commands, his heart was hardened. What does this passage and Rom. 9:16-18 teach us about God's sovereignty and human responsibility?

16. Where in your life do you need to remember that God has a good plan? What would it look like for you to take a step of faith in that area?

17. What hard tasks are only possible if our church decides to take steps of faith together?

²⁷ *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).