

EXODUS

What If?

“What if?” is a question we can ask a lot. We can look back on certain moments in our lives and wonder how drastically different things could have turned out.

In 2021, Marvel released a tv series called *What If...?* In the show, they explored different versions of familiar stories by asking questions like, “What if this happened?” or “What if that happened?” And it opened the door to some really interesting stories.

But it got me thinking about our own lives. There are so many moments in my life (and throughout history) where, if things hadn’t lined up exactly the way they did, we would be in a completely different place today.

If I hadn’t been in that class, I wouldn’t have met those friends. If I hadn’t worked that job, I might not have had the money to do this or that. One small decision or moment can lead to something completely different. It’s kind of like the butterfly effect.

And when we spend too much time thinking this way, we can start to spiral. We can drive ourselves crazy thinking, “What if I had made a different decision? What if I had gone somewhere else? What if that hadn’t happened?”

Today, we’re going to meet a character named Moses, and we’re going to see how God used him and orchestrated everything in his life.

And honestly, that’s good news for us. Because when God is in control, we don’t have to constantly live asking, “What if?”

God has a plan. And even when we can’t see how all the pieces fit together, He is still at work.

Moses’ birth wasn’t an accident. The timing wasn’t an accident. The people God used to protect him weren’t an accident. **God had a plan the entire time and STILL HAS A PLAN.**

ICEBREAKER

We all have “what if” moments in our lives. Looking back, what is one experience you once wished had not happened but now see that God used for good?

DAILY DEVOTIONS — DAY 1

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 did God do after hearing Israel's cries?
7. What does the chapter reveal about God's activity even before Israel recognized it?

DAY 3 — TODAY'S THEME: THE SUCCESS OF FAILURE

Read Exodus 2:16–22.

The first sermon I ever preached was so nerve-racking. I was terrified. I had no idea what I was doing, but thankfully, I went through a preaching cohort (basically a class) here at Village Bible Church. As part of the cohort, I was told that every sermon I preached had to be preached two weeks in advance so I could receive feedback and correction.

Pastor Jeremy invited a group of guys, and they all showed up. So there I was, preaching in an empty sanctuary with four experienced preachers sitting there, ready to rip me apart, or at least, that's what it felt like.

I preached the sermon, stammering my way through it, staring at my notes the entire time, and sounding like a robot. It was not good, and I knew it.

One of the guys Jeremy invited looked at me and said, "Ethan, that was really bad. Not good at all." I felt awesome of course, but then he said something that stuck with me: "The only way to preach a better sermon is to keep going. Keep preaching, keep learning, and keep improving. You're going to fail a lot, but you're going to see growth."

And that has turned out to be so true. I've seen God grow me in this skill. Don't get me wrong, I'm far from great, but we all are. God uses our failures to grow us.³

God is in the business of using people who have failed. The Bible doesn't gloss 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."⁴

11. Think about a failure or mistake in your own life. What did you learn from it, and how might God use that experience to help you grow?

12. What do you think God was teaching or developing in Moses during his forty years in Midian?

13. Why do you think God sometimes makes us wait instead of giving us what we want right away?

14. What is one area of your life where you need to slow down, spend time with God, and allow Him to grow you?

³ Authors Note

⁴ 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>.

DAY 4 — TODAY’S THEME: OOPS! I FORGOT

Read Exodus 2:23–25.

Most of us say things we don’t remember saying. If I’m honest, I don’t remember half of what I say. Few things disappoint me more than when someone reminds me, “You said you were going to do this,” and I realize I completely forgot.

Not that I went back on my word or tried to disappoint them, but it was a promise I made and completely forgot about. This happens all the time for me, and I need to improve in that area. I’m a flawed individual, and my promises sometimes fail.

The amazing and reassuring thing about our God is that His promises never fail, and He never forgets.

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.⁵

15. Have you ever felt like God wasn’t listening or had forgotten about you? How did you respond?

16. Where in your life do you need to remember that God has not forgotten you?

17. When God feels silent, what are some things you can do to remind yourself that He is still present and working?

⁵ Author’s Note.

This study was written by Ethan Wentzlaff, based on the adult study written by the VBC Pastoral Team.