

EXODUS

WHAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK?

I like being comfortable. I like my hobbies, my routines, my friendships, and doing things that I enjoy. And there's nothing wrong with those things. But sometimes, the things I enjoy can become excuses for not doing what God is asking me to do. It's easy to say, "I'll do that later," or "I'm not ready yet," because staying comfortable feels easier.

That's what we've seen from Moses over the past few weeks. God called him to do something difficult, and Moses kept coming up with excuses. But eventually, Moses had to realize that **his excuses weren't going to change what God had called him to do.**

That's where we find Moses in Exodus 4. After giving God excuse after excuse, Moses finally starts making his way back to Egypt. But before Moses can publicly lead God's people, God deals with something in Moses' private life.

That reminds us of something really important: **God isn't looking for perfect people. He is looking for people who will trust Him and obey Him.**

So as we study Exodus 4, I want us to ask ourselves one simple question: **What's keeping me from fully obeying God?**

Maybe it's fear. Maybe it's wanting to stay comfortable. Maybe you think you're not good enough. Maybe there's something you know God wants you to do, but you keep putting it off.

Whatever it is, remember this: **God doesn't call us because we are good enough. He calls us because He is with us.**

The same God who called Moses, even with all his excuses, still uses imperfect people to accomplish His perfect purposes for His glory.

ICEBREAKER

If you could instantly become an expert at something, what would you choose and why?

DAILY DEVOTIONS—DAY 1

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?

DAY 2—TODAY’S THEME: TIME TO GO

Read Exodus 4:18.

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.¹

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?²

¹ Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Exodus, 2025 edition (Richardson, TX: Sonic Light, 2025)

² David Guzik, “Exodus 4—Moses’ Commission from God,” Enduring Word Bible Commentary, <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/exodus-4/>

5. **Moses had seen God do amazing things, but now he had to actually obey. Why do you think obeying God can be harder than simply knowing what God wants us to do?**

6. **Moses didn't know everything that would happen when he left Midian. What do you think Moses might have been afraid of? Have you ever had to trust God without knowing how things would turn out?**

7. **After the burning bush, Moses had to go back to normal life and actually do what God said. What does this teach us about what it looks like to follow God after we leave church, youth group, or a powerful spiritual moment?**

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.³

8. **What is one ordinary responsibility God has given you right now, and how can being faithful in that responsibility help prepare you to obey Him when He gives you something bigger to do?**

³ Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 124–25.

DAY 3—TODAY'S THEME: DIVINE WEAPONRY

Read Exodus 4: 19–26.

If you know me, you know I love a good superhero story. I love when the hero gets the weapon he'll use on his journey, like Captain America's shield or Thor's hammer, Mjolnir. On their own, the weapons aren't all that impressive. What matters is the person who wields them and the strength that comes through them. That's what we see with Moses here.

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.⁴

9. God often uses ordinary people and ordinary things to do amazing things. What does this teach us about how God chooses to work?

10. Instead of focusing on what you don't have, what has God already given you that you could use to serve Him 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.

Philip Ryken summarizes this difficult truth in this great way: “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.”⁵

11. Pharaoh stood against God's plan, but God was still in control. How can knowing that God is in control help you when someone or something gets in the way of what He wants you to do?

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

⁵ Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005)

DAY 4—TODAY'S THEME: PRIVATE OBEDIENCE

Read Exodus 4:27–31.

Moses has finally obeyed God and is heading back to Egypt. But before he can confront Pharaoh, God confronts Moses about his own disobedience. Moses needed to get his own household back into covenant obedience before leading God's people. The main lesson is simple: **God takes obedience seriously. Our private obedience matters just as much as our public obedience.**

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!"⁶

12. **Why did God want Israel to leave Egypt? What does this teach us about why God saves us?**

13. **Pharaoh wanted Israel to serve him, but God wanted His people to worship and serve Him. What things can compete with God for our attention and loyalty today?**

14. **Why can it be easier to show that you follow God in front of other people than to obey Him when no one is watching? Are there any areas where your private life needs to match what you say you believe?**

15. **The Israelites worshiped God before their situation had changed. Why do you think they did that? What does this teach us about trusting God?**

⁶ 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>

This study was written by Ethan Wentzlaff based on the adult study by the VBC pastoral team.