

# EXODUS

## OBEDIENCE IS OURS, OUTCOMES ARE GOD'S

### **Exodus 5: Staying Faithful When Circumstances Get Worse**

I remember playing soccer in high school. We would have practice after school, but sometimes some guys wouldn't take practice seriously and they would mess around. Of course, the coach would get frustrated during practice, so he had a plan to correct this behavior by using group peer pressure. If one player was messing around, the whole team would have to pay the consequence. The coach would make us run. We had to sprint to the goalie box line and back, then to the midfield line and back, then to the goalie box line on the other side of the field and back and finally all the way across the field and back. And, if one of us wasn't running 100 percent, he would make the whole team run that drill again. That didn't seem fair to everyone else who was following the coach's directions.<sup>1</sup>

But here's the thing: the coach was in charge. The coach was in authority. I wasn't in control of the outcome. My responsibility was simply to obey the orders I had been given. What happened after that was ultimately out of my 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.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Author's note

<sup>2</sup> Taken and adapted from Steve Lombardo's intro

## ICEBREAKER

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

## DAILY DEVOTIONS—DAY 1

### 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?
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?

## DAY 2—TODAY'S THEME: UNWAVERING OBEDIENCE

### Read Exodus 5:1-4.

If we're honest, when God calls us to obey Him, it's not always easy. God told Moses to go talk to Pharaoh and ask him to let his work force of over 600,000 Israelite men plus women and children<sup>3</sup> to just walk out of Egypt. When adding women, children, elderly and non-Israelites who joined them, the number of people Moses was asking Pharaoh to allow to leave Egypt was between two to three million.<sup>4</sup> Egypt was also considered the world superpower at this time in history.<sup>5</sup> Egypt had reached the height of its world military dominance, wealth, and international influence.

Furthermore, when you entered a Pharaoh's temple, the statues were large so that you would feel small. One was 70 feet high.<sup>6</sup> Pharaoh was considered a god, and he wanted you to think that he was tremendously powerful when you walked into his temple. Imagine how Moses must have felt as he entered Pharaoh's temple.

God asks us to obey Him no matter how difficult the situation.. Moses does obey God and tells Pharaoh to let God's people go, but Pharaoh won't listen to Moses and as we will see, he makes life more difficult for Moses and the Israelites.

6. **Why are we often tempted to think that if we are obeying God, our circumstances should immediately improve?**
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?**
9. **If Paul describes blessing in 2 Corinthians 11–12 as including hardship, weakness, and persecution, how should that shape our prayers, our expectations of obedience and ministry, and the way we encourage one another when following Jesus makes life more complicated rather than simpler?**
10. **What would it look like for you to faithfully obey God without knowing what the outcome will be?**

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<sup>3</sup> Exodus 12:37

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-many-israelites-exited-egypt/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-moses-chose-exile/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://archaeology.org/collection/rediscovering-egypts-golden-dynasty/>

## DAY 3—TODAY'S THEME: UNJUST AUTHORITY

### Read Exodus 5:5–21.

Twenty Egyptian Christians and one Ghanaian had traveled to Libya seeking work when they were captured by an ISIS-affiliated jihadist group in 2015. Some believe the Ghanaian man came to faith after witnessing the steadfast courage of his Egyptian companions. After a month of refusing to renounce Christ, all 21 were executed on a Libyan beach.

Because the act was broadcast worldwide, it became one of the most widely witnessed acts of martyrdom in Church history. Yet it wasn't only the courage of the 21 that captured global attention — it was the response of their families. Despite the brutality of what they'd witnessed, the families of these Coptic believers made headlines for their resilience and forgiveness, embodying the very faith for which their loved ones had died.<sup>7</sup>

Today we see that Pharaoh is an unjust ruler oppressing the Israelites by demanding that they make the same number of bricks without being provided with the straw that had previously been given to them each day. When they didn't meet the daily quota, the slave drivers beat the Israelite overseers.

Even today, Christians are persecuted for their faith in Jesus. There may be a day coming for us where we too will face persecution because of Jesus. How are we to respond in those moments? I love how Jesus modeled for us the perfect response: "When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly."<sup>8</sup>

11. **What are some modern situations where Christians face unfair pressure, cruel treatment, or injustice at school or in society?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
12. **What does it practically look like to "entrust yourself to God" when someone insults you, spreads rumors, or treats you unfairly because of your faith or values?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
13. **Is there an area of your life where God may be calling you right now to trust Him and keep obeying even though the circumstances haven't changed?**

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<sup>7</sup><https://globalchristianrelief.org/stories/9-christian-martyrs-every-believer-should-know-nigeria/#:~:text=Twenty%20Egyptian%20Christians%20and%20one%20Ghanaian%20had,21%20were%20executed%20on%20a%20Libyan%20beach.>

<sup>8</sup>1 Peter 2:23

## DAY 4—TODAY'S THEME: TURNING TO GOD HONESTLY WITH OUR EMOTIONS

**Read Exodus 5:22–23.**

One thing for certain in life is that we will all go through difficult times. You may have a tough situation at home, whether it's strained relationships, financial difficulties, or the physical or mental health of a family member. Maybe you experience the heartbreak of a boyfriend or girlfriend breaking up with you.

The Israelites find themselves in a difficult time as they are oppressed by Pharaoh.

Because Moses and Aaron obeyed God and asked Pharaoh to let his people go, Pharaoh made life impossible for the Israelites by demanding that they make the same number of bricks without the Egyptians providing any straw material that they previously provided.

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.

When we find ourselves in difficult and seemingly impossible situations we need to turn to God, being open and honest with how we are feeling.

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

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

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

**17. What situation are you facing right now that you need to talk honestly and openly with God about?**

**This study was written by Pastor Mario Arindaeng based on the adult lesson by the VBC pastoral team.**