

# EXODUS

Journey of Fear, Doubt, and Blessing





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Journey of Fear, Doubt, and Blessing



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# ABOUT THIS STUDY

Life is God's gift. He fashioned every person in his or her mother's womb. Each of us is "remarkably and wondrously made" (Ps. 139:14). At conception we begin to live. As we grow, we learn how to live.

In this Bible study we'll explore the Book of Exodus. This book describes the new life the Israelites received when the Lord rescued them from Egypt. In Exodus God set the Israelites free from bondage. He said, "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from the forced labor of the Egyptians and rescue you. ... I will redeem you. ... I will take you as my people, and I will be your God" (Ex. 6:6-7).

As you work through this fascinating book, may you leave behind the old life of sin and bondage and begin a new life for God's glory through Jesus Christ!

The *Explore the Bible* series will help you know and apply the encouraging and empowering truth of God's Word. Each session is organized in the following way.

**UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT:** This page explains the original circumstances and setting of each passage and identifies the primary themes.

**EXPLORE THE TEXT:** This page introduces the Bible passage, providing helpful commentary and encouraging thoughtful interaction with God through His Word.

**APPLY THE TEXT:** This page helps you and your group members apply the truths you've explored. It's not enough to know what the Bible says. God's Word has the power to change your life.

**DAILY EXPLORATION:** Go deeper into God's Word, building on the group experience. Engage in these daily Bible studies, reflect on the questions, record your thoughts, and take action.

**OBEY THE TEXT:** These pages provide opportunities to obey the Scripture you've studied by responding to questions, memorizing verses, journaling, and praying.

**LEADER GUIDE:** This final section provides discussion starters and suggested questions to help someone lead a group in reviewing the daily exploration.



## GENERAL EDITOR

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# ABOUT THE BOOK OF EXODUS

Exodus is the second of the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, and the Pentateuch is central to the entirety of Christian Scripture. In fact, understanding Exodus and the rest of these five books of the Bible allows us to better grasp God's redemptive plan for His people.

In Genesis we see the start of God's people. Through the promise to Abraham, God established His covenant to make a people for Himself through which all the nations in the world would be blessed. In Exodus we witness the birth of God's people. Not only were God's people shaped by a covenant at Mount Sinai, but they also began learning to walk in God's ways as His people. If Exodus was the birth and infancy narrative of God's people, Leviticus was their schooling. If Exodus saw the emergence of the Israelites as God's chosen people, God provided in Leviticus the curriculum that outlined the Israelites' covenant relationship with Him. God began to teach them what it looks like to live as good citizens of His kingdom.

In Exodus we see God's commitment to His promise to make Abraham's descendants a great nation, but the fulfillment of this promise wouldn't be without its obstacles. In opposition to the great powers of Egypt and despite the Israelites' lack of faith, God remained true to His promise. When God's people were faithless, He remained faithful. In fact, the victory of God's people over Pharaoh in Exodus was clearly the victory of God.

The second part of Exodus is devoted to building the tabernacle. Through the tabernacle's structure and its designated place for sacrifices, God illustrated the relational framework for the unfolding covenant relationship He had established with His people. The Israelites couldn't help but learn of their impurity and sin in God's sight. Because God is holy, He couldn't dwell in the midst of an unclean people without divine provision. So the grace of God provided a way for the people to atone for their sin through sacrifices and maintain their proper relationship with God.

The gospel is unveiled throughout the Pentateuch. God's redemption of His people from slavery through Moses points to Jesus, the true and greater Moses, who would deliver His people from their enslavement to sin and death. The requirement of holiness points to the perfect righteousness and holiness of Christ. In this sense, the sacrifices God would require to be made in the tabernacle, particularly the sacrifice of atonement, prefigured the atoning sacrifice of Christ for our sin—a sacrifice that was made once and for all! All of the longings of Exodus find their perfect amen in Jesus.



For helps on how to use *Explore the Bible*, tips on how to better lead groups, or additional ideas for leading, visit [ministrygrid.com/web/explorethebible](http://ministrygrid.com/web/explorethebible).

Session 1

# Reluctance

*God calls and empowers people to serve Him and His purposes.*

Exodus 3:4-14; 4:13-16



**What can cause people to doubt their ability to accomplish a challenging task?  
How do our doubts feed our reluctance and hesitation to act?**

Most of us likely have doubts about our capabilities in some area. Christians aren't exempt from those feelings of doubt. Christian history is marked by reluctant leaders, struggling sinners, feeble doubters, and weak workers. God accomplishes His work through humans in spite of their limitations and failures.

## ► UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Exodus 1:1–4:31 we're introduced to Moses. He's mentioned many times in the New Testament and is almost always shown in a positive light. Among God's people, Moses is rarely criticized or disparaged; he's always honored. However, when we encounter Moses in the first chapters of Exodus, the initial picture we get is one of a weak and fearful man.

The Israelites had moved to Egypt (see 1:1) and had grown into a large group (see 1:7). Because of their great number, Pharaoh and the Egyptians no longer regarded them with friendliness but with fear. The Egyptians pressed the Israelites into slavery, causing God's people to suffer greatly (see 1:8-11).

In chapter 2 Moses entered the story. His name sounds like the Hebrew verb meaning "to draw out." His name alone foreshadows God's purposes to use Moses to draw out Israel from Egypt. Moreover, the preservation of Moses at birth points to his destiny. Moses was set in a basket (or an "ark," KJV) to be saved from the death that would come when Pharaoh had the firstborn sons of Israel slaughtered (see 1:22; 2:3). Moses was selected as God's means to deliver His people from a tragic fate. The one who had been delivered would become the deliverer.

In the exodus account we see both the strengths and the weaknesses of Moses' leadership and character. Moses initially let his feelings of inadequacy overwhelm him. At this point Moses' significance wasn't based primarily on his godliness and faith. Rather, his significance was based on God's plan and power working through him to accomplish His will—despite Moses' doubt and fear. The story of Moses is the beginning of the redemption of God's people, setting the stage for a supernatural act of salvation by God for a people powerless to help themselves. For Christians, weakness shouldn't lead to despair but to reliance on God's power to accomplish His will.



## ▶ EXODUS 3:4-14; 4:13-16

**3:4** When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, **God called out A** to him from the bush, “Moses, Moses!” “Here I am,” he answered. **5** “Do not come closer,” he said. **“Remove the sandals B** from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” **6** Then he continued, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” **Moses hid his face C** because he was afraid to look at God. **7** Then the LORD said, “I have **observed the misery D** of my people in Egypt, and have heard them crying out because of their oppressors. I know about their sufferings, **8** and I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and to bring them from that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the territory of the Canaanites, Hethites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. **9** So because the Israelites’ cry for help has come to me, and I have also seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them, **10** therefore, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh so that you may lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” **11** But Moses asked God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” **12** He answered, “I will certainly be with you, and this will be the sign to you that I am the one who sent you: when you bring the people out of Egypt, you will all worship God at this mountain.” **13** Then Moses asked God, “If I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what should I tell them?” **14** God replied to Moses, **“I AM WHO I AM. E** his is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.”

**4:13** Moses said, “Please, Lord, send someone else.” **14** Then the LORD’s anger burned against Moses, and he said, “Isn’t Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, he is on his way now to meet you. He will rejoice when he sees you. **15** You will speak with him and tell him what to say. I will help both you and him to speak and will teach you both what to do. **16** He will speak to the people for you. He will serve as a mouth for you, and you will serve as God to him.”

### Passage Outline

- The Approach (Ex. 3:4-6)
- The Assignment (Ex. 3:7-10)
- The Authority (Ex. 3:11-14)
- The Assurance (Ex. 4:13-16)

### Keywords

- A** God gets our attention in different ways when He wants to reveal His will to us (Heb. 1:1).
- B** God’s presence caused the ordinary sandy desert to become set apart for God’s distinctive purpose.
- C** What Moses saw was “the form of the LORD” (Num. 12:8), which doesn’t contradict Exodus 33:20; John 1:18; and 1 Timothy 6:16.
- D** God revealed His compassion for His suffering people. God’s love for them caused Him to “come down” (Ex. 3:8), identify with them in their distress, and deliver them from the Egyptians.
- E** God was saying, “I AM He who exists, and I will be present with you in the situation to which I am sending you.” God’s name is His person, character, authority, power, and reputation.

## ► EXPLORE THE TEXT

While tending sheep on Horeb (also known as Mount Sinai), Moses encountered God in a burning bush (see Ex. 3:2). In Exodus God's presence is often revealed in a flame of fire (see 13:21-22; 19:18; 40:38). It isn't difficult to imagine why Moses stopped and approached this mysterious burning bush that wasn't being consumed by flames (see 3:3).

Here was Moses, standing before the Almighty God. There was God, manifest in the flames in His beautiful glory, burning purity, and consuming holiness. And what did God do? He called Moses by his name.

**KEY DOCTRINE: God** >> The eternal, triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes but without division of nature, essence, or being.

God specifically revealed Himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob (see 2:24). Moses clearly understood who was addressing Him. In awe and fear Moses hid his face. Remember that Moses was in exile from God's enslaved people in Egypt (see 2:15). In fact, Moses had been alienated from them since birth. With this declaration God reminded Moses of his heritage (see 2:23-25). Moses surely wondered why God had chosen to reveal Himself.

**What did Moses' responses reveal about his view of God? What do people's responses to God reveal about their view of God? About their view of themselves?**

The God of Israel wasn't a distant deity, detached from His people; He had intimate knowledge of their sufferings. God had heard their cries. The words *have observed*, *heard*, and *know* reveal God's deep covenant love for His people (see 3:7; also see 2:23-25). Then God revealed His plans. He had come down to rescue the Israelites from the enslaving Egyptians and to deliver them to a land flowing with milk and honey. You can imagine Moses' awe as the God of his fathers revealed His plan to deliver His people from approximately four hundred years of slavery in Egypt. Moreover, God would deliver them to a land of their own.

**How did knowing God's identity bring assurance to Moses? How does God's promised presence enable us to trust Him?**

God didn't answer Moses' question in the way he asked but rather pointed back to Himself. In the Old Testament when God declared that He would be with someone, He was saying, "I'll do this by My own power" (see Gen. 26:3; Ex. 4:12). God confirmed His promise by stating that once the Israelites were delivered, they would serve God on the very mountain where Moses stood.

**How did God plan to demonstrate His power through Moses' weaknesses? What does this passage teach about the way God uses our weaknesses to accomplish His purposes?**

## ➤ APPLY THE TEXT

- God is holy but demonstrates His grace by approaching unholy people.
- God selects specific people to serve His purposes and lead His people. Even so, like Moses, we often doubt our ability to live according to God's will.
- Believers can be assured that God will provide the resources for them to be successful in their God-given responsibilities.

**Whom do you think Moses doubted more—himself or God? How can self-doubt cause us to doubt God as well?**

**How do your personal doubts affect the way you view God and His plans to involve you in His work?**

**List the resources God has provided for you to accomplish His will. How can you use each resource to accomplish God's will? Ask God for courage to fulfill His will, using the resources He has provided.**

**What steps can you take to carry out the role God wants you to play in His redemption of people?**



## ► DAILY EXPLORATION

### Day 1: Our response to God says more about us than it says about Him.

*Read Exodus 3:4-6, identifying the way God initiated His conversation with Moses.*

God took the initiative by approaching Moses. He also lovingly warned Moses, as he approached the burning bush, that he was standing on holy ground. Just as God didn't consume and destroy the object of His revelation (the bush), He also didn't consume or destroy the recipient of His revelation (Moses). This fact demonstrates God's grace and purpose, for otherwise, no sinful person can survive a close encounter with the almighty God. In response, an encounter with the living God calls for a respectful change in posture, a fearful reverence that treads lightly. Though God is transcendent, He's also immanent.

God isn't required to reveal Himself to humanity but chooses to do so from love and for His purposes. Even so, God is holy and should be approached with reverence.

**What does your response to God reveal about your view of God? About your view of yourself? How does your response to God need to change?**

### Day 2: God hears our cries for help.

*Read Exodus 3:7-10, circling the things God said He was about to do through Moses.*

God told Moses He would use him to orchestrate the events that would change history and become embedded in the minds of the Israelites as one of the most significant moments in their story. God is a saving God and a sending God.

Moses is a prime example that God "is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). God's purposes are accomplished not by our power but by His. God sent Moses as the deliverer to rescue His people from slavery and to lead them to dwell in the promised land.

God commissioned Moses by His word and power to do something that seemed impossible. He sent Moses to stand before Pharaoh, call for the Israelites' release, and lead a huge group of slaves out of bondage. His mission would be possible only if God supplied the power. God isn't a distant deity. He hears the cries of His people and is moved to action.

**What challenges are you currently facing that seem beyond your abilities? How do the cross and the resurrection of Christ remind you that God has ultimately heard your cries?**



### Day 3: God's name reveals His character.

***Read Exodus 3:11-14, paying particular attention to verse 14. Notice the way God identified Himself.***

The words *I AM* have been the focus of much theological study. The wordplay on the Hebrew verb *to be* is illustrated in the Septuagint's translation, "I am the One who is." Simply put, God's nature isn't dependent on anything other than Himself. God is beyond our exhaustive knowledge, and yet He graciously chooses to reveal Himself to humanity. Although He isn't completely comprehensible, in revealing His personal name, He lovingly shows that He's knowable. In this sense, the more you know about God, the more you don't know.

God simply is. God will be who He is. This declaration required Moses to trust Him, His word, and what He chose to reveal at that time. Hebrews 1:1-2 tells us, "Long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son." Jesus is the clearest revelation of God to people. For this reason the name *I AM* anticipates the "I am" sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John, which show His deity (see, for example, John 8:58). Moreover, God's promise to be with Moses foreshadows Jesus' promise to be with the disciples as they went on mission with God (see Matt. 28:18-20).

**How do the realities behind God's name give you confidence? Take time to pray, sharing your doubts, confessing your shortcomings, and asking Him to help you overcome your doubts. Memorize Exodus 3:14.**

### Day 4: God promises His presence as we take on His assignments.

***Scan Exodus 3-4, looking for verses that highlight God's presence or promised presence.***

God always promises His presence to those who are willing to follow Him. Review the following passages: Joshua 1:9; 1 Chronicles 28:20; Matthew 28:20. Pay particular attention to who is addressed. In each of these passages, the presence of God is promised to the person who carries out His mission. God's presence enabled Moses to stand before Pharaoh and call for the release of the Israelites. God's presence gave Joshua the courage he needed to lead the Israelites into the promised land. God's presence sustained Solomon as he built the Jerusalem temple and assumed the role of king. God's presence enabled Jesus' followers to faithfully make disciples of all nations. We can only shudder to think of the results if any one of these individuals had been left to complete the assigned task alone. Believers can rest assured that God will be with them when they're completing a God-given assignment.

**Why is it important for someone who receives a God-given task to be assured of God's presence? How does God's presence motivate you to action? How does His promised presence give you courage to complete your God-given assignments?**

## Day 5: God works through our weaknesses.

*Read Exodus 4:13-16, looking for ways God would work through Moses' weaknesses.*

Moses still doubted himself (see Ex. 3:17-18; 4:1). Even after God had given Moses further confirmation (see 4:8-9), Moses pleaded for God to send someone else. Moses said he didn't have the credentials (see 3:11-12), the knowledge (see 3:13-22), the people's trust (see 4:1-9), or the communication skills (see 4:10-12). Moses must have thought he had built a strong case against God's plan. While God reproved Moses for his questioning, He also provided Aaron as Moses' spokesperson to help accomplish His purposes.

God would provide the power to accomplish His will. He would provide the message through Moses that would accomplish His will. In Aaron God provided the mouthpiece to speak into action what He willed. Believers can be assured that God provides the resources they need to successfully carry out their God-given responsibilities.

**How has God used your weaknesses to demonstrate His power? How would you describe the significance of God's working through your weaknesses?**



*Our greatest fear ... should not be of failure but of succeeding at things in life that don't really matter.*

TIM KIZZIAR

## ➤ OBEY THE TEXT

**Reflect on the truths found in Exodus 3–4 and record your responses to the following questions or discuss them with two other members of your Bible study group.**

What has God directed you to do in the past week that made you hesitate? In what ways was your response similar to Moses' response to God in this passage?

When have you sensed God's presence during the past week? How did that experience affect your confidence in God?

What did God reveal about Himself to you? How does Scripture confirm what He revealed to you? How does what He revealed to you affect your life? What actions are you taking?

## MEMORIZE

God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you."

EXODUS 3:14

## MY THOUGHTS

Record insights and questions from this session's group experience and daily exploration.

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## MY RESPONSE

Note specific ways you'll put into practice the truth explored this week.

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## MY PRAYERS

List specific prayer needs and answers to remember this week.

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## ▶ GETTING STARTED

**OPENING OPTIONS:** Choose one of the following to open the group discussion.

**WEEKLY QUOTATION DISCUSSION STARTER:** “Our greatest fear ... should not be of failure but of succeeding at things in life that don’t really matter.”—Tim Kizziar

- › What’s your initial response to this week’s quotation?
- › In what ways is success in accomplishing God’s purposes affected by our fears?
- › In today’s Scripture passage we’ll explore the tension between faith and fear as we examine Moses’ role in leading the Israelites out of their four-hundred-year-captivity in Egypt, despite his initial reluctance to be a part of God’s plan. As we’ll see today, our reluctance to be used by God often stems from our fear, but God’s willingness to use us anyway stems from His grace.

**CREATIVE ACTIVITY:** Before the group meets, think of a time when you allowed fear to keep you from an exciting or rewarding experience (for example, riding a roller coaster or going on a trip due to a fear of flying). Use the following questions and statements to open the group discussion.

- › Is basing a decision solely on fear ever a good idea? Why or why not?
- › We’ll always look back and regret allowing fear to keep us from participating in beneficial experiences. However, in the moment of deliberation, there may be signs alerting us that we’re about to make a poor decision based on fear. What are some of those warning signs?
- › We can’t simultaneously obey our fear and fully walk in faith; one must override the other. This truth was embodied by Moses, who was initially reluctant to commit to God’s plan because of his fear. Today we’ll see that God, in His power and grace, is able and willing to use us even though we’re afraid. However, He’s not content to leave us in our fearfulness.

## ▶ UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

**PROVIDE BACKGROUND:** Briefly introduce members to Exodus, pointing out major themes, information, and ideas that will help them understand Exodus 3:4-14; 4:13-16 (see pp. 5 and 7). Then, to help people personally connect today’s context with the original context, use the following questions and statements.

- › Fear and faith were recurring themes in Moses’ life. Fear caused his mother to hide him as a baby for three months, and faith compelled her to put him in a basket by the river bank. A deep-seated sense of faith compelled Moses to intervene when he saw an Israelite being beaten by an Egyptian (see Acts 7:23-25), but fear compelled him to flee to Midian to escape Pharaoh’s retaliation. Today’s passage also illustrates the interplay of fear and faith in Moses’ life.
- › Why do we often devote our thoughts and attention to fear instead of faith? When we make decisions based on fear rather than faith, what’s the effect on our thoughts, attitudes, and actions?

- › Not all fear is created equal. Some fear is born of reverence for God (see Ex. 3:16), and some fear is produced from a lack of faith that makes us reluctant to fully submit to the Lord (see 4:13). In today’s passage we’ll see that although Moses eventually led the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt, at first he was reluctant to fully commit to God’s original plan because of his fear.

## › EXPLORE THE TEXT

**READ THE BIBLE:** Ask two volunteers to read Exodus 3:4-14; 4:13-16.

**DISCUSS:** Use the following questions to discuss group members’ initial reactions to the text.

- › What immediately stands out to you in this text as a theme or primary point? What do you find encouraging, timely, or convicting?
- › How do you feel when you read that the Lord “observed the misery” of His people and “heard them crying out” (v. 7)? In what ways does this aspect of God’s character influence your faith?
- › What did Moses’ repeated questioning of God’s plan reveal about his heart?
- › Why was it important for Moses to return to Egypt in God’s name and power rather than in his own name and for his own altruistic purposes? Why is it important that believers today also perform divinely appointed tasks in the Lord’s name and by His power rather than leaning on our own plans, means, and strength?
- › What else does this text teach us about God? About ourselves? What other questions or observations do you have?

**NOTE:** Provide ample time for group members to share responses and questions about the text. Don’t feel pressured to prioritize the printed agenda over group members’ personal experiences. If time allows, discuss responses to the questions in the personal reading.

## › OBEY THE TEXT

**RESPOND:** Foster an environment of openness and action. Help individuals apply biblical truth to specific areas of personal thought, attitude, and/or behavior.

- › What message do we communicate to the world when we willingly enter difficult, painful, life-altering work in the name of the Lord?
- › What steps will you take to prepare your heart for the day when the Lord calls you to enter your own “Egypt” to confront your own “Pharaoh”?
- › What spiritual practices can we begin in our lives to guard our hearts against reluctance and fear?

**PRAY:** Close by thanking God for working through our weakness. Pray that He will help us set aside our fear and reluctance and will use us to demonstrate His power.