



the**GOSPEL**PROJECT.

# FROM CAPTIVITY TO THE WILDERNESS

ADULTS / LEADER GUIDE / WINTER 2021-22 / VOL. 2 / CSB



# GOD'S WORD TO YOU

## A LIFE WORTH DYING FOR

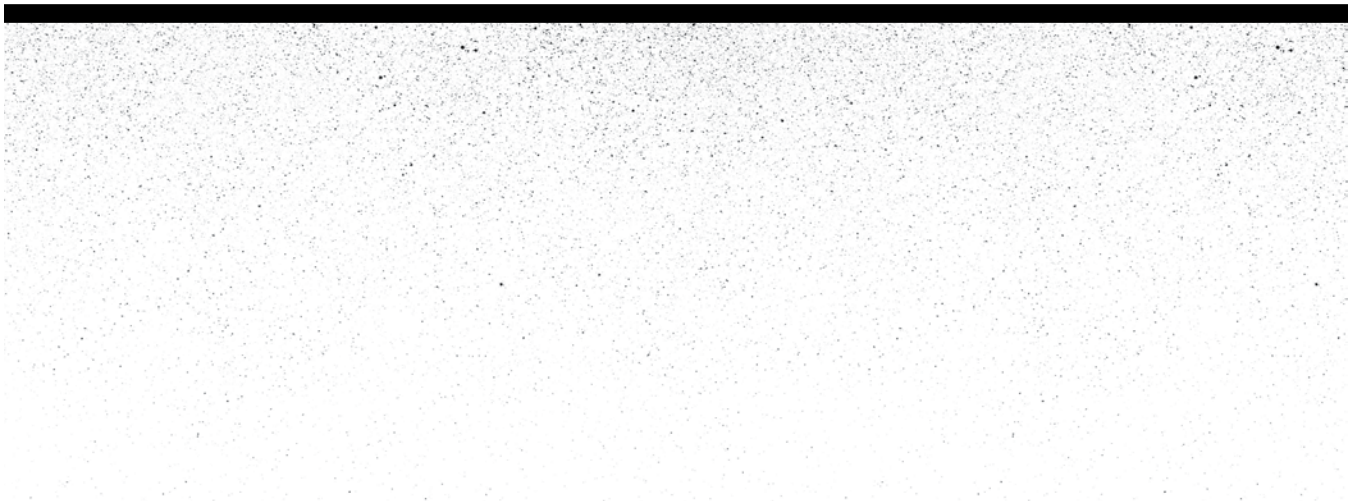
In the beginning, God created all things good. With the making of humankind as male and female, He even declared His creation to be very good. Paradise was the location; abundant life was the experience, that is, until the taint of sin covered the world through the rebellion of Adam and Eve against their Creator.

As a result, humanity lost its paradise and was separated from the God who created all things good. Death was God's warning for disobedience, and death became the reality—the death of living apart from God (sin), the death of life (physical death), and the death of eternal separation from God's goodness (spiritual death).

But the God of all good things was not finished. He called a people to Himself to be a light to the world. He gave them His holy expectations that they should follow them. He made provision for sin through sacrifices. And even when His people continued to rebel against Him, He promised life from death.

In comes Jesus, the Son of God sent into the world to make all things new. "In him was life, and that life was the light of men" (John 1:4). "Full of grace and truth," Jesus obeyed all of the Father's holy expectations (1:14). He is the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (1:29). He laid down His life in death on a cross to secure life for those who follow Him (10:11), and He proved it in His resurrection when He took up His life again (10:18). A thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy; Jesus came so we might once again have life and have it in abundance (10:10).

So how should we respond to this good news? By turning from sin (repentance) and believing in Jesus (faith). "The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (12:25). The treasures and pleasures of this world cannot compare to the eternal life found in Jesus.



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# THE EDITOR

The first time I read the Book of Leviticus, I was baffled. As a brand-new, twenty-something Christian, I didn't know why this book—and most of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy for that matter—was so important. So I asked the more established Christians I knew. They weren't sure either. And it turned out that outside of the odd narrative passage and a few verses in isolation, many of them hadn't read these books either.

These books can be intimidating, especially when we're asking what we're supposed to get from them or how they apply to us. They're filled with rules and regulations, the social and ceremonial code of the Jewish people. At a glance, they hardly seem relevant to us at all. But if we believe that, we're going to miss out on something amazing: God's grace demonstrated time and again, not simply in the miracles God did rescuing the Israelites from captivity and providing for their every need in the wilderness but in that very same social and ceremonial code that leaves us scratching our heads.

The books of the Law reveal the holiness of God, a God who cares about the particulars in addition to the big picture. A God who declares that His people are to be holy as He is holy, that they are to live in a way that reflects His goodness and glory. We see God's faithfulness to deliver His people, not simply from their captivity but to a life of holiness—a deliverance that finds its ultimate fulfillment in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

In this volume, it is our prayer that you would see God's holiness and faithfulness afresh—and that as you do, your desire to be holy as He is holy would be strengthened.

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## UNIT 4

# OUT OF EGYPT

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# I CALLED MY SON

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## “I Will Be Your God”

by J. A. Medders

+

Iconic. That’s one of the first words that comes to mind when I think about the Book of Exodus. Maybe you’ve seen the multiple movies depicting one of the most epic scenes in our sacred Scriptures. Water spreading, ground drying, Israelites marching. The parting of the Red Sea will be high on the list of most requested footage in the New Jerusalem.

Exodus is filled with famous scenes, such as baby Moses floating down the river to escape Pharaoh’s genocide of Hebrew boys, only to end up raiding Pharaoh’s fridge while growing up in Pharaoh’s house. You may recall the account of Moses killing an Egyptian and fleeing into the desert, where he eventually encountered a burning shrub that would not burn up as it burst forth with the voice of God. Here, Moses was charged with the mission and the words, “Let my people go” (Ex. 5:1). And it was here that God revealed His personal name—YHWH (pronounced Yahweh). Before long, we see this covenant God devastate Egypt with plagues, litter the land with frogs and hail, cover the skies in darkness and death, and lead His people on an exodus toward their holy land.

The incredible scenes of Exodus get imprinted on our imagination, and that’s the kind of the point. The pyrotechnics in Exodus serve a spiritual purpose.

### GOD IS THE MESSAGE

God worked His wonders in Exodus to set His people free, yes, and also to make an announcement to every Israelite, to every Egyptian with their pantheon of gods, to Pharaoh and his palace, and to everyone who would ever read Exodus. That message: There is no one like God.

- To the Israelites, God declared them to be His people, and He promised that they would know Him as the Lord their God who brought them out from their slavery in Egypt (Ex. 6:7).
- At the conclusion to the plague of frogs, Moses gave Pharaoh the honor of deciding when Moses was to pray for the plague to end so Pharaoh would know the uniqueness and power of the God of the Hebrews (Ex. 8:10).
- The Lord declared to Pharaoh that He could have struck and killed the king at any moment, but He hadn’t for a purpose—so God’s power would be shown in Egypt and God’s name would be known throughout the earth (Ex. 9:16).
- God performed His wonders against Egypt so that the Israelites and the generations after them would know that the Lord alone is God (Ex. 10:2).

- God parted the Red Sea for His people to pass through and planned to bring it back together to the destruction of Pharaoh's army, which would result in God's glory among the Egyptians (Ex. 14:18).

The verses identified above illuminate for us that Exodus is also about how God gives an exodus, a deliverance, a freedom from spiritual ignorance. God delivered His people from the chains of Egypt—and He delivered them to Himself. God wants people to know Him. God is the subject of the exodus: His power, His might, His mercy, His provision, His glory, His attention, His invitation to know Him.

An exodus can only be an exodus if there is a destination. So the Book of Exodus is both departure and arrival. It is leaving Egypt to walk with God. Leaving darkness to walk in the light. Exodus is a blueprint for Christian spirituality—God's mercy sets sinners free to make them His people. This ancient account is part of the believer's testimony. It's more than Bible stories; it's your story in Christ.

## YOUR SPIRITUAL LINEAGE

There is a reason for the existence of multiple services that will trace your ancestry, piece together your family history, or provide your genetic makeup with a kit in the mail. We want to feel connected. We desire a discovery of meaning in our histories. The apostle Paul wanted us to take that same approach in our intake of Exodus. Fight to overcome the gap of time, space, place, culture, and customs. Fight any familiarity you have with Exodus that could breed apathy. Paul told every disciple of the risen Lord Jesus that Moses wrote these events down—both the good and the bad—for our spiritual health (see 1 Cor. 10:1-6).

Paul wanted us to learn our family history so we won't be doomed to repeat it. It's not uncommon for people in small groups and studies to throw their heads back in disbelief at the Israelites, saying, "They saw these amazing things in

Egypt, saw all that God did, and they still whined and complained!" But are we sure we would have been much different? We have full and finished Bibles, ones wrapped in cowhide and ones in apps on our phones, and we still struggle. We have shelves of books, hours of sermons that have hit our ears, and we still manage to get tripped up in our walk with Jesus. Paul gave us his warning in 1 Corinthians 10 because he knew that if we aren't careful, then we will answer our temptations just like our spiritual ancestors did. If we don't learn from our history, our spirituality will continue to be sluggish, floundering, and lack the zeal we truly desire.

This ancient account  
is part of the believer's  
testimony. It's more  
than Bible stories; it's  
your story in Christ.

So what can we do? Know the Lord. Trust His deliverance, redemption, and power. Get ready to drink from the spiritual rock, who is Christ the Lord. While you pay attention to the narrative, the movements, and the plagues found in Exodus, also pay attention to your discipleship with the same Jesus who saved a people out of Egypt (Jude 5). Follow your Lord God who was crucified and raised for you, who provided His blood to deliver you from sin, Satan, and death, and who calls you to know Him and the power of His resurrection. Recall how you have been delivered to a new destination—an abundant life in Christ and filled with His Spirit. This is your life, your story, your God.



# GOD SHARES HIS NAME

## + SESSION OUTLINE

1. God reveals His holiness to His servant (Ex. 3:1-5).
2. God reveals His identity to His servant (Ex. 3:6-15).
3. God reveals His power to His servant (Ex. 3:19-22).

Background Passage: Exodus 1-4

## + WHAT WILL MY GROUP LEARN?

God heard the cries of His people in distress and responded by raising up Moses, the one He would send to provide deliverance.

## + HOW WILL MY GROUP SEE CHRIST?

God revealed Himself to Moses as “I AM,” identifying His transcendent self-existence. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, the great “I AM” who came to save people from sin.

## + HOW SHOULD MY GROUP RESPOND?

Because God has revealed Himself to us in Christ so that we might be freed from the oppression of sin, we strive to make Christ known to those around us, conscious of and burdened by the plight of the oppressed in our world.



# GROUP TIME

NOTES



## INTRODUCTION

**SETTING:** Through Joseph’s influence, God’s people initially lived in Egypt as honored guests. But a new Pharaoh came to power who did not remember Joseph. As a result, God’s people suffered under brutal oppression in Egypt for generations. But the covenant-keeping God heard their cries and prepared to demonstrate His power on their behalf. He would do so through an unlikely messenger—a Hebrew man named Moses, Egypt’s fallen prince, who was grinding out his existence in obscurity, shepherding on the backside of nowhere.

**DISCUSS:** What does your name mean, and what was its inspiration? (wait for a group member to respond first; only share your response as a conclusion to the discussion)

**TRANSITION:** In ancient times, names often took their meanings to another level. A person’s name could describe his or her character or a defining physical characteristic. Some were borne out of joy, and others out of suffering. God too has a name. It was not given to Him but chosen by Him, and it served the purpose of identifying His nature and character for the comfort and hope of His people.



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# POINT 1

## GOD REVEALS HIS HOLINESS TO HIS SERVANT (Ex. 3:1-5).

NOTES

**1** Meanwhile, Moses was shepherding the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. **2** Then the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire within a bush. As Moses looked, he saw that the bush was on fire but was not consumed. **3** So Moses thought, “I must go over and look at this remarkable sight. Why isn’t the bush burning up?” **4** When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called out to him from the bush, “Moses, Moses!” “Here I am,” he answered. **5** “Do not come closer,” he said. “Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Exodus 3:1-5** from his or her Bible.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSE 1** commentary to emphasize the following idea (*the bold words fill in a blank in the Daily Discipleship Guide [DDG]*):

Horeb was an insignificant place in the wilderness, but because **God** appeared there, it became **holy** ground.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 2-5** commentary to highlight God’s holiness, a truth learned through God’s special revelation (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

**ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #2: Special Revelation:** Special revelation refers to God revealing Himself to humanity through historical events, His **Word**, and through Jesus Christ. Through special revelation, human beings learn about God’s **character**, His will, His purpose for creation, and His plan of **redemption**. Special revelation shows us the nature and character of God, and because God has revealed Himself in this way, we can know Him—through a saving relationship with Him in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

**DISCUSS:** Why is it important that we learn about God’s holiness from His special revelation? (as God’s image-bearers, we should want to know all we can about our Creator so as to honor Him; God intentionally revealed this aspect of His character so that we would strive to be holy as He is holy; so we recognize the weight and stain of our sin in contrast to God’s holiness)

**TRANSITION:** Believers have special access to God as Father through His Son and the Holy Spirit, but we must not allow our understanding of God’s burning holiness to wane. He is never less holy than when He commanded Moses to remove his shoes in His presence.

### THEOPHANY

A term used to describe a visible appearing of the invisible God, theophany refers to a rare but real phenomenon throughout salvation history. These typically occur at significant points in God’s plan in the form of a direct message, a message given in a dream or vision, and/or given by an angel.

### THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

An example of theophany, the Angel of the LORD is a mysterious figure who appears as distinct from Yahweh, the God of Israel, and yet also seems to be identical with Him.

## COMMENTARY

**VERSE 1 /** Where is the least likeliest place for a world-changing, history-defining miracle to begin? Probably the exact place Moses was shepherding in Exodus 3. Moses was tending his father-in-law's flocks alone and deep in the wilderness. Yet here is where God met Moses.

Much of Moses' life would be considered blessed. When Moses was a baby, his Hebrew parents protected him from infanticide at the hands of the Egyptians. And for forty years, he lived as an adopted son in the family of Pharaoh's daughter. So he was spared from the horrors of Egyptian slavery experienced by his people. Once he had been surrounded by servants, but now this failed son of Egypt didn't even own his own livestock. In defense of a Hebrew slave, Moses murdered an Egyptian taskmaster, and fearing for his life, he fled, spending the next forty years in exile (Ex. 1–2).

Moses led the flocks to the **“far side of the wilderness,”** or as the King James translation of the Bible says, “the backside of the desert.” One Hebrew scholar notes that the name **“Horeb”** comes from a Hebrew root word for “dryness” or “parched place.” **1** Moses couldn't be in a more obscure place. God often finds His best servants broken down and in out of the way places.

There is also deep significance in Moses' vocation. He was leading sheep in the wilderness, but soon he would be leading people through the wilderness. A future leader in Israel, King David, would come from a shepherding background. And the ultimate shepherd, King Jesus, declared Himself to be “the good shepherd” who cares for His people and lays down His life to save them (John 10:11-18).

**VERSES 2-5 /** Isolated in the desert, Moses did a double take. Were his eyes playing tricks on him? A bush on fire in the desert may not have been an unusual occurrence for the experienced shepherd, but a bush that wouldn't burn? That sight caused him to venture closer.

What Moses saw was no mere fire. He was witnessing an appearance of God Himself. This is what theologians refer to as a “theophany,” an appearance of God. The text tells us this was a divine messenger of God—**“the angel of the LORD”**—who appeared and spoke as God, the One who **“called out to [Moses] from the bush.”** In other words, the invisible God made Himself known in a visible way.

It's significant that God appears here as **“a flame of fire.”** This symbolizes God's holy presence. The people of Israel would be led by God in a pillar of fire (Ex. 13:21). Later, God would descend on this same mountain in fire (Ex. 19:18). Fire is a metaphor for God's holiness.

There is an important principle at work here. God is not a cosmic buddy or a social media friend. He's “a consuming fire,” and the only right response is to worship Him (Heb. 12:29). Too often our modern conceptions of God domesticate Him into something that is strangely foreign to this God who manifested Himself in the burning bush.

As the Creator, every square inch of creation belongs to the Lord, but because God showed up on this mountain, it is called **“the mountain of God”** (Ex. 3:1). Therefore, God told Moses to remove his shoes, a Middle-Eastern custom for showing respect and hospitality. This was **“holy ground”** not because of the ground itself but because of the holy One who was present.

Yet notice that God spoke to Moses in personal terms. Moses was called by name and known by the God of the universe. He was to remain barefoot at a respectful distance, but by God's grace, Moses was able to remain in God's holy presence.

So it is for God's people today; through faith in Jesus Christ, we know God and have become known by Him (Gal. 4:9). And in an even greater way, we are able to enter God's holy presence through Jesus, our Savior.

# POINT 2

## GOD REVEALS HIS IDENTITY TO HIS SERVANT (Ex. 3:6-15).

NOTES

**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 because he was afraid to look at God. **7** Then the LORD said, “I have observed the misery 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 ancestors 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. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.” **15** God also said to Moses, “Say this to the Israelites: The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name forever; this is how I am to be remembered in every generation.

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Exodus 3:6-15** from his or her Bible.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 6-15** commentary to explain what we learn about God’s identity from this passage (*the bold words fill in a blank in the DDG*):

The great “I AM”—Yahweh, the Lord—is a compassionate God, a **rescuing** God, a **sending** God, and the eternal, **pre-existent**, all-powerful Creator God.

**DISCUSS:** Read the **VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY** quote in the sidebar, and then ask this question: **What did God’s name have to do with the plight of His people in Egypt?** (God is sovereign and in control; no one can thwart God’s plans or frustrate His intentions; God will do what He says He will do; both the Hebrews and the Egyptians should have worshiped God alone)

**TRANSITION:** Along with an understanding of God’s holiness and His identity, Moses needed to recognize God’s infinite power as he faced Pharaoh and the Egyptians on behalf of his people.

### VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“For God and Lord is a name of majesty, a name of power, even as God himself says, ‘The Lord is my name,’ and as in another place the prophet declares, ‘The Lord almighty is his name.’ He is God, therefore, and Lord, either because his rule is over all or because he beholds all things and is feared by all without exception.”<sup>2</sup>

–Ambrose (d. 397)

## COMMENTARY

**VERSES 6-10** / God appeared in fire, and God spoke, declaring His identity. This is the God of Moses' father, but more importantly, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The covenant faithfulness of God wasn't negated by the Hebrews' four-hundred-year stint in Egypt. In fact, God had foretold the difficulty of this stretch of time and His future protective response (Gen. 15:13-14). Their God is the God who keeps His word. This is the God who promised to make Abraham the father of many nations, and this promise's fulfillment would begin with the people of Israel (Gen. 12; 17).

God used three phrases to describe His awareness of the Israelites' distress in Egypt: **"I have observed," "[I] have heard,"** and **"I know."** God is not detached from the suffering of His people but intimately acquainted with it. God's all-seeing eyes witnessed their oppression, and His all-hearing ears received their cries for deliverance. What's more, "to know" means more than mere knowledge; it means God will act with power and intentionality.

God's words to Moses—**"I have come down to rescue them"**—are a window into the heart of the mercy of God. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is a rescuing, delivering God. Ultimately, God would "come down" in the person of Jesus, the eternal Son of God born in human flesh to rescue His people from sin through His sacrificial death and resurrection.

Notice God's two-fold plan: to rescue His people from their oppression in Egypt and to relocate them to a good land. This is consistent with the theme of salvation in the Bible: God rescues us from the peril of slavery to sin and calls us to something better—worship and witness (Eph. 2:10). **3** Notice also how God contrasted the bondage of Egypt with the beauty of the promised land. A land flowing with milk and honey indicated a prosperous agrarian society, with the milk from goats and honey from dates. **4**

This rescuing God is a sending God as well. He knew about His people's oppression, and His act to rescue them involved a human mediator and leader—Moses. Centuries later, God the Father sent the Son to rescue us from sin, and the Son has subsequently sent His followers into the world to deliver the message that rescue is available for sinners who repent and believe.

**VERSES 11-15** / God was sending Moses, but Moses had some questions. First, **"Who am I?"** reflected his insecurity about his ability for the mission. Moses' previous attempt at liberation resulted in murder and exile (Ex. 2:11-15). But God delights in restoring and using failed sinners. It didn't matter who Moses was; it matters who God is. God promised to be with Moses, and that would make all the difference (see Matt. 28:20). Moses, an eighty-year-old man, stumbling into Pharaoh's court would be a ridiculous idea. Moses empowered by the God of the universe, the Lord of creation, however, is a different story.

Second, Moses inquired about how he should refer to God. A new generation of Israelites wouldn't recognize Moses or trust him to be their leader. So God told Moses to tell them that **"I AM WHO I AM"** sent him. **"I AM"** is related to the Hebrew word for "to be" and is likely pronounced "Yahweh" (often translated in our Bibles as "LORD"). Jesus also referred to Himself in this way, saying "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58).

It's impossible to fully understand the mystery and meaning of God's name, but at the very least, it implies God's eternal pre-existence. God was never created, nor does He need anything to sustain Him. He just is—the Creator and Sustainer of everything, which is dependent upon Him. God's name also tells us something about His character. He is unchangeable, reliable, and eternal. The people of God could trust God because He will do what He says He will do. **5**



# POINT 3

## GOD REVEALS HIS POWER TO HIS SERVANT (Ex. 3:19-22).

NOTES

**19** “However, I know that the king of Egypt will not allow you to go, even under force from a strong hand. **20** But when I stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my miracles that I will perform in it, after that, he will let you go. **21** And I will give these people such favor with the Egyptians that when you go, you will not go empty-handed. **22** Each woman will ask her neighbor and any woman staying in her house for silver and gold jewelry, and clothing, and you will put them on your sons and daughters. So you will plunder the Egyptians.”

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Exodus 3:19-22** from his or her Bible.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 19-20** commentary to contrast the power of Pharaoh and God (*the bold words fill in a blank in the DDG*):

Pharaoh’s hand over the Hebrews was **strong**, so Moses’s mission would not be easy-going. But God’s hand is **stronger** still, and He would accomplish what He sent Moses to do, just as He said.

**DISCUSS:** How have you seen God’s sovereign power on display? (wait for a group member to respond first; only share your response as a conclusion to the discussion)

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 21-22** commentary to emphasize the following idea (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

God’s power would liberate the Hebrews from their **slavery**, and He would also bless them through the gifts of the Egyptians. Similarly, Jesus liberates believers from **sin** and blesses them with spiritual gifts.

**DISCUSS:** Why do we need God’s power through Jesus to save us from our sin? (we are dead in our sin and helpless to liberate ourselves; the power of sin and death holds humanity captive until God alone saves; no other human being can lay down his or her life to free us from our slavery to sin—only Jesus)

## COMMENTARY

**VERSES 19-20** / God was equipping Moses for his mission with everything he would need: the holiness of God, the name of God, and now the sovereign power of God.

In verse 18, God instructed Moses and all the Israelite elders to go to **“the king of Egypt,”** to Pharaoh, and request a three-day furlough for the Hebrews to travel into the wilderness to worship their God. Such a request was commonly granted for indentured servants and slaves in Egypt. **6** But even as He gave this instruction, the omniscient God knew Pharaoh’s response. Pharaoh would reject this request, and his heart would grow harder and harder in opposition to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Deity who, centuries before, had saved Egypt by raising up Joseph.

It’s important to understand what God was telling Moses here. This mission would not be easy-going; there would be much opposition. At first, this rescue plan would seem easily thwarted and futile. But God reassured Moses that even the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart would serve God’s purposes. Through the king of Egypt’s rejection, God would demonstrate His power with plagues that struck at the heart of Egypt’s arrogance and idolatry.

Notice the juxtaposition here between the strong hand of Pharaoh and the divine hand of God. The king of Egypt, in the short term, would have a strong hand. He repeatedly made life worse for Israel and resisted Moses’s entreaties for their freedom from enslavement. But God’s hand was stronger. The prophet Isaiah would later say, **“The LORD’s arm is not too weak to save”** (Isa. 59:1). Today, it is easy to become jaded about the strong hands we see in government, in culture, and in false religions. But God’s hand is the strongest, and His is mighty to save.

God is faithful and in control, and He even uses the hardness of human hearts as a catalyst to display His glory and bring about our good. In response to God’s power,

we strive for a joyful, grateful faithfulness to Him, regardless of the outcome. God’s people are sent by Him with His power to speak His word while trusting in His sovereignty. We obey His commands and go on His mission, leaving the results up to the only One who can change hearts.

**VERSES 21-22** / From where he was standing, deep in the wilderness, on the run from Egypt, it would have been hard for Moses to foresee a day when the enslaved people of God would be so favored by the Egyptians that they’d be given generous gifts on the way out of town. But just as God had said, they would **“plunder the Egyptians”** (see Ex. 12:36).

How should we think about this? Perhaps it’s hard for us to understand the concept of Israel **“plundering”** her captors. On a pragmatic level, this would be a small restitution for their years of slave labor, an example of God righting a glaring social wrong. This was yet another indication that God would not just save them from their bondage but would lead them toward abundance and flourishing in a promised land.

We also know these gifts of gold and jewelry would be used later in decorating and furnishing the tabernacle, the Israelites’ meeting place with God (Ex. 35). God was predicting a victory over Egypt so thorough that their enemies would furnish and fund Israel’s physical and spiritual future.

As Christians, we are beneficiaries of God’s righteous plundering of His enemies. Jesus’ defeat of sin, death, and the grave are so total, His squashing of Satan so complete, that we not only are rescued from enslavement to sin and death but we are given spiritual abundance in Christ. Through faith in Jesus, we are liberated from our oppression, bestowed with spiritual gifts, and adopted as sons and daughters (Eph. 2:18-20; 4:8). Our Savior has made room for us in His coming kingdom, a promise that allows us to experience joy and peace here and now (John 14:2-3).



# MY RESPONSE

**PACK ITEM 3: GOD USES FAITH:** Hand out copies of this bookmark to help remind your group that though we are sinners, God can and will use us as believers in Christ for His mission and His glory to rescue sinners in the world.

Because God has revealed Himself to us in Christ so that we might be freed from the oppression of sin, we strive to make Christ known to those around us, conscious of and burdened by the plight of the oppressed in our world.

## HEAD:

God reveals Himself not only through His creation, but also by intentionally and specifically speaking to us through His Word. The God who appeared in the burning bush to Moses is the same God who is sovereign over the universe. He is not a detached deity, but the God who observes, hears, and knows about the oppression of His people. He is a God who acts to save. The great “I AM” who initiated the rescue of Israel from Egypt also came down in Jesus to rescue His people from their sin. And He’s a God who sends us on mission to declare the good news of this rescue.

**How might God be sending you on mission to declare the good news that He rescues sinners?**

## HEART:

God called Himself the great “I AM”—“I AM WHO I AM.” God’s name declares His character and His faithfulness. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob confirmed to Moses that He would keep His covenant promises. Jesus fulfilled the new covenant with His blood and is the “I AM” who defeated sin and death and the grave. We can trust His faithfulness, both in the past in rescuing us from sin and in the future in leading us into the New Jerusalem.

**In what areas of your life are you refusing to trust to the great “I AM”? Repent now and obey in faith.**

## HANDS:

Our rescuing God is a sending God. God called an eighty-year-old washed-up former prince of Egypt as His messenger, and today, God is still calling flawed and imperfect sinners as messengers. God sends us with His power, with His name, and with His Word. We don’t have to invent a new message; we simply have to declare the message He has already given us. And we have His promise that if we are faithful, God will be faithful to use our words to penetrate the hearts of sinners who need His salvation.

**Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear the good news of the gospel? Where are you being sent for God’s glory?**

## VOICES from THE CHURCH

“God does not stand on ceremony in requiring a formal invitation before making a grand entrance onto the stage of human history. God determines in himself to create, covenant, and commune with his creatures, even when they are steeped in ignorance, stupefied by idolatry, and sullied with sin. God’s self-communication is entirely gracious. It follows, then, that God’s revelation of himself is chiefly redemptive.”<sup>7</sup>

—Michael Bird

## POINT 1: GOD REVEALS HIS HOLINESS TO HIS SERVANT (EX. 3:1-5).

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### COMMENTARY

“How is God known to us? The Christian tradition has maintained that God is transcendent, invisible, hidden, and completely ‘other.’ We cannot reach him or beseech him, nor can we adore him or implore him without God first introducing himself to us. Knowledge of his person and plan cannot be arrived at by mere deduction or by gut intuition. If we are to have knowledge of God, we are entirely dependent on God making himself known to us ... Revelation is also necessary if the alienation and enmity between the Creator and his creatures are to be overcome. It is not enough for people to know that there is a God. Mere assent to monotheism, even a creational monotheism, is not enough to restore humanity to a relationship with God. The chief end of God’s revelation is the restoration of humanity back to fellowship with their Lord and Creator. Unless God saves, any revelation he gives will be bad news. Yet if there is a God who is mighty to save, then his revelation will be good news.”<sup>8</sup>

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### COMMENTARY

“It is significant that we have here the first use (by the narrator) of the personal divine name YHWH in Exodus, anticipating the fact that God himself will speak the name to Moses very soon in this story. This will be a new revelatory moment—one of the most important in the Bible (cf. Ex. 6:2-3). The God whom we, as readers, have known to be YHWH the God of Israel, even while reading the accounts of his words and actions in Genesis before Israel as a nation existed, this God is now embarking on a new phase of self-revelation, a phase that will accompany his greatest act of redemption within the biblical story until the coming of Christ. Appropriately, the name is revealed in the context of a theophany—an appearance of God in human form (albeit a human form mysteriously wrapped in flames). God appearing in human form in the Old Testament, of course, raises a theological question for us that the text itself does not address, a question which may seem anachronistic even to ask. Was the angel of the Lord (here and in other theophanies) a manifestation of the so-called pre-incarnate Christ—that is, the Second Person of the Trinity prior to his full incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth? ... Even if it was, as we would now say, the Second Person of the Trinity who assumed this theophanic human form while remaining fully divine, we should not talk about ‘Jesus’ in the story. There is a habit among some Bible teachers and preachers of finding Jesus wherever they can in Old Testament texts. This seems to me a misapplication and distortion of the legitimate hermeneutical

# EXTRA

affirmation that the whole canon of Old Testament Scripture ultimately points toward and leads to the climactic redemptive act of God in and through Jesus of Nazareth. Seeing the Old Testament like a journey that leads to Christ is not the same as seeing Jesus himself at every point on that journey—a habit that removes the unique and unprecedented nature of the incarnation.”<sup>9</sup>

## POINT 2: GOD REVEALS HIS IDENTITY TO HIS SERVANT (EX. 3:6-15).

### + COMMENTARY

“God now identified himself to Moses as ‘the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’ (v. 6), and proceeded to tell Moses of his plan: Moses was to be the one who would deliver the Israelites from bondage in Egypt and to bring them into the land promised to their forefathers (vv. 7-10). He was to form them into a nation whose central concern would be the worship of God ... When Moses asked about the ‘name’ of God, he was inquiring about more than just the identity of God. He was asking a question about the very nature of God. Within the world of the biblical text, the name was the expression of the nature of its bearer (cf. 1 Sam. 25:25). Adam’s naming the animals meant that he was looking at their essential nature—looking, in fact, for a ‘suitable partner’ (Gen. 2:20)—the ‘name’ was an expression of the very essence of the one who bears the name. Thus when Moses asked God’s name, the answer he received may not seem like the answer we would have expected ... If Moses was in fact seeking to know God’s essential nature in asking for his name, then the answer he received from the Lord was precisely that which he sought. The Lord’s reply, ‘I am who I am,’ may be paraphrased as, ‘It is I who am with you.’ Thus in his reply to Moses, the Lord let it be known to the Israelites that ‘the one who promises to be with [them]’ has sent Moses to them.”<sup>10</sup>

### + COMMENTARY

“Moses asks God who Moses is, before he asks God in verse 13 who God is. God’s answer to the first question is similar to his answer to the second. The second answer ... was *ehyeh asher ehyeh*, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ The first answer is *ehyeh immak*, ‘I will be with you’ or ‘I am with you.’ We might think that ‘I will be with you’ does not really answer Moses’ question, ‘Who am I?’ Moses asks about himself, Moses: God replies by speaking of himself, God. But of course, God more than answers Moses’ question. Who is Moses? He is the man with whom God is. God has covenanted to stand with Moses in his confrontation with Pharaoh. So Moses is Yahweh’s man; that’s who he is ... God with us! Immanuel (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23)! This is one of the most precious concepts in Scripture. The essence of the covenant is that God is our God and we are his people.”<sup>11</sup>

### + ILLUSTRATION

Imagine you are on a trip to London, England, and you show up at 10 Downing Street and request a meeting with the British Prime Minister. If you are just an ordinary citizen, you’ll almost certainly be denied the opportunity. The Prime Minister doesn’t know who you are and you are not on his schedule. But imagine you are John Adams, the first American Ambassador to the Court of St. James. Or perhaps you are John Quincy Adams, Robert Todd Lincoln, Joseph Kennedy, or Walter Annenberg, all who served in this role. You’d not get the cold shoulder from



a receptionist; you'd likely be escorted into 10 Downing Street and would likely have an audience with the Prime Minister. What's the difference between the first scenario and the second? It's all about who is sending you. If you go on your own, you have no standing. If you go as an ambassador of the nation's most important ally, you will be heard. When God sent Moses to Egypt, Moses wouldn't be going on a whim. He'd be going with the full power of the great I AM. "Tell them, I AM has sent you," God said. And so it is with us. When we live on mission for God in this world, we are going with the power of God and the name of God and the Word of God.

### POINT 3: GOD REVEALS HIS POWER TO HIS SERVANT

(EX. 3:19-22).

#### + COMMENTARY

"Here God showed his full knowledge of people's character and thinking processes by predicting that Pharaoh would remain stubborn, thus also anticipating the 'hardness of heart' theme that recurs in the plague stories (see 4:21-23). The two clauses **when I stretch out my hand** and **he will let you go** both use a form of the same Hebrew verb, making tight connection between cause and effect. When God's hand goes to work, the Israelites will go out of Egypt. The contest would be between the **strong hand** of the Lord and the 'power [lit "hand"] of the Egyptians' as personified by Pharaoh (v. 8)." <sup>12</sup>

#### + COMMENTARY

"Having indicated briefly how he will compel Pharaoh by force to release the Israelites (vv. 19-20), YHWH then describes how the Israelites, in spite of having been enslaved for years, will go out from Egypt with considerable wealth (vv. 21-22). Moses will later communicate these instructions to the Israelites (11:2-3) and their fulfilment is recorded in 12:35-36. Although the closing words of the divine speech refer to the Israelites stripping or plundering the Egyptians—something occasionally associated with victory in battle—the manner in which this will happen is most atypical. The Israelite women are to ask the Egyptian women for items of gold and silver, as well as clothing. With these they will adorn or clothe their sons and daughters. Nothing is to be taken by force, a point that is possibly underlined by the fact that the asking is to be done by the Israelite women. Remarkably, because YHWH will give the Israelites favour in the sight of the Egyptians, everything will be supplied willingly ... Later some of the silver and gold will be used in the construction of the tabernacle. The wealth acquired by the Israelites fulfils the divine promise to Abraham in Gen. 15:14 that his descendants would emerge from slavery with many possessions." <sup>13</sup>

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