

*Living in Awe of*  
**GOD**

Studies in Exodus

Written by  
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We believe the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. The 2000 statement of The Baptist Faith and Message is our doctrinal guideline.

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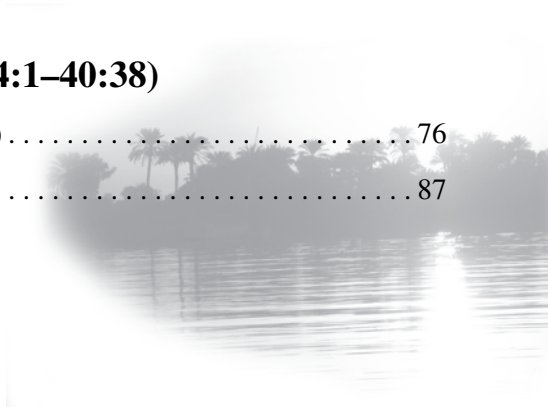
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# From the Editor

Because of His awesome nature and character, God has certain expectations and seeks certain responses from His people. This study in Exodus is designed to lead adults to expand their understanding of God—including truths about His nature and character—and to fulfill God's expectations of them as His people. Four essential truths about God form the basis of the content of the Book of Exodus: God is always faithful; God is absolutely powerful; God is continuously good; and God is eternally present. These four truths provide the outline for this January Bible Study 2009.

This Learner Guide is written in an informal, easy-to-read style that helps the reader understand the biblical text without extensive comments. It also has a series of helps to enhance each reader's study. These helps include:

- **Learning Activities** in each chapter. Each activity is integral to the teaching plans in the Leader Guide.
- A least one feature entitled **A Closer Look** in each chapter that elaborates on or provides summary information on related chapter topics.
- Sets of questions entitled **For Your Consideration** occur throughout each chapter. Some questions relate to Bible content. Some are application questions that help learners focus on the passage's present-day meaning for their lives. These questions can be used in individual or group study, and with the Learning Activities can help a group leader stimulate discussion.

At the beginning of each lesson you will find the **Bible Truth** and **Life Impact**. The Bible Truth briefly states the main abiding spiritual principle for that lesson. The Life Impact identifies how learners will give evidence of spiritual transformation on an ongoing basis. This is the main application we hope learners will take with them after the session is over.

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# Accept God's Challenge

## BIBLE TRUTH

God's people can accept whatever challenge God gives them with assurance He is faithful to His people and will provide what they need to obey Him.

## LIFE IMPACT

To help you respond affirmatively to whatever God asks of you

## Take Notice (Ex. 3:1-6)

God's call to a task can come in any kind of circumstance. He may speak to us while at worship, while reading, while conversing with others, or while doing an ordinary task. **Moses was shepherding the flock of his father-in-law Jethro.**

Fire gives light and warmth but also is dangerous and forbidding. It is like God's holiness, and people in the Old Testament were as terrified of seeing God's face as they were of being caught in a fire. Moses could have run away when he saw the burning bush, hiding himself both from the strange fire and the holiness of God. But he did not run: **I must go over and look at this remarkable sight.** Of course, we could attribute this to nothing but curiosity on Moses' part, but even when the fire spoke he did not run away.

## LEARNING ACTIVITY

### When God Asks Me to do Something

When God asks me to do something, I . . .

- Try to run
- Try to discern if God is really speaking
- Seek understanding or clarification
- Make excuses
- Obey completely
- Other:

God told Moses, **“Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”** Shoes carry with them all the dirt that we walk through, and wearing shoes here represents bringing something defiling and ordinary into God’s presence. Taking off the shoes symbolically shows respect for the purity of God. When God calls us, we must never forget with whom we are dealing. In fact, it may be very difficult for us to hear God at all if we do not cultivate a reverent spirit and a listening heart. We should not run away from God’s call, but we should always be reverent about it.

A true encounter with God is never isolated from the rest of God’s work and His history with His people. To Moses, He said, **“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”** This told Moses that God is the same God who spoke to the patriarchs centuries before and that what God says is consistent with what He

has already said and done. We should never think that we have a task or message from God if our “calling” is not consistent with what God has said in the Bible and with what He has done through Jesus Christ and His apostles. A message that is “new” in the sense that it is inconsistent with God’s prior work is no message from God at all.

**For Your Consideration**

1. From the Bible or history, can you think of examples of how God spoke to a person when calling him or her to a mission?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How can you keep yourself ready to hear a word from God?

**Listen Carefully (Ex. 3:7-10)**

God’s word is consistent with His character. Here, God’s message to Moses was in keeping with His compassion and faithfulness. God twice asserted that He was aware of Israel’s oppression (vv. 7,9), saying, **“I have observed the misery of My people in Egypt”** and **“The Israelites’ cry for help has come to Me.”** God also twice spoke of how He would act to save them (vv. 8,10).

God’s word to Moses also involved a task, but it was a task in which God was the primary agent and Moses was secondary. He commissioned Moses to do His work in verse 10 (**“I am sending you to Pharaoh so that you may lead My people, the Israelites, out of Egypt”**). But whereas in verse 10 God spoke of using Moses as His agent, in verse 8 He spoke of Himself acting directly to deliver the people. The point is clear: God was about to save the Israelites, and He wanted Moses to join Him in that work and be used as His instrument.



BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR

Mount Horeb (3:1)

We cannot be used of God if we do not understand His character and what He is doing in the world. We must know His heart and His gospel. We must listen carefully to biblical teaching, and we must tune our ears to the voice of the Spirit of God. In addition, we must have hearts that are made after His own. Moses had shown (however imperfectly) that he was devoted to Israel and cared about their sufferings when he killed the Egyptian taskmaster (Ex. 2:11-15). Now God was calling him to renew that devotion. We cannot do God's work if we are indifferent to the things that move God Himself.

### **For Your Consideration**

1. How can a habit of Bible reading and prayer prepare a person for doing a great mission when the moment comes?

## A CLOSER LOOK

### “I AM”

In Exodus 3:14, God called Himself “I AM.” The Hebrew word for “I am” is *ehyeh*, which, when spoken aloud, sounded similar to “Yahweh.” When Moses asked God what he should say when people asked him the name of the One who sent him (3:13), God told him to say to them, “I AM has sent me to you” (v. 14). Why does God do this?

Often, when God had something very important to say, especially in a context of judgment, He used a wordplay (a kind of pun). For example, Amos 5:5 says, “Gilgal will certainly go into exile” (in Hebrew, this is *Gilgal galoh yigleh*). This is a wordplay based on the repetition of the consonants G and L. This wordplay was no joke; it was meant as a warning. In Jeremiah 1:11-12, God showed Jeremiah a rod of “almond” (Hebrew: *shaqed*) and said that he was “watching” (Hebrew: *shoqed*) over His word to fulfill it. The words for “almond” and “watching” are unrelated, but they sound similar in Hebrew and formed the basis for this serious wordplay.

When God called Himself “I AM,” He made a wordplay based on the fact that *Yahweh* sounds like *ehyeh*. He meant that the Israelites were mistaken if they thought that the God called Yahweh was just another deity with a name, like the gods Baal or Osiris. The Lord is the only eternal, self-existent and uncreated Being; He is the One God. The other gods are lies; He is I AM.

2. Why is it important to recognize that the task we feel called to is first of all God’s work and not our own?

## Ask Questions (Ex. 3:11-15; 4:1-5)

When God gives us a challenge that seems impossible, we may ask questions to gain a better understanding of the task or to express our concerns about it. God answers our questions about the challenges He gives us, and He provides what we need to obey Him, sometimes enlisting other people to help us.

Moses asked three valid questions of God. First, he asked, **“Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”** (3:11). Moses was correct to assert that he was inadequate for this task. God did not respond by telling Moses that he had been prepared by his experiences and was now competent for the job. Instead, He said, **“I will certainly be with you.”**

Second, Moses knew that the Israelites had been in a pagan environment for centuries and that they would want to know about this “god” who had spoken to Moses and would ask, **“What is His name?”** (3:13). Moses was not wrong to raise this, but the question shows a lack of understanding. The Lord was not simply one of the gods of Egypt, like Osiris, Horus, Seth, or Isis, who had names and domains. He is the one true God, the Maker of heaven and earth, and the eternally self-existent Deity. He is the only one who can call Himself **I AM**.

Third, Moses bluntly asked, **“What if they won’t believe me and will not obey me but say, ‘The Lord did not appear to you’?”** (4:1). As subsequent events would show, this was certainly a valid concern; the Israelites would

be both unbelieving and rebellious. God responded by showing Moses that he would be able to demonstrate by miraculous signs that God was with him: He told him to throw his rod on the ground, and when he did so, **it became a snake**. By this and other signs Moses could prove that he was no fraud.

Few people have had access to a direct interview with God such as Moses had, but the principle that we must thoroughly understand our calling remains the same. We must face our inadequacy and be convinced that God is with us. We must be realistic about the people to whom we go. We must be prepared for the questions that people will ask us, and understand what is distinctive about the gospel of Christ. We must be sure that the power to deal with people will be from God and not ourselves.

### **For Your Consideration**

1. Moses knew specifically how the Israelites would respond to him. What questions might people raise against the gospel if we go to them?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How might God show His power through us to bring people to faith?

### **Beware Excuses (Ex. 4:10-17)**

The three above questions were valid, but they do show that Moses was looking for a way out. Next, instead of asking legitimate questions, he directly sought to be excused from the job God gave him. First, he claimed, “**I have never been eloquent ... because I am slow and hesitant in speech**” (v. 10). This probably means that Moses was not comfortable with public speaking and not that

he had a speech impediment. But whatever the meaning, God rejected it immediately because God had made Moses who he was and had chosen him for this task: **“Who made the human mouth? Who makes him mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?”** Any excuse we might offer for rejecting a challenge from God fails to take into account He is greater than our insecurity, inexperience, or inability.

Next, Moses simply asked outright not to be given this commission: **“Please, Lord, send someone else”** (v. 13). God was exasperated with this disobedience and cowardice, but rather than punish him, God allowed Moses to use Aaron as his spokesperson. When God said, **“you will serve as God to him”** (v. 16), He did not mean that Moses would have some kind of divine power over Aaron. He simply meant that as a prophet speaks for God, so Aaron would speak for Moses. We do not know how much speaking Aaron really did, because in the texts subsequent to Exodus 5, Moses often directly addressed the pharaoh or the Israelites. But at least having Aaron alongside him gave Moses some reassurance, especially at the beginning of his ministry.

### **For Your Consideration**

1. What excuses do we make when God calls us to a task?

2. All of us have limitations of one kind or another. What comfort can we take from Exodus 4:11?

### Obey Completely (Ex. 4:27–5:3)

Despite his hesitation, Moses did all that God told him. He took Aaron as his assistant, went to the Israelites, had Aaron speak the message of God to them and perform the signs God had given him, and finally went before the pharaoh himself. The passage tells us about two different responses. First, **the people believed, and ... they bowed down and worshiped** (4:31). Second, the pharaoh responded, **“Who is the LORD that I should obey Him by letting Israel go?”** (5:2). Obedience to God’s commission always provokes a response. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 2:15, “For to God we are the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.”

We can draw several lessons from this. First, if God sends us on a task and we obey, the mission will not end in failure. For all of Moses’ legitimate concerns about the Israelites, and for all their later failures, the important point here is that they believed his message and worshiped God at this critical moment. Second, there is almost always opposition and scoffing, such as Moses experienced from the pharaoh. Third, it is better to be in God’s work and to provoke reactions than to run away and accomplish nothing. Fourth, having to face down opposition is actually part of our obedience and is to the further glory of God. If the pharaoh had simply acquiesced to Moses’ request and let the people go, we might think better of the pharaoh, but God’s power would never have been shown in His mighty works. We would have no reason to think that the exodus of Israel was anything more than the work of a generous ruler of Egypt.

## For Your Consideration

1. The people first believed, and then they worshiped. Why is worship an appropriate follow-up to believing?
2. We often criticize the exodus generation for their lack of obedience and faith. In light of what this passage says about them, would you say that we Christians are for the most part different from those Israelites, or that we are in many ways similar to them? See also 1 Corinthians 10:1-5.

## Receive Reassurance (Ex. 6:2-8; 7:6)

Almost immediately things began to go wrong. Instead of yielding to God's demand, the pharaoh made things much worse for the Israelites by making them responsible both for making the bricks and for finding the raw materials for production. Moses bore the brunt of the people's anger, and then he himself was dismayed at how badly things had turned out (Ex. 5:1-23). God gave him reassurance in the following six points. First, He was the same God who had appeared to the patriarchs (**"I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty"**). Second, He remembered His promise to them (**"I also established My covenant with them ... and I have remembered**

**My covenant**”). Third, He cared about their hardships (“**I have heard the groaning of the Israelites**”). Fourth, He would save them (“**I will deliver you from the forced labor of the Egyptians**”). Fifth, His miraculous salvation would confirm their earlier faith (“**You will know that I am Yahweh your God**”). Sixth, He told them that soon they would have a land of their own (“**I will bring you to the land**”).

There is very little new information in this word of reassurance to Moses. God had already said to Moses almost everything found in this text (see, for example, Ex. 3:6-10), and Aaron had already conveyed this information to the people (Ex. 4:30). Perhaps that explains why many of the Israelites did not believe Moses when he came to them with this message (6:9). They had heard all that before, and it had not done them any good. For them, the reality of how much worse their circumstances had become carried more weight than did a new word from God that essentially repeated the old word from God.

For Moses and Aaron, however, the new word was a comfort and encouragement. In 7:6, we read, **So Moses and Aaron did ... just as the LORD commanded them.** In their eyes, the fact that God’s latest word contained little by way of new information mattered less than the fact that God was still committed to His earlier promises.

### **For Your Consideration**

1. Can familiarity with the gospel breed contempt? What does it say about our condition if hearing the “old story” of God’s work in Christ is tedious to us?
  
2. What promises of God do we hear over and over without having yet seen their fulfillment? Should we let that discourage us?

