

WATER•FIRE•STONE

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MOSES

Session 3 – Exit Strategy | Exodus Chapters 5–6

Exodus began with a pharaoh who feared a growing Hebrew population, so he decreed death for all baby boys. But times have changed. The pharaoh that Moses is dealing with isn't about to let go of his Hebrew slaves. Who does Moses think he is, coming to Pharaoh with such a demand?

When Michelangelo created his statue of Moses, he chiseled fierce determination into his brow, a piercing gaze in his eyes, and a set to his jaw that dared any to defy him. If life were suddenly breathed into that massive marble figure, Pharaoh would have trembled in fear.

The flesh and bone Moses, however, was an eighty-year-old desert nomad with a wooden stick in his hand and his older brother by his side! Pharaoh waves him off like a pesky mosquito. And who is this God that Moses speaks of? *I do not know the Lord and besides, I will not let Israel go.*



ex•it strat•e•gy (*noun*)

A preplanned means of extricating someone from a situation that is likely to be difficult or unpleasant.

Leaving Egypt wouldn't be easy. God will champion His people and deliver them as promised, but things get worse before they get better. Through ten plagues, God demonstrates His power over all creation and systematically exposes Egypt's powerless gods. Life begins to unravel and the idols they worship cannot save them.

In this four-part series, we'll explore God's strategy to deliver us from false masters and feeble gods that compete for worship in our culture.

Icebreaker

Name two aspects (one positive, one negative) of how you deal with disappointment. Which gets the most airplay in your mind?

Goals for this Session:

- Discover what God's response to Moses reveals about His nature and character.
- Consider the value of prayer and God's Word as your first line of defense against adversity.
- Pray and watch for ways to be a source of encouragement for someone else.

1 Read Exodus 5:1–14 | What is happening? Describe the situation in your own words.

a. How did Pharaoh view the God of Israel? As far as he was concerned, who did the Hebrew people answer to?

b. What did Pharaoh accuse Moses and Aaron of trying to do? Describe Pharaoh’s new work policy. What do you think he intended to accomplish with this strategy?

Good to Know

Festivals in the ancient world centered around nature and the deities associated with them. Egypt had hundreds of gods and getting out of work “to pay homage to my god” was the ancient equivalent of “calling in sick.”

c. Did Pharaoh’s strategy work? How and in what way?

2 Read Exodus 5:15–23 | Moses did everything the Lord told him to do. After the favorable response from the Hebrew leaders and others (Exodus 4:31) what kind of response do you think he might have expected from the Hebrew foremen?

a. The Bible doesn’t say, but it’s likely that the foremen were part of the community that witnessed the miraculous signs and initially supported Moses. So what would account for their angry response toward Moses now?

b. It’s easy to analyze their wrong response because it’s a familiar pattern, right? They couldn’t reason with Pharaoh so they lashed out at Moses. Blame is shifted. Motive is questioned. Support and cooperation is withheld. We’ve all been on the receiving—and giving!—end of misdirected anger. When you find yourself in either position, what is your response likely to be? What would you *like* it to be?

3 The overburdened men refused to listen to anything else Moses had to say. For all they cared, he could beat a dusty track back to Midian. He probably gave that some thought. But first, he went back to the Lord.

- a. What does Moses' response in verses 22–23 reveal about his state of mind? Does his response surprise you? Why or why not?

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- b. When life doesn't go according to plan (our idea of what God is doing) we find ourselves in the frustrating position of trying to figure it out. Moses took this setback personally and did his own share of blaming.

Never doubt in the dark
what God has told you in
the light.

V. Raymond Edman

What does Moses blame God for doing (verse 22) and *not* doing (verse 23)?

- c. Moses blurts out his questions in a tone we're all familiar with. From what you know about Moses so far, why do you think he took this setback so personally? What did he need to remind himself of? Use Exodus 3:19–21 for help with your answer.

Memory Verse

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you,” says the Lord,
“thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”
Jeremiah 29:11 NKJV

Which part of this verse resonates most with you today? How or in what way?

4 Read Exodus 6:1–13 | Moses’ prayer is raw and honest. And God responds so graciously. When Moses took his troubled questions to the Lord, God reminded Moses (again) what was true.

a. **“I am the Lord”** (verses 2–8). God essentially has the burning bush conversation with Moses again. Circle how many times God makes this statement here. Why do you think He does this?

b. Finish the following statements:

→ vs. 6 – “I will free you from . . .

→ vs. 6 – “I will rescue you from . . .

→ vs. 6 – “I will redeem you with . . .

→ vs. 7 – “I will claim you as . . .

→ vs. 7 – “I will be your . . .

→ vs. 8 – “I will bring you into . . .

→ vs. 8 – “I will give it to you . . .

“

c. **“Therefore, say to the people . . .”** (verse 6). Why do you suppose God gave Moses such a detailed explanation to take back to the people? Because God’s ways are higher than ours, His reasons are infinite—so here’s just one to consider. Moses was so discouraged at this point, he needed to hear the truth of God’s Word again for himself.

The words that come out of
My mouth will not come back
empty-handed.
They’ll do the work I sent
them to do,
They’ll complete the
assignment I gave them.

Even though he was in the center of God’s will, Moses still experienced highs and lows. Opposition was fierce and still ramping up. Pharaoh wasn’t going down without a fight—but he *was* going down. Moses needed a reset to get his head and heart centered again. So he went to the One who alone has power to do that.

Are you ever tempted to back off or give up when pursuing God’s will gets hard? In what ways can you relate to Moses’ discouragement and the way that he dealt with it?

5 Read Exodus 6:28–30* | For a third time, Moses mentioned how inadequate he felt about his speaking skills. This wasn't an obstacle as far as God was concerned, but for Moses it was a recurring issue.

What's on your mind? Negative self-talk isn't a term Moses would've used, but it's a familiar human experience. Remember what Moses said to God at the burning bush: *Who am I?*

His own answer to his own question played an endless loop in his own mind. *I'm not a good speaker. I stumble over my words. My own people don't listen to me, so why should Pharaoh?*

The Bible speaks about the power of our thoughts. That's where our words and actions originate, so it's important to make the connection. "Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think," Paul wrote (Romans 12:2 NLT). By the way, that's not just a New Testament concept.

We've been given a front-row seat to watch the Lord patiently take Moses through the process of changing the way he thinks, so lean in and take notes.

- a. What assurance had God already given Moses? Review Exodus 4:12, 15 for the answer.

Moses believed God but he still didn't feel like the right guy for the job. At this point, his obedience is an act of trembling faith and extreme discomfort. Can you relate? List some positive outcomes of being in this position.

- b. Moses blamed himself (and now, God) for this trouble. But verse 9 is the first indication that Moses is beginning to see the situation more accurately. Why weren't the people responding to Moses' message?

What effect does their response have on Moses? Discuss why seeing a problem from someone else's perspective can help change ours.

* Moses and Aaron's genealogy in verses 14-27 briefly interrupts the narrative to precisely trace their lineage back to Jacob (Israel) and establish the priestly line going forward. It seems oddly placed to us (think of it like a news scroll across the bottom of a network screen) but it established credibility for ancient readers.

- c. God continues to nudge Moses toward confidence in his calling. Review verses 10–13 and catch what happens. God tells Moses alone to speak to Pharaoh. *You’ve got this Moses. You can do this.* Again, Moses hesitates. So the Lord tells Moses *and* Aaron to go.

Here’s the point. When it comes to changing the way you think, God doesn’t lose interest and move on. He doesn’t say *work on this, I’ll come back later to check on you.* He is right there with you, full attention, encouraging you all the way. But cooperating is up to us.

Identify something you’re currently having a *change-the-way-you-think* conversation with God. How’s that going?

Identify something you need to have a *change-the-way-you-think* conversation with God. How will you begin?

6 **“Why did You ever send me?”** Moses felt low, and who can blame him? He was heading into round two with a surly king and nothing but boos and hisses from his own people. It’s going to get worse before it gets better. But God knows what He is doing. Do we believe that?

It’s natural to question if we heard God right when we’re knee-deep in trouble. Like Moses, we can go to the Lord in distress. He will listen. And He makes a way through what we call impassible and impossible. He did it for Moses. Not by telling Moses who he was—but by reminding Moses who HE is.

Even on our best day, we need reminders that God is with us. He never sends us off to face the battle alone. God’s Word is our greatest weapon to evict unruly thoughts and keep our mind set on Him.

Look for a prayer, a promise, or a pattern to follow in each of the verses listed. Note what you find.

Isaiah 41:10

Psalms 94:18–19

Psalms 138:7–8

Philippians 4:8

Hebrews 13:15

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The main trouble is that we allow our self to talk to us instead of talking to our self. You must go on to remind yourself of God:
Who God is,
what God has done,
and what God has pledged Himself to do.

Action Steps ►► As you think through this part of Moses' story, what is the most important takeaway point for you personally? How will you put what you've learned into action?

Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. —Ephesians 6:18 NIV

Adoration – Giving praise and honor to God for who He is and what He does.

Confession – Honestly deal with sin; acknowledge to God the ways (and whys) you fall short.

Thanksgiving – Verbalize your gratitude; express your praise and a thankful heart.

Supplication – Pray specifically for the needs of others, ourselves, our church, our nation.



Close your discussion time by praying together. Use the A·C·T·S pattern as a group focus and keep it simple. No need to be lengthy or profound, just authentic.
