



# MOSES

*The Reluctant Deliverer*



# INTRODUCTION

What can cause a person to doubt his or her ability to accomplish a challenging task?

Some of our doubts come from a knowledge of our own abilities. We take a hard look at ourselves, and feel we aren't up to the challenge. Then again, some of our doubts come from the size of the task before us. We look at what we have been asked to do, and the obstacles seem insurmountable. We see both of these things in play in the life of Moses.

We are introduced to Moses in Exodus. He is mentioned many times in the New Testament, and is almost always shown in a positive light. Among God's people, Moses is rarely criticized. But when we meet him in the first chapters of Exodus, we get a picture of a reluctant and unsure person called to a giant task.

Moses initially let his feelings of inadequacy overwhelm him, but ultimately found his significance in the Lord. God worked powerfully through Moses to accomplish His will—despite Moses' doubt and fear. Therefore, Moses illustrates how God accomplishes His work through people like us—reluctant leaders, struggling sinners, feeble doubters, and weak workers. God loves and uses people, not because they are capable, but because He is capable.

**How do our doubts feed our reluctance and hesitation to act?**

**What is the relationship between our fears and what we trust?**

*Watch the video teaching for Session 1 to discover “The World of Moses,” then continue the group discussion.*

## GROUP DISCUSSION

### *FOCUS ATTENTION*

**Think of a time when you were completely out of your comfort zone. What fears did you have during those moments?**

### *EXPLORE THE TEXT*

As a group, read Exodus 3:4-16.

**Characterize Moses' initial response when he observed the burning bush and realized something supernatural was happening. When have you realized a situation to be something that only God could do?**

**God identified Himself as the God of Moses' father, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. What did this communicate to Moses? How should knowing God's name impact our willingness to follow Him?**

**What was the biggest mistake Moses made? How might we make the same mistake today?**

As a group, read Exodus 4:13-16.

**What causes people to hesitate to do what God asks them to do? How do these hesitations compare with Moses' excuses?**

As a group, read Exodus 7:1-13.

**Why was Moses' and Aaron's exact obedience so important? How does simple and complete obedience demonstrate faith?**

As a group, read Exodus 14:21-31.

**For the Israelites, what was the result of God working through Moses in such a dramatic fashion?**

**What larger impact did the Red Sea crossing and the defeat of Egypt have for Israel? For the surrounding peoples? For believers today?**

## ***APPLY THE TEXT***

God calls and empowers people to serve Him and His purposes. God is holy, but demonstrates His grace by approaching and equipping unholy people. Believers can be assured that God provides the resources for them to be successful in their God-given responsibilities.

**What role does God desire you to play in His redeeming of His people? What steps do you need to take to carry out the mission you have identified?**

**List resources God has given you to use to accomplish His will. How can you use each resource?**

**Reflect on Exodus 3:14. In what current situations do you need to be reminded that God is always true to His character?**

*Close your group time in prayer, reflecting on what you have discussed.*

# MOSES

## KEY VERSE

*No prophet has arisen again in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face.*

— Deuteronomy 34:10

## BASIC FACTS

1. Son of Amram and Jochebed [JAHK uh bed] (descendants of Jacob through Jacob's son, Levi), who grew up to lead Hebrew slaves out of Egyptian slavery and gave them God's law at Mount Sinai.
2. Had two siblings: older brother Aaron; older sister Miriam.
3. Name *Moses* possibly of Egyptian origin, but also related to a Hebrew verb meaning "to draw out."
4. Name relates to two key events: (1) the infant Moses was drawn out of the Nile River in a papyrus basket by the Pharaoh's daughter; (2) Moses led the Hebrews' exodus (drawing out) from Egyptian slavery.

## TIMELINE

### 1700 BC–1600 BC

- Body armor used in China 1700
- Minoans develop system of running water 1700
- Linear A script comes into use on Crete 1700
- Cookbook developed in Mesopotamia 1700
- Rhind Papyrus (mathematical text) 1650

### 1600–1500 BC

- Volcano on Santorini erupts 1600
- War chariots used in Egypt 1600
- Miriam 1539–1408
- Aaron 1529–1407
- Moses 1526–1406

## KNOWN FOR

1. While shepherding flocks in the wilderness around Mount Horeb (Sinai), Moses encountered the Lord God in a burning bush that was not consumed by the flames (Ex. 3–4). God told Moses to return to Egypt and lead the Israelites out of slavery to become a covenant nation and take possession of the promised land of Canaan.
2. After God sent plagues on Egypt, Moses miraculously led the Israelites through the Red Sea. They crossed on dry ground, but the pursuing Egyptian army drowned when the sea engulfed them (Ex. 14).
3. On Mount Sinai, Moses received God’s covenant law in the form of the Ten Commandments on stone tablets (Ex. 20). These commandments laid out God’s expectations on how the Israelites were to live as His people.
4. Throughout the Israelites’ wandering in the wilderness, Moses served as the agent of God’s liberation, provision, protection, and guidance (Ex. 16–17; Num. 11; 20–21).
5. Moses disobeyed God’s specific instruction concerning one miraculous action—getting water from a rock by speaking to the rock rather than striking it with his staff—and was not allowed to lead the people into the promised land (Num. 20:6–13).
6. Moses climbed Mount Nebo at God’s direction and saw the promised land. He died soon after at the age of 120, and God buried him in an unknown location in Moab (Deut. 34:1–7).
7. Moses contributed the first five books of Scripture (also known as the Torah, the Law, and the Pentateuch), as acknowledged by Jesus Christ (Mark 12:26; John 5:46).

### 1500–1400 BC

- Hittites develop iron technology 1500
- Glass bottles first used in Egypt 1500
- Joshua 1490–1380
- Israelites’ exodus from Egypt 1446
- Ten Commandments given at Mount Sinai 1446
- Moses’ death and burial on Mount Nebo 1406

### 1400–1300 BC

- Achaians establish early Greek civilization 1400
- Chinese develop multicrop agriculture 1400
- Division of land among Israelite tribes 1385
- Joshua’s death and burial 1380
- Deborah 1360–1300

## FURTHER INSIGHT MOMENT

### *Trained in Pharaoh's House*

By Gary P. Arbino

Moses was born during the New Kingdom period (1539–1075 BC), when Egypt was a powerful international empire and Pharaoh was its supreme ruler. When Moses was three months old, his mother hid him in a basket in the reeds of the Nile. Soon the “daughter of Pharaoh” discovered and adopted him (Ex. 2:3-10). “Daughter of Pharaoh” often refers to one of the pharaoh’s secondary wives, rather than a biological offspring. The pharaoh’s daughter adopted him and hired a nurse for him, in this case the child’s Hebrew mother (vv. 5-9). Egyptian infants nursed for three years; afterwards the child returned to the royal house.

As a young boy, Moses would have spent most days playing. Swimming and riding lessons were common, as well as royal etiquette and table manners. Children also played with pets, especially dogs, cats, and monkeys. Egyptians spent leisure time listening to stories and wisdom tales, although most Egyptians had very little free time.

At the age of ten, boys began their formal education. Education in the New Kingdom was primarily for the elite class; most Egyptians were illiterate. Boys received the basics of a scribal education in reading and writing, which lasted four years. Moses would have also received instruction in archery, rowing, horsemanship, and perhaps basic military training.

When Moses was about fourteen, he would have received more specialized education for one of three basic career paths: military, government, and priesthood. At this point, Egyptians received schooling in writing the colloquial language of the New Kingdom as well as math, accounting, geometry, surveying, and basic engineering. Students entering the priesthood and the more intellectual careers received instruction in medicine, magic, dream interpretation, astronomy, and temple administration. For those who chose the military, advanced training included administration, geography, and foreign language. Although not stated in Scripture, we can assume that Moses received at least some instruction in most of these areas.



Nileometer on Elephantine Island. Nileometers were used to determine the height of the Nile River at flood stage.

By the time he was twenty, Moses would have completed his formal education. At this age, Egyptian culture would have dictated that Moses take an Egyptian wife. As an adult member of the extended royal family, he likely would have received either an assigned administrative task in the household or a minor office in local or provincial governance. When Moses was almost forty, this office may have been what took him out to see the Hebrews (see Ex. 2:11-12). What happened that day changed the course of his life.

Dated to about 1550–1295 BC, an 18th Dynasty painting from Thebes depicts a nobleman hunting in the marshes. The painting, which shows Nebamun, the “Scribe and Counter of Grain” fowling with throwsticks, is in the company of his wife and daughter aboard a light papyrus skiff. The daughter’s haircut was a common style for Egyptian youth.





***Read Exodus 3:4-14.***

God's people were enslaved for four centuries, but that would soon come to an end. God would use a surprising instrument to bring about their freedom. Moses was reared in privilege. During the time around his birth, the ruler of Egypt instituted a population-control decree. Pharaoh declared that the male children of the Israelites should be killed upon birth. Rather than obeying this wicked command, Moses' mother hid him, and the baby eventually was brought into the very house of the one who had issued the decree for his death.

Forty years later, Moses left the house of Pharaoh in disgrace, having killed an Egyptian for the way he was treating a Hebrew slave. During the last four decades, Moses had been a shepherd, but he had never seen anything like what he was about to experience in God calling him from a burning bush.

Moses found himself standing on holy ground. It must have shaken him to his core not only to see the burning bush, but to hear the voice of the Lord. In the midst of his fear, Moses also experienced God's grace and purpose, for no sinful man can survive a close encounter with God. How would Moses respond to such a revelation? For that matter, how should any of us respond to a holy God?

**How does your understanding of God's holiness compare and contrast with that of Moses? How does growing in the depth of our understanding of God's holiness impact our walk with Him?**

God is not required to reveal Himself to humanity, but chooses to do so out of love and for His purposes. Even so, God is holy and should be approached with reverence. God told Moses He would use him to orchestrate history-changing events that would become embedded in the minds of the Israelites as one of the most significant moments in their story as a people.

But Moses wasn't too sure. God commissioned him to do something that seemed impossible. Moses was sent by God to stand before Pharaoh and call for the Israelites' release. He was sent to lead a huge group of slaves out of bondage, and Moses knew he wasn't up to the task. Who was he to do this?

Moses is a prime example that God "is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). His purposes are accomplished by His power, not ours. God sent Moses as the deliverer to rescue His people from slavery and to lead them to dwell in the promised land. This would be possible only if God supplied the power. In other words, Moses was asking the wrong question. He should not have been asking, "Who am I?" but instead, "Who are You, God? Can You really accomplish this?"

**Why is it important to take our eyes off ourselves and put them on God in matters of obedience? Why is this so difficult to do?**

Moses did get to this question, and notice how God identified Himself—He is I AM. We might translate this another way: "I am the One who is." Simply put, God's nature is not dependent on anything other than Himself. God is beyond our exhaustive knowledge, and yet He graciously chooses to reveal Himself to us. While He is not completely comprehensible, by revealing His personal name, He shows that He is knowable. In this sense, the more you know about God, the more you do not know.

Hebrews 1:1-2 states, "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 man. 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).

***Read Exodus 7:1-13.***

After Moses agreed to be God's messenger, he followed God's directions. God laid out His strategy for bringing about His purposes in delivering His people. There are three reminders of God's promises from earlier conversations that fortified Moses and his brother Aaron in their calling and confidence. First, God reminded Moses that He had provided Aaron to function as a prophet before Pharaoh (see 4:14-16).

**How would God's providing Aaron as a spokesperson bolster Moses' confidence?**

Next, God again declared that He would harden Pharaoh's heart (see 4:21). Lastly, God proclaimed that He would bring Israel out of Egypt by His mighty hand (see 3:19-20). Neither Pharaoh nor his army would stop God from accomplishing His will. Pharaoh would know who God was when the plagues were unleashed against Egypt.

Without excuse, Moses and Aaron did exactly what they were told. We often shy away from God's work because of excuses or perceived weaknesses. But the example of Moses and Aaron in this passage reminds us that God's power is made most evident through our weaknesses. With confidence in our all-powerful God, we are called to live just as God has commanded us.

**What attitudes toward God are demonstrated by Moses and Aaron's obedience? Compare and contrast these attitudes with that of Pharaoh.**

Pharaoh refused to listen to Moses, so the cycle of miraculous plagues began (see 7:14–10:19). The water in the Nile River turned to blood. Then frogs, gnats, and flies overran the land. One plague caused the death of livestock. Another brought boils, while another brought deadly hail. Still another brought swarms of locusts; then a plague of darkness covered Egypt.

Moses announced each plague, and each arrived and departed exactly as he stated. As the plagues progressed, they became more devastating. Several times Pharaoh promised to let the Israelites go, but then refused to free the people when each plague ended. The plagues punished Egypt, showed the powerlessness of its gods, and demonstrated God's sovereignty.

Consider for a moment how far Moses had come. Early in his life, Moses lived in the palace and wanted for nothing. For the middle section of his life, he lived humbly in the desert as a shepherd. Then he was back in the house of Pharaoh, but this time being used as an instrument of God to perform His signs and wonders. It's quite a life trajectory, full of all kinds of twists and turns.

**Why might God have waited until this moment in Moses' life to use him in this way? How do you think Moses' perspective was different at this point in his life?**

Throughout his life, Moses underwent an emptying process to the point where he was wholly surrendered to the purposes of God. Such is the case with us. Our life experiences are not just happenstance, but rather part of God's work getting us *where* He wants us to be and *who* He wants us to be.

***Read Exodus 14:13-28.***

The people were free. Moses led them out of Egypt after the horrific tenth plague of the death of the first born. But just when all were ready to breath a sign of relief, Pharaoh once again changed his mind and sent his army to retrieve the former slaves. For Moses, here was yet another moment of crisis, with the Egyptian army bearing down on one side and the Red Sea on the other.

Moses' words to Israel, "Don't be afraid" (v. 13), were issued to bolster their confidence. The Israelites were to stand firm and see God work. The phrase "the LORD's salvation" (v. 13) describes the deliverance only God can provide. God would do what Israel could not do. For Moses, there was no hesitation and no argument as there had been at the burning bush years earlier. Moses had learned a thing or two about God, and he wanted the Israelites to know these things as well.

God told Moses to lift his staff and stretch it out over the sea. God would divide the sea so that the Israelites could go through the sea on dry ground. As Israel faced certain destruction, God delivered them by the power of His hand. What a humbling moment for Moses! He was the one holding the staff, but he had no claim on Israel's deliverance. He was merely the one God had chosen to work through.

**How can you discern the difference between you trying to do something big for the Lord, and the Lord doing something big through you? Why is it important that you understand the difference?**

The angel of God stood between the Israelites and the Egyptians. When the angel of the Lord appears in the Old Testament, he is depicted as acting and speaking for God Himself (see Gen. 22:11-18). The angel of the Lord appeared in a flame of fire (see Ex. 3:2), in the pillar of fire and cloud (see 13:21-22), on Mount Sinai (see 19:18), and in the tabernacle (see 40:38). In all instances, the angel of the Lord signified God's presence and protection.



**How does the promise of God's presence give a person hope? How does the promise of God's presence impact a person's faith?**

Was Moses surprised? Was he shocked at all when he stretched out his hand and saw God drive back the sea? We don't know for sure, but the Bible gives no indication that he was. Moses had seen God do the miraculous before; and here he was again, witnessing God's commitment to carry out His plans and purposes for His people. Because Moses believed God, he was obedient to God, and God did exactly what He said He would do.

**What is the relationship between faith and obedience? Can a person have one without the other? Explain.**

When the Egyptian chariots pursued the Israelites into the dry seabed, God caused them to swerve and stall. Even the Egyptians themselves realized that their confusion and difficulty was no coincidence; this was all happening because Israel's God was fighting for His people.

At the command of God, Moses extended his staff again, and the sea completely engulfed the Egyptian army in judgment. It is important to note God's justice here. The Egyptians had repeatedly rejected God and His warnings. Pharaoh repeatedly went back on his promise to release Israel. God gave several warnings, but kept His word.

In contrast to Pharaoh, we find Moses following God without hesitation. The once reluctant leader was now the one God used to deliver His people.

# SESSION 1 | LEADER GUIDE

## *FOCUS ATTENTION*

**Think of a time when you were completely out of your comfort zone. What fears did you have during those moments?**

- God gives many strengths and talents to His people, but sometimes He calls us to act in areas where we feel the weakest or least confident, just as He did with Moses. God desires that we remain obedient, trusting Him despite our reluctance or fear.

## *EXPLORE THE TEXT*

Ask a volunteer to read Exodus 3:4-16.

**Characterize Moses' initial response when he observed the burning bush and realized something supernatural was happening. When have you realized a situation to be something that only God could do?**

- Moses' first response of reverence and fear of the Lord made him attentive to further conversation with God. God first established His identity and His holiness to Moses. Everything else God unfolded and called Moses to do flowed from these foundational truths.

**God identified Himself as the God of Moses' father, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. What did this communicate to Moses? How should knowing God's name impact our willingness to follow Him?**

- Moses had likely been exposed to many impostor gods in his lifetime. He needed to have firm clarity regarding God's identity as the covenant God of Moses' forefathers.
- God showed Moses this was something bigger than just the present situation. God personally brought Moses into His plan to dwell with His people and bring them into a whole new way of life.

**What was the biggest mistake Moses made? How might we make the same mistake today?**

- Moses focused more on what God asked of him than on God's character, compassion, and promises. God is at work in the past, present, and future to bring about His will. We can trust that when He invites His people to respond to Him, He is already preparing them as well as working in the circumstances.

Ask a volunteer to read Exodus 4:13-16.

**What causes people to hesitate to do what God asks them to do? How do these hesitations compare with Moses' excuses?**

- Moses relied on his own ability and gifts rather than on God. We must be careful to obey God, even if He calls us to a task in which we feel inadequate. Often the preparation and strengthening God gives come *after* we surrender to Him. Aaron was on the way before Moses ever knew God sent him to help.

Ask a volunteer to read Exodus 7:1-13.

**Why was Moses' and Aaron's exact obedience so important? How does simple and complete obedience demonstrate faith?**

- Our disobedience, including our partial obedience, confuses the message from God that He asks us to convey to others. It gives us the false impression that we have the right to pick and choose whether or not to obey Him.

Ask a volunteer to read Exodus 14:21-31.

**For the Israelites, what was the result of God working through Moses in such a dramatic fashion?**

- Often God asks His followers to trust Him before the outcome is visible. God miraculously made a way for the Israelites to escape to the land He had prepared for them.

**What larger impact did the Red Sea crossing and the defeat of Egypt have for Israel? For the surrounding peoples? For believers today?**

- Israel had deeply feared their Egyptian overlords for 430 years. Seeing them overwhelmed by God's power changed everything. God's stated intention was for the Egyptians to know He was Yahweh. Knowing He is God is the beginning point to knowing Him (see Ex. 14:4,18).

## ***APPLY THE TEXT***

**What role does God desire you to play in His redeeming of His people? What steps do you need to take to carry out the mission you have identified?**

**List resources God has given you to use to accomplish His will. How can you use each resource?**

**Reflect on Exodus 3:14. In what current situations do you need to be reminded that God is always true to His character?**