

The Gospel Project® for Adults

Daily Discipleship Guide CSB, Unit 4, Session 4

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God Hears His People

Session in a Sentence: God is fully aware of suffering and oppression and responds because He is good and just.

Main Passages: Exodus 3:2-15; 4:1-5

What are some common perceptions about studying the Old Testament?

The Book of Exodus isn't just Israel's story of how God rescued them in the past; it is also *our* story. In it we learn that God, despite being the sovereign Creator of the universe, is not distant; He is near, attentive, and personal. We learn that God cares. He sees us, hears us, responds to us, provides for us, and saves us. And although His name is not mentioned, the exodus story cries out "Jesus!" on page after page. It is, therefore, fundamental to the gospel.

Group Time

Point 1: God hears the prayers of His people (Ex. 3:2-10).

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." **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."

Years before, God guided the Israelites to Egypt to deliver them from the famine. But now they needed deliverance from that land of deliverance. They were in pain and desperate for relief. Here we see a scriptural truth: Pain is real and people hurt—even the people of God. But there is another truth: God hears our cries and He responds.

Why might we struggle to believe God hears us when we suffer?

God Is Infinite: God's infinity means that there are no boundaries on His _____ and _____. God's infinity also extends to His _____ of things as well as His _____ to do all things according to His will.

Voices from the Church

"God is concerned about the suffering of his people ... [The] caring God does not keep away from or ignore his people's struggles and pain." ¹

—P. G. George and Paul Swarup

Point 2: God reveals His identity (Ex. 3:11-15).

11 But Moses asked God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

12 He answered, “I will certainly be with you, and this will be the sign to you that I am the one who sent you: when you bring the people out of Egypt, you will all worship God at this mountain.”

13 Then Moses asked God, “If I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what should I tell them?”

14 God replied to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. 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 fathers, 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.

Moses’ first question was understandable—*Who am I to do this?* He was a fugitive; who was he to stand up to Pharaoh? But Moses’ second question revealed the greater cause of his hesitation—*Who are You?* Moses had just encountered, perhaps for the first time, this God who appeared to him in fire. Moses wanted to understand who this God is so he could answer the questions about Him that would surely come. Therefore, God revealed His most holy, most personal name to Moses—I AM WHO I AM.

God Is Transcendent: God is _____ from and _____ of His created world. He is transcendent over us in regards to His greatness and _____ as well as His goodness and _____.

How should God’s being both transcendent and immanent frame our relationship with Him?

If we’re honest, God’s name—I AM WHO I AM—is confusing. It is odd and repetitive. But it does bring us clarity about who God is and His purposes. God is telling us, “I have been who I have always been. I am consistent. I am who I am. I am not shaped by others, and I will be who I will be. I am what matters in the future.” The story of the burning bush is profound in that it reveals a self-defining God who is both transcendent and immanent. And if we want to be faithful as the people of God, then we must root our identity in Him and live dependent on Him, saying, “I’m with Him!”

Point 3: God shows His power (Ex. 4:1-5).

1 Moses answered, “What if they won’t believe me and will not obey me but say, ‘The LORD did not appear to you?’”

2 The LORD asked him, “What is that in your hand?” “A staff,” he replied. 3 “Throw it on the ground,” he said. So Moses threw it on the ground, it became a snake, and he ran from it. 4 The LORD told Moses, “Stretch out your hand and grab it by the tail.” So he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand. 5 “This will take place,” he continued, “so that they will believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.”

Up to this point, God had done a lot of talking to Moses, but when do we see God’s power revealed? *After* Moses took a step, even the smallest of ones, in faith, when he threw his staff on the ground. This is how God tends to work: He invites His people to trust Him—to step out in faith—and when we do, He is there to supply His power. We see this in Moses’ calling. We see this in our calling through the message of the gospel. And we see this in our mission, where God calls us to step out in faith to proclaim the kingdom as He draws others to Himself through the power of the gospel.

How have you seen the power of God manifested after taking a step of faith and obedience?

God uses His power to fuel our obedience, but all of us can relate with Moses. We all struggle to trust God and step out in faith and obedience. But there is joy when we follow the Lord and walk in obedience. We get to see the power of God in our lives. We cannot let our past define our present, nor our future. We aren’t perfect. We’re broken people. But God isn’t calling us to perfection before He uses us. He’s calling us to obedience rooted in faith in who He is. He is ready and able to draw near to us with His presence and work in and through us with His power.

My Mission

Because God has delivered us from the oppression of sin through Christ, we strive to be conscious of the plight of the oppressed in our world as we seek justice for all and show and share the love of God.

- **What steps of faith and obedience do you need to take because Christ has freed you from sin?**
- **How can your group be conscious of and seek justice for the oppressed as you share the love of God**

with them?

- **Who needs to hear that God is the great I AM, both transcendent and immanent, powerful and compassionate? How will you share Jesus, the great I AM, with them this week?**

Daily Study

Day 1: Read Exodus 1:1-22

The disobedience of the midwives presents a fascinating, and not unimportant, ethical issue for believers. Were Shiphrah and Puah right to disobey Pharaoh's edict, and if so, why? We know from this passage and others, such as Daniel's refusal not to pray (Dan. 6:10) and Peter and John's refusal to abstain from preaching the gospel (Acts 4:19-20), that we are to follow the laws of our nations unless those laws expressly violate God's law.

While this is important for us to know, and there may be times when we must put this principle into practice, for most of us it is more academic. Few of us will ever be in a situation where a law of the land is in direct conflict with God's law. But that does not mean this principle isn't relevant and helpful for us. It is, just for a larger reason. Notice why the midwives knew what to do in this situation: They feared God. The same was true with Daniel and with Peter and John. The fear of the Lord gave them the wisdom to navigate their ethical quandary and to follow God, even if it put their very lives at risk.

And this is what we need to take away from this part of the exodus account. Our daily struggle is not to be bold to stand against the unjust laws of our nation; it is to be faithful to follow the just and good commandments of our God. Like Shiphrah and Puah, we need to be men and women who fear God, who love Him and desire to live for Him out of gratitude for what He has done for us. Ours is not a question of when we are to disobey; it is the question of why we aren't obeying more.

What are some ways you have disobeyed God, been slow to obey, or have obeyed with the wrong heart? Confess these to God and ask Him to fill you with the fear of the Lord.

Voices from the Church

"We need to take courage and remember that as long as we are on the side of God, we are the majority. We may lose our lives, but not our reward!" 2

—Abel Ndjereou

Day 2: Read Exodus 2:1-25

As you read through Exodus 1, you might get the impression that God was, well, absent. The God who was so involved in orchestrating Jacob's family to come to Egypt now, four hundred years later, seems awfully quiet. But then in chapter 2, we read of a mother, in desperation, placing her baby along the bank of the Nile. What happens next can only be explained as God's hand at work.

That baby is discovered by Pharaoh's own daughter, who had compassion on him. And then, if that were not amazing enough, Pharaoh's daughter agreed to have Moses' mother nurse him until he was weaned, at about three or four years old. With this account opening Exodus 2, any thought we may have had that God was absent or disinterested in Exodus 1 comes crashing down. God may seem quiet at times, but He is never inactive. God was at work behind the scenes in Exodus, just as He is at work in our lives today—whether we see it or not.

What is an area of your life that you need to trust that God is working in and through?

Day 3: Read Exodus 3:1-10

As Moses approached the burning bush, God stopped him: "Do not come closer. Take off your sandals. You are on holy ground." But what made the ground holy that day? It was just dirt or sand; there was nothing intrinsic to the particles of that patch of ground that made it holy. It was God's presence that made it holy. And so, standing in God's presence on ground He made holy, Moses removed his sandals in a show of respect and honor.

This is what God does. He makes holy that which He inhabits. We see it here with a patch of ground. We will see it later with

the tabernacle, namely, the most holy place, and we see it in our lives. As Christians, we are a holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9). But we are just like the grains of sand or particles of dirt that Moses stood on. There is nothing intrinsic within us to make us holy—it is because of God’s presence in us that we became holy at the moment of our salvation. And it is only through the ongoing work of God in us and through us that we live holy lives as an accurate representation of our new, true identities in Christ.

Why is it important to remember that God makes you holy and that you are not holy on your own?

Day 4: Read Exodus 3:11-22

We can’t blame Moses for asking the first question he asked God: “Who am I to do this?” Was Moses’ question rooted in humility? Likely. But the point God made to Moses in response was basically this: *it wasn’t humble enough*. Implicit in Moses’ question was the thinking that he would be the primary actor, that he would be the one to carry out God’s plan. Moses’ mistake was to use the same pronoun: “Who am I that I should go?” (v. 11). But God had placed the emphasis on Himself (vv. 7-10). Although Moses’ question was not devoid of humility, with his eyes on himself, it was not humble enough.

And so, God in His kindness redirected Moses back to the One he should have been focused on: The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In essence, God was saying: “Moses, you missed it. It’s not about you. It’s not about what you can do or might do. It’s about Me. It’s about what I can do and what I will do.” That was what Moses needed to understand in this call, and it is what we need to understand as well. As Christians, our service to our King is not based on who we are. It’s not based on how smart we are, how dedicated we are, or how talented we are. Sure, God has given us all those gifts to be used by Him, but that’s the point—God is the primary actor, not us.

What are some ways you tend to rely on yourself instead of on God?

Day 5: Read Exodus 4:1-31

God had been so patient with Moses. But at some point questions and concerns give way to excuses: “Please, Lord, send someone else” (v. 13). He addressed God with a term of submission in “Lord,” but his heart was far from submissive. And so, God’s anger burned against Moses. Here we might fall into the common trap of seeing God in the Old Testament as a temperamental, volatile God, but that notion is quickly put to rest in the latter part of verse 14: God provided Aaron to help him.

Yes, we can take our sincere questions and concerns to God. He welcomes our desire to understand Him and His plans better—when they come from a yielded heart. Our Father is kind, but He is not One to be trifled with. And yes, God’s grace and mercy are unending. Even when we are under His discipline, His love prevails.

What sincere questions might you be holding back from God, and at the same time, what excuses might you be offering Him?

Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- God hears the prayers of His people (Ex. 3:2-10).
- God reveals His identity (Ex. 3:11-15).
- God shows His power (Ex. 4:1-5).

How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?

How can your small group or church become more aware of people who are suffering and how they are suffering?

What are some excuses that keep you from obeying God, and how does the gospel of Jesus help you to be faithful?

References

1. P. G. George and Paul Swarup, "Exodus," in *South Asia Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Brian Wintle (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 82.
2. Abel Ndjerareou, "Exodus," in *Africa Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 87.