

# GOD SHARES HIS NAME

**+ SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

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

**+ BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Exodus 1–4

**+ 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.

# DAY 1

## READ:

**Exodus 1:1–3:5**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Exodus 3:1**

NOTES

## VOICES from THE CHURCH

"Moses, after his major, life-shattering failure and all those years of obscurity that followed, certainly must have felt like an unusable vessel. He couldn't imagine God's picking up a rejected utensil such as himself, and finding any use in it. To him, the idea was ludicrous. Then one normal, ordinary, desert day, he stopped to look at a particular bush, and nothing was ever normal and ordinary for him again."<sup>1</sup>

-Chuck Swindoll

When people recall the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks, they probably begin by thinking, "It was an otherwise ordinary day." But history has a way of sneaking up on us.

This was the case with Moses. He didn't climb Horeb that day looking for a miracle. It was a mundane morning as he led his father-in-law's livestock. What a stunning culture shift it had been for the former prince of Egypt. Once he was the talk of the town, a renowned son of Pharaoh, a man who commanded armies and enjoyed the luxuries of royalty. Now, he was a failed leader, having sought to act on behalf of his people only to alienate both Egypt and Israel at the same time.

The wilderness has a way of sanding down the edges of our ego in ways that God can use for unexpected opportunity. What Moses didn't see that day was how God was working in the silence. He was preparing His messenger in ways the messenger didn't even see. And so it is with us. God often moves us through grinding monotony in order to prepare us for leadership.

It would be on this day, of all days, a most ordinary day, that Horeb became the place where God appeared in a dramatic way and revealed His greatness and a bit of His white-hot glory to the least likely of servants. An 80-year-old man on the backside of the desert was God's long-awaited answer to the hurt and pain and bondage of His people.

**What does the ordinariness of this moment tell us about the way God works in human history?**

# DAY 2

## READ:

Exodus 3:1-5

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

Exodus 3:2-5

## NOTES



### 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.

Imagine Moses's shock that day. Suddenly the ordinary became extraordinary. Moses didn't do a double take because a shrub was in flames. That would not catch the attention of this shepherd. No, what startled him was the fact that the bush would not burn.

It's significant that God appeared here as fire. This is a symbol for His holy presence. Israel would be led by a pillar of fire (Ex. 13:21). Later, God would descend on this same mountain in fire and smoke (Ex. 19:18). Sacrifices in the tabernacle would be consumed with fire (Lev. 9:24). And we cannot forget the flaming tongues of fire on the Day of Pentecost, which represented the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' disciples. Fire is a metaphor for God's holiness. He's a "consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29), and the only right response is to worship Him.

It's hard for us to accept a God of "consuming fire." We've domesticated God down to a social-media buddy or a jogging partner. We love God as long as He ratifies our life choices and endorses our endeavors. But God revealed Himself to Moses with flaming fire and demanded that he remove his shoes and stand barefoot on ground made holy because God was present. This is the God who was about to act with power on behalf of His people in bondage in Egypt.

Scripture says that knowing and fearing God as He presents Himself is the pathway to wisdom (Prov. 9:10). Moses had to turn his face away from the glory of God. Today, we can access God directly through Jesus, who walked through the fire of God's wrath on our behalf and reconciles us to the Father. While we continue to fear God's holiness, we don't have to fear God's wrath because that was poured out on His Son. If you are in Christ, this fiery God of wrath and judgment is on your side.

**What are some ways you fear and revere the Lord in your life?**

# DAY 3

## READ:

**Exodus 3:6-10**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Exodus 3:7**

NOTES

There are three words that describe God's compassion for His people in bondage in Egypt. He observes, He hears, and He knows. Think about this: While Moses was talking to God on the backside of the desert, a ruthless dictator was exploiting the free labor of an oppressed people. All the promises a king of Egypt had once made to Israel because of Joseph's influence had now been erased and forgotten. If you were a common Hebrew slave, laboring under the hot sun while taskmasters whipped your back, you might think your plight was hopeless and that rescue would never come. But what Israel didn't know, what Pharaoh didn't know, was that God saw everything, heard everything, and knew everything. And He was about to "come down" and save His people.

It's important that we understand this about God: Nothing escapes His vision. No injustice, no hurt, no wrong is unheard. The God who heard Abel's blood cry from the ground sees every last bit of injustice in the world.

What's more, God "came down" in the person of Jesus Christ, who defeated sin, death, and the grave and is making the world new. The gospel tell us we are both the oppressed and the oppressor. Sinners are in bondage to sin, a ruthless taskmaster, but we also are the ones doing the sinning, committing egregious acts against God and against our fellow human beings. Yet Romans 5:8 tells us that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. This is what we celebrate every Sunday—indeed, every day—a God who sees, hears, and knows and who came down to save us from the bondage of sin.

**What does the active work of God to save Israel from Egypt tell us about the nature of God's heart, and how does this point us forward to Jesus?**

# DAY 4

## READ:

Exodus 3:11-15

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

Exodus 3:11-15

## NOTES

In school, we often were told that there is no such thing as a wrong question. Of course, it's not hard to think of a classmate who disproved this thesis. There are wrong questions, and Moses began his response to God by asking one of them. When God said that Moses was the man for this mission to Egypt, Moses asked, "Who am I?" In other words, Moses was reminding God of how far he had fallen, as if God needed Moses's updated resume with his epic failures and his advanced age.

But it didn't matter who Moses was. It mattered who God is. Moses wouldn't be going to Egypt on a lark; he would be going with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now God was giving Moses His resume. This was the God who made an unbreakable covenant with Abraham to make his offspring as numerous as the stars, and God was going to keep this promise.

What's more, God revealed Himself as "I AM WHO I AM." This also could be interpreted as "I will be who I will be." God is the pre-existent One. He is uncreated and needs nothing to complete Him. He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. This is who was going with Moses. So it didn't much matter who Moses was—it mattered supremely who God is.

Later, Jesus would describe Himself, declaring to the religious leaders, "Before Abraham was, I am (John 8:58)." And this Jesus sends us to declare the good news that God is rescuing sinners. Jesus declared in Matthew 28:18-20 that we could go and make disciples throughout the world because He would be with us until the end of the age.

This is why ordinary, flawed Christians can join Jesus in His mission: We are going with the great "I AM."

**How does God's declaration of His name inform the way we think about the mission of God?**

# DAY 5

## READ:

**Exodus 3:16–4:31**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Exodus 3:19-22**

## NOTES

God was upfront with Moses about the difficulty of his assignment. Even though he went with the power of God, he would be facing a king whose heart was hardening fast away from God and toward evil. God even told Moses what to say and that Pharaoh would reject it. Imagine that? And yet, Moses's mission wouldn't be a failure because God would use the king's stubbornness to display God's power and might over the false Egyptian gods. The king might not convert, but many in Egypt would look up in awe and despair at the God of Israel, who had true power over creation, unlike the false deities of the age.

The sovereignty of God is a much-discussed theological topic. It invites much consternation among theologians. But it's not just an interesting theological discussion; God's sovereignty is an invitation to awe and worship. Moses could be comforted by the fact that nothing he would face in Egypt would surprise God. There were no developments on the ground that stunned the courts of the Almighty.

Today, we can rest in that same knowledge. God's sovereignty helps us process difficult and hard tragedy. It helps us avoid being shaken by world events, from trembling when we scroll our news feeds and read alarming headlines. It keeps us from fixating too much on trying to change earthly circumstances out of our control.

The sovereignty of God doesn't excuse inaction. Moses still had to go and obey the call of God. But he could go knowing that God was going with him. We too can rest in knowing that God goes with us. He knows what evil men are doing and what they will do. And yet, just as He did in Egypt, He is able to use even the hardened Pharaohs of this world to demonstrate His power and glory.

**In what areas of your life are you struggling most to yield to the will and plan of God?**



# GROUP

NOTES

**POINT 1: God reveals His holiness to His servant** (Ex. 3:1-5).

Horeb was an insignificant place in the wilderness, but because \_\_\_\_\_ appeared there, it became \_\_\_\_\_ ground.

## ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #2: SPECIAL REVELATION

Special revelation refers to God revealing Himself to humanity through historical events, His \_\_\_\_\_, and through Jesus Christ. Through special revelation, human beings learn about God's \_\_\_\_\_, His will, His purpose for creation, and His plan of \_\_\_\_\_.

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.



**Why is it important that we learn about God's holiness from His special revelation?**

**POINT 2: God reveals His identity to His servant** (Ex. 3:6-15).

The great "I AM"—Yahweh, the Lord—is a compassionate God, a \_\_\_\_\_ God, a \_\_\_\_\_ God, and the eternal, \_\_\_\_\_, all-powerful Creator God.



**What did God's name have to do with the plight of His people in Egypt?**

## 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)

### POINT 3: God reveals His power to His servant (Ex. 3:19-22).

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



**How have you seen God's sovereign power on display?**

God's power would liberate the Hebrews from their \_\_\_\_\_, and He would also bless them through the gifts of the Egyptians. Similarly, Jesus liberates believers from \_\_\_\_\_ and blesses them with spiritual gifts.



**Why do we need God's power through Jesus to save us from our sin?**

### MY RESPONSE

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:** How might God be sending you on mission to declare the good news that He rescues sinners?
- **HEART:** In what areas of your life are you refusing to trust to the great "I AM"? Repent now and obey in faith.
- **HANDS:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear the good news of the gospel? Where are you being sent for God's glory?

NOTES

### 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>3</sup>

-Michael Bird