



LESSON 18

God raises Moses to lead Israel

EXODUS 3:1-4:31



God makes His servants humble and obedient.



“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exod 3:14).

Supporting Truths

1. God is omnipotent.
2. God displays His power through those He has humbled.
3. God loves and delivers His people.
4. The godly man leads by faith in God, not in himself.
5. God always exists and is always present to keep His promises.

Objectives

1. Describe how God is going to defeat Pharaoh.
2. Describe how God’s plan for Moses is pictured in the burning bush.
3. List three ways God shows His love for Israel in Exodus 3–4.
4. Compare Moses’ objections to God’s answers.
5. Explain what “I AM WHO I AM” means.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God raises Moses to lead Israel • Exodus 3:1-4:31



Lesson Summary

Before using Moses to deliver the people of Israel, God used forty years of shepherding sheep to humble Moses. God appeared to him in a flaming bush that did not burn up. He called Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt, but Moses doubted his ability to carry out God's plan. He questioned God, pointing out his own weaknesses and the many difficulties that lay ahead. But God answered Moses, by declaring His power and control over the coming deliverance.

Spotlight on the Gospel

God reveals Himself in order to deliver His people. In the gospel, just as in Exodus, it is God who saves, not the person delivering the message.

LAST WEEK



God prepares Israel
for deliverance
Exodus 1:1-2:25

THIS WEEK



God raises Moses to
lead Israel
Exodus 3:1-4:31

NEXT WEEK



God sends plagues
on Egypt
Exodus 7:1-10:29

DELIVERANCE

Lesson Commentary

God makes His servants humble and obedient.

In Egypt Moses was a prince, educated in all the learning of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22). He loved his people, the oppressed Hebrews, but his initial attempt to free them was a total failure (Exod 2:11–14). On the run from Pharaoh, he fled to Midian where he became a shepherd (2:15, 3:1). The only crowd willing to follow him in Midian was a flock of sheep (3:1), and they weren't even his sheep! They belonged to Jethro, his father-in-law. Moses' life, like that of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, shows us that when God chooses men to lead, He first humbles them so that His own power, not theirs, is put on display (1 Cor 1:26–31).



THINK ABOUT IT

God's leader will be humble or he will be humbled!

God reveals Himself (3:1–10)

As 80 year-old Moses shepherded the sheep at Mt Horeb (Acts 7:23, 30), God appeared to him in a

miraculous way: He revealed Himself to Moses in a burning bush that was not burned up. The bush itself was unimpressive, but God's holy presence blazed in the bush and drew Moses to it. After many years of oppression God spoke to one of His people to reveal He was still the God in control and that He had not forgotten the promises that He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

God's plan of deliverance was based on His character. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod 3:6), the God who remains the same throughout the ages. He heard His people's cry and did not forget His promise to bring Abraham's descendants from Egypt to Canaan (Gen 15:13–16; Exod 3:7–8). For the first time Israel is called "My people" (Exod 3:7), and God was willing to "come down" to them in their suffering in order to save (3:8). God would powerfully deliver them because He faithfully loved them.

God reveals His power (3:11–4:17)

Moses was no longer a self-confident prince.

He questioned God's plan five times. First, he asked, "Who am I?" (3:11). How could

an old, forgotten shepherd oppose the powerful Pharaoh? God responded by encouraging Moses to trust in God (**faith**), not trust in self (**pride**). God said, "I will be with you" (3:12). God also gave Moses a sign: he and the people would worship God on that very mountain, Mt Sinai (3:1, 12). This sign assured success, but it also explains the purpose of deliverance. God saves so that those who are saved will worship Him. The Israelites were delivered from slavery to Pharaoh in order to be slaves to God, and we who are freed from sin to become slaves of God (Rom 6:22).

Second, Moses asked what he should say if the Israelites asked, "What is His name?" (3:13). The question concerns God's character: what can we learn about God from His name? Is He able to deliver? Is He worth listening to? God answered, "I AM WHO I AM" (3:14). In other words, "I am the One who is and will be, the One who is always present." God was reassuring Moses and Israel that just as He was with the fathers, so He would be with them to deliver them and bring them into Canaan (3:15–18). He would do so with such great power that the Hebrew slaves would plunder the most powerful kingdom without fighting a single battle (3:19–22). They would later use this plunder to build the tabernacle to worship their strong Deliverer (38:24–31).

Third, Moses wondered whether the Israelites would believe him (4:1). God again turned Moses' eyes away from his own weakness and toward God's strength. He gave three miraculous signs (Exod 4:2–9). These signs would confirm Moses' message. The purpose of miracles is always to confirm the Word of God by displaying the power of God (Heb 2:3–4). Through

THINK ABOUT IT

The confidence of God's presence is a powerful motivation for ministry (Matt 28:20).



STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON



God raises Moses to lead Israel • Exodus 3:1–4:31

Moses, God displayed His power in order to call Israel to hear His words and be His faithful people.

heart in order to prove His omnipotence, his unbeatable power to do as He pleases (4:21–23).



THINK ABOUT IT

Moses was learning that everything he had was from

God and everything he would do would come through God.

Fourth, Moses said he was not quick-witted or eloquent (4:10). Again God focused Moses' attention on God's power instead of on human weakness. He reminded Moses that since He was powerful enough to make man's mouth, He was powerful

enough to give the right words (4:11–12). God had made Moses' mouth just as He intended, just as He perfectly equips every believer to accomplish their God-given mission by God's strength (Heb 13:21).

Fifth, Moses bluntly told God to find someone else (Exod 4:13). God rightly became angry with Moses. He had already been patient to answer Moses' excuses, and He had already given Moses plenty of evidence to confirm His own power. God graciously chose Aaron as a spokesman for Moses (4:14–16), but because of Moses' lack of faith, Moses would miss out on a glorious part of God's redemptive plan: Aaron's line, not Moses', would be the priests of God. Though God is gracious and patient, those who doubt His power lose some of the joy and success they could have had in His service.

God blesses leaders who obey (4:18–31)

Moses finally obeyed (4:18–20). Before he left for Egypt, God reminded him of His covenant of love and power. He loved Israel His firstborn son (4:22). He was also powerful, promising to harden Pharaoh's

Aaron and Moses met and traveled to Egypt (Exod 4:27), where Aaron spoke, Moses performed the signs (4:28–30), and the people believed and worshiped God (4:31). When God's people act upon God's promise, God brings success. Success is ultimately being faithful to do

what God has commanded. But the display of God's power had only just begun. God would powerfully rescue Israel through the humbled leader, just as God now powerfully redeems sinners through Christ Jesus, who humbled Himself to the point of death (Phil 2:5–8). Jesus Himself said that salvation belongs to those who are humble (Mt 5:3). Those who are poor in spirit, who recognize their spiritual weakness and fully depend on God's strength to save them, receive the kingdom of heaven—salvation.

THINK ABOUT IT

Success is ultimately being faithful to do what God has commanded.



Lesson Outline

God makes His servants humble and obedient.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God chose Moses, a humble man (3:1, 10).
2. God spoke to Moses through a burning bush (3:2–9).
3. When Moses thought he was too weak, God showed He was very strong (3:11–4:17).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God chose a humbled leader (3:1–10).
 - Moses was a shepherd for forty years (3:1).
 - God spoke to Moses from a flaming bush (3:2–4).
 - God reminded Moses that He is holy (3:5–6).
 - God called Moses to deliver His people from Egypt (3:7–10).
2. When the humbled leader doubted himself, God confirmed His own power (3:11–4:17).
 - Moses: “Who am I?” God: “I will be with you.”
 - Moses: “What if they ask me Your name?” God: “I AM WHO I AM.”
 - Moses: “What if they do not believe me?” God gave miraculous signs.
 - Moses: “I cannot speak well.” God: “I made your mouth and will help you speak.”
 - Moses: “Send someone else.” God was angry but allowed Aaron to help.
3. When the humbled leader obeyed, God gave success (4:18–31).
 - Moses obeyed and headed to Egypt (4:18–20).
 - The LORD reminded Moses of His power and love for His people (4:21–23).
 - The LORD rebuked Moses for neglecting to keep the covenant (4:24–26).
 - The people believed Moses and Aaron and worshiped the LORD (4:27–31).



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

God raises Moses to lead Israel • Exodus 3:1–4:31



Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. What was Moses doing when God spoke to him?**
Shepherding sheep.
- 2. How did God appear to him?**
In a burning bush that did not burn up.
- 3. What job did God give Moses?**
God told Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt.
- 4. How did God answer Moses' questions?**
God helped Moses to see God's great power.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. What was Moses doing when God spoke to him?**
Humbly shepherding sheep.
- 2. Why did God appear to him in a burning bush?**
To show a picture of what Moses was going to be. The bush was a humble thing, but God used it to display His glory, get Moses' attention, and speak His words to Moses. God would use humble Moses to display His glory, point people toward God, and speak His words.
- 3. What was Moses' first objection, and how did God answer?**
Moses asked, "Who am I?" He knew he did not have the ability to do God's plan. God answered by promising to be with Moses.
- 4. What was Moses' second objection, and how did God answer?**
Moses asked what he should say about God's name. God answered, "I AM WHO I AM," promising that He is always present to redeem His people.
- 5. What was Moses' third objection, and how did God answer?**
Moses asked, "What if they don't believe me?" They didn't believe him before. But the first time Moses had relied on his own abilities. This time, God gave him three signs to show God's power.
- 6. What was Moses' fourth objection, and how did God answer?**
Moses complained that he did not speak well. He was still focused on his own abilities. God answered that He was in control of Moses' mouth. It was about God's power, not Moses'.
- 7. What was Moses' fifth objection, and how did God answer?**
Moses told God to find someone else. God was angry, and would not let Moses get out of his calling. But He graciously allowed Aaron to help do the speaking.
- 8. What do Moses, the bush, and God's answers show about God's purpose in delivering Israel?**
God's purpose was to display His great power. That is why He required a humble leader, so that Israel would put their faith in God and not in Moses.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



PHONE CALL

Bring in two phones. Choose one child at a time to talk with you on the phone. Pretend to be the president, a police officer, or even the pastor. Call the child on the phone. Make up a conversation with the child and tell them that you have a very important job for them to do. After you have done this with several children, tell them that in today's lesson, they will learn about a call that was much more amazing than a phone call.

FOLLOW THE LEADER

As the children imitate your actions or those of another child, do the following: clapping, toe tapping, tummy rubbing, jumping, hopping on left foot, hopping on right foot, clapping a friend's hands, reaching for the sky, and putting a hand in a pocket. In today's Bible lesson, they will learn about how God wanted the Israelites to follow their leader, Moses.



A HUMBLE SHEPHERD

Dress up as Moses (robe, head covering, beard, shepherd's staff) and tell the Bible story as Moses.

BURNING BUSH

Cut a large bush or branch without foliage. "Plant" it in a coffee can or bucket with dirt and rocks. Add tissue-paper flames to the "bush." Use this flaming bush as a prop for today's Bible story.



GOD APPEARS TO MOSES

See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, blue construction paper, red and yellow and orange paper, crayons, scissors, and glue.

Directions: Pre-cut Moses picture and burning bush outline from craft sheet. Pre-cut small green and brown rectangles and flame pieces of red, yellow, and orange. In class, children should color Moses and glue him to the construction paper. Have children glue the burning bush outline to the construction paper and then fill it in by gluing on the flames and bush pieces.



God Appears to Moses
See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.

TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

God raises Moses to lead Israel • Exodus 3:1–4:31



AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE

Some things seem to never change. Bring in examples of things that take a long time to change, such as rocks and metal objects. Also bring in things that change easily, such as Play Doh, water, or even paper. Talk about what it takes to make these things change. In today's lesson, we are going to learn about one person who never changes—God. God tells Moses His name. The name is “I AM.” It means that God always was, always is, and always will be. God never changes, and His plans never change. In today's lesson, we will see that God's plan to fulfill His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was one step closer.

PHONE CALL FROM THE PRESIDENT

Ask children what they would do if they got a call from the governor or the president. If he asked them to do something, would they do it? It would be a very strange thing for most of us to get a call from the president. In today's lesson, we will learn about a call that was much more amazing.



ILLUSTRATE

THE LIFE OF MOSES

Tell the children that the life of Moses can be divided into three 40-year periods. Bring in a symbol to represent each of these three periods: crown (prince), shepherd's staff (shepherd), and bull horn to proclaim “Let my people go!” (deliverer). Today's lesson covers portions of the last two periods of Moses' life. As you teach the lesson, utilize the symbols to identify the different periods of Moses' life.

REMOVE YOUR SHOES

Ask the children to take off their shoes when you get to Exodus 3:5. Does this seem like a strange request? This is what God told Moses to do when He called to him from the midst of the burning bush. Tell the children that by taking off his sandals, Moses was showing God that he understood that God is worthy of worship. Specifically, he was showing God that he understood that God was holy, separate from sin. The ground where Moses was standing was holy because God was there. God's presence set apart the bush and the land surrounding it. Remind the children that God has said that we are to be holy because God is holy (1 Pet 1:16).



APPLY

THE BURNING BUSH

Materials: Paper plate, green and brown construction paper, orange and yellow tissue paper, and glue.

Directions: Instruct children to cut a tree shape out of a paper plate. Have them cut small rectangles from green and brown construction paper and glue them onto the plate as shown below. Tear and glue on pieces of tissue paper and fill to the edge of the plate, twisting each piece with the eraser end of a pencil.



AGES 9–11

**DOUBLE TAKE**

Have you ever been walking along and seen something strange or interesting? Did you pause and go closer for a better look? Allow the children to share a few stories. Something like this happened to a shepherd in today's Bible lesson, and his story tops them all!

HOLY GROUND

Have a volunteer stand at the door before class begins, directing children to take off their shoes and leave them outside. Begin class by reading Exodus 3:5 aloud. Use this activity to lead the class in a discussion of how serious it is to be in the presence of our Holy God! You may choose to cite other Bible passages where people experienced the presence of God firsthand. Remind the children that God is omnipresent, which means He is present everywhere.

**WORDS ON FIRE**

Act out the Bible lesson, using the dialogue between God and Moses to help the children remember the story.

Moses: "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh?"

God: "I will be with you."

Moses: "What if they ask me Your name?"

God: "I AM WHO I AM."

Moses: "What if they do not believe me?"

God: "I will give you miraculous signs (staff to serpent, leprous hand, water to blood).

Moses: "I cannot speak well."

God: "I made your mouth and will help you speak."

Moses: "Send someone else."

God: "I will allow Aaron to help."

SIGNS OF MOSES

Ask an adult volunteer to dress up as Moses. Provide the following props for Moses to use: rod, snake (live, if possible), leprous glove (coat a glove with coconut to look like flaking skin), black cloth, cup of water, red food coloring, and pan with dirt. Use these props to illustrate the miraculous signs God gave Moses in Exodus 4:1–9: (1) Rod to snake to rod, (2) normal hand to leprous hand to normal hand, and (3) water to blood on dry land.

**SIGNIFICANT REPETITIONS**

See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.

Ask the class whether they noticed any phrase being repeated in this week's lesson. Direct the children to read Exodus 3:6, 15, 16; and 4:5. They will discover the phrase "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" repeated in these verses. Ask the children what point they believe God was trying to emphasize by repeating this list of forefathers. Read Exodus 2:24 aloud. Point out that God remembered His covenant with Israel. Pass out the chart to each child, and lead a discussion of how God kept His promises to each of these people we learned about in Genesis. Direct the children to take notes on the chart, listing how God abundantly blessed each forefather by His grace. Some notes are provided, and you may want to review additional portions of Genesis with your class.