

# MOSES

DEVOTIONAL READING: 2 Chronicles 19:4-7

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Exodus 3

## EXODUS 3:1-12

<sup>1</sup> Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup> There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. <sup>3</sup> So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.”

<sup>4</sup> When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!”

And Moses said, “Here I am.”

<sup>5</sup> “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” <sup>6</sup> Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

<sup>7</sup> The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. <sup>8</sup> So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. <sup>9</sup> And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. <sup>10</sup> So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

<sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

<sup>12</sup> And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”



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## KEY VERSES

*“Now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”—*

*Exodus 3:9, 10*

## LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. List the who, what, where, when, and why of God's call of Moses.
2. Compare and contrast Moses' reaction to God's call with that of Gideon's ([lesson 2](#)).
3. Personalize Moses' question "Who am I, that I should [perform a specific mission]," and give an answer considering the difference God's presence makes.

## LESSON OUTLINE

### Introduction

- A. Agony or Victory?
- B. Lesson Background

### I. Incredible Meeting ([Exodus 3:1-5](#))

- A. Fire on the Mountain ([vv. 1-3](#))
- B. Voice from the Flames ([vv. 4, 5](#))

### II. Divine Awareness ([Exodus 3:6-10](#))

- A. Who God Is ([v. 6](#))
- B. What God Knows ([v. 7](#))
- C. What God Intends ([vv. 8-10](#))

*What God Still Sees*

### III. Supernatural Provision ([Exodus 3:11, 12](#))

- A. Moses' Reluctance ([v. 11](#))
- B. God's Reassurance ([v. 12](#))

*Answering the Call*

### Conclusion

- A. The With-ness in Our Witness
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. Agony or Victory?

Years before ESPN became the primary sports network, there was ABC's *Wide World of Sports*. On Saturday afternoon one could tune in as announcer Jim McKay introduced this sports anthology. McKay would remind viewers that attempting to achieve greatness in sporting events led to both "the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat."

Such a phrase aptly describes the experience of the Lord's servants throughout the years. Serving the Lord in a broken, sin-cursed world can be the source of some of life's greatest joys, but it can also produce some agonizing moments. Perhaps no group of individuals in Scripture exemplifies this battle better than the Old Testament prophets, who are the focus of our next unit of studies. The first of this group to be considered is Moses.

### B. Lesson Background

One could use the letters in the word *prophet* in an acrostic to define the Old Testament prophets as passionate representatives obediently proclaiming heaven's eternal truth. The prophets were God's spokespersons who proclaimed his message (usually but not always) fearlessly.

Some people view a prophet as one who predicts the future. That is certainly part of what the Old Testament prophets did, but their task was by no means limited to that. It is helpful to see the prophets as both *foretellers* (those who predicted the future accurately) and *forth-tellers* (those who declared God's truth). Prophets were often subject to verbal and/or physical abuse because they spoke unpleasant truth boldly and plainly. They often did so without regard for the consequences.

Some look at Moses' role as that of a lawgiver more than a prophet. But the Scriptures clearly refer to him as a prophet ([Deuteronomy 18:15](#)).

The same book concludes with these words of tribute to Moses: “Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face” (34:10).

Moses began his service to the Lord in need of his own prophet or spokesman, his brother Aaron (Exodus 4:14-16; 7:1, 2). But in time Moses would learn an important lesson: the key to answering God’s call is found not in who the human servant is but in who God is. That principle still holds true.

In his defense before the Sanhedrin, Stephen related that Moses had killed an Egyptian whom he saw beating one of “his own people, the Israelites” (Acts 7:23, 24; compare Exodus 2:11, 12). According to Stephen, Moses assumed that his fellow Israelites would acknowledge him as their deliverer and rally around his efforts; “but they did not” (Acts 7:25). When Moses realized that his murderous act was known by others and that he had been rejected as a deliverer, he fled Egypt. He ended up in Midian, where he married Zipporah, one of seven daughters of Jethro. We find Moses in that situation as today’s text opens.

## I. Incredible Meeting

(EXODUS 3:1-5)

### A. Fire on the Mountain (vv. 1-3)

#### **1. Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.**

*Jethro* is first introduced in Exodus 2:18 as Reuel. Some suggest that Reuel (meaning “friend of God”) is this man’s given name, while *Jethro* (meaning something like “his excellency”) is a title. The verse before us describes him as *the priest of Midian*. The nature of *Jethro’s* priesthood is a bit uncertain, since the Bible does not specifically say that he is a priest of the Lord. Originally Midian was one of the sons of Abraham born to him through Keturah, whom he married following Sarah’s death (Genesis 25:1, 2). Whether Abraham’s faith in the true God was eventually passed on to the Midianites or how many of them embraced it is difficult to know.

## HOW TO SAY IT

Aaron *Air-un.*

Amorites *Am-uh-rites.*

Amram *Am-ram.*

Aqaba *Ock-uh-buh.*

Canaanites *Kay-nun-ites.*

Damascus *Duh-mass-kus.*

Gideon *Gid-e-un (G as in get).*

Hittites *Hit-ites or Hit-tites.*

Hivites *Hi-vites.*

Horeb *Ho-reb.*

Immanuel *Ih-man-you-el.*

In *Jethro’s* case, he may have at one time worshipped the true God alongside other gods. This theory is supported by *Jethro’s* declaration “Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods” (Exodus 18:11) after learning what the Lord had done for the Israelites.

Midianite territory includes a vast desert area. As Moses tends *the flock of Jethro*, he leads it (perhaps in an effort to find sufficient grazing) to *the far side of the wilderness* (the more distant side). This area around Horeb likely includes the land west of what is known today as the Gulf of Aqaba. Such land is part of the Sinai Peninsula. The traditional site of Horeb is at the peninsula’s southern end.

The term *Horeb* is generally believed to be either (1) another name for Mount Sinai, (2) another peak in the region of the Sinai Peninsula, or (3) the entire range of mountains, with the word *Sinai* designating a specific mountain in that range. (Compare Exodus 33:6; Deuteronomy 1:6.) Horeb may be called *the mountain of God* because here is where he speaks to Moses and later gives his law. Or perhaps the Midianites have already given the mountain that name for reasons unknown to us.

#### **2. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.**

*The angel of the Lord* coming to Moses in *flames of fire* is echoed in Psalm 104:4. That verse tells us that the Lord “makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants.” Such a fiery manifestation may point to the later association of God’s presence and fire on this same mountain in the sight of the Israelites. At that time the fire will be much more intense (Exodus 19:18).

#### **3. So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.”**

Moses is captivated by a bush aflame yet not consumed. Clearly something out of the ordinary is happening before his very eyes—it is a *strange sight*. Who wouldn't *go over* to take a closer look?

*What Do You Think?*

What are some ways to turn our church into a “burning bush” that draws people to Jesus?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- Regarding how mutual love is demonstrated
- Regarding building and grounds appearance
- Regarding the nature of preached and taught messages
- Other

## B. Voice from the Flames (vv. 4, 5)

**4 When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!”**

**And Moses said, “Here I am.”**

*Verse 2* of our text speaks of “the angel of the Lord,” but the verse before us speaks of the presence of the Lord himself *from within the bush*. Some believe the angel of the Lord to be a preincarnate appearance of Jesus.

Moses' sight has been captured by the burning bush; now his ears hear a voice. His name is called twice, which occurs on other notable occasions in Scripture: with Abraham just before he offers up Isaac as a sacrifice ([Genesis 22:11](#)), Jacob ([Genesis 46:1-4](#)), young Samuel ([1 Samuel 3:10](#)), and Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus ([Acts 9:4](#)). Moses responds with a simple *Here I am*, even though he does not yet know who is calling to him.

## HOW TO SAY IT

Jebusites *Jeb-yuh-sites*.

Jethro *Jeth-ro*.

Keturah *Keh-too-ruh*.

Levi *Lee-vye*.

Midian *Mid-ee-un*.

Midianites *Mid-ee-un-ites*.

Perizzites *Pair-ih-zites*.

Pharaoh *Fair-o or Fay-roe*.

Reuel *Roo-el*.

Sanhedrin *San-huh-drun or San-heed-run*.

Sinai *Sigh-nye or Sigh-nay-eye*.

Zipporah *Zih-po-ruh*.

**5 “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”**

The order to remove *sandals* because of *holy ground* is not unique to this verse. A similar command will be given to Joshua when the Lord prepares him for the task of conquering the promised land ([Joshua 5:13-15](#)).

*What Do You Think?*

What actions on our part can acknowledge our awareness of being in the presence of the God of all holiness ([1 Peter 1:15, 16](#))?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- Within the context of marriage and family
- During worship on the Lord's Day
- During private devotions

Other

## II. Divine Awareness

(EXODUS 3:6-10)

### A. Who God Is (v. 6)

**6a. Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.”**

Moses learns the reason why the ground on which he stands is holy: it is God who is speaking to him. In so doing, God first identifies himself with Moses’ father, Amram, of the tribe of Levi ([Exodus 2:1](#); [6:20](#)). Of even greater significance is God’s lordship with regard to Moses’ ancestors. We refer to *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob* as *the patriarchs*. It is the covenant that God made with them that now moves him to come to the rescue of his enslaved people ([Exodus 2:24](#)).

**6b. At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.**

Moses’ reaction of fear is immediate. He had been eager to “see this strange sight” before him ([v. 3](#)); now he shields *his face* from it as he learns who is speaking to him. Moses may well recall his ancestor Jacob’s surprise at being still alive after he “saw God face to face” on a particular occasion ([Genesis 32:30](#)).

### B. What God Knows (v. 7)

**7. The Lord said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.”**

God’s people—the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—have been in bondage *in Egypt* some 400 years at this point in time ([Genesis 15:13](#); [Acts 7:6](#)). That God knows the sorrows of his people provides consolation for us today. We know that in Jesus we see a “man of suffering” who “bore our sorrows” at the cross ([Isaiah 53:3, 4](#)).

Even so, for God to note at this point that he knows of the suffering of his people in Egypt raises an immediate and obvious question: Why has he waited so long to come to their aid? Questions concerning God’s timetable or scheduling of events are not addressed in most cases in Scripture. Rather, the Scripture’s focus is more on learning to trust that the Lord will keep the promises he has made—and leaving the timing up to him.

Centuries later, Jesus’ inquisitive disciples will ask, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” ([Acts 1:6](#)). His blunt response at that time will serve as something of a thump on the head: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority” ([1:7](#)). God’s servants are to focus on their duties, and predicting dates of the Lord’s return, etc., is not one of them ([1 Thessalonians 5:1, 2](#); [1 Timothy 6:14, 15](#)).

#### *What Do You Think?*

How do we eliminate hindrances that cause us to neglect relieving the suffering of others?

#### Talking Points for Your Discussion

Regarding emotional suffering

Regarding physical suffering

Regarding spiritual suffering

### C. What God Intends (vv. 8-10)

**8a. “So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—**

The Lord is moving from awareness to action. He is committed to delivering his people from Egyptian servitude. God is pictured as doing that by means of his own “mighty hand” in [Exodus 13:9](#); [Deuteronomy 4:34](#); [5:15](#); [6:21](#).

But the pending deliverance is not just *from* something but *to* something. God intends to bring his people to much different surroundings: *a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey*. This is a fulfillment of God’s earlier promise to Abraham in [Genesis 15:13, 14](#). The metaphor *milk and honey* speaks to the productivity and abundance awaiting the Israelites when they arrive in the new land. It will be a striking contrast to what came to be called the “iron-smelting furnace” known as Egypt ([Deuteronomy 4:20](#); [1 Kings 8:51](#)).

**8b. “the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.**

The most comprehensive list of the promised land’s inhabitants is found in [Genesis 15:19-21](#). The presence of these competing people groups in an area about the size of the state of Vermont highlights both the instability of the area and the challenge the Israelites have ahead of them.

These are peoples whom God will want the Israelites to eliminate. In so doing, the Israelites will be carrying out his judgment against them because of their extreme depravity ([Deuteronomy 7:1, 2](#)).

**9. “And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them.”**

The Lord repeats the fact of his awareness. The all-knowing God is about to teach both his people and the Egyptians that he is no mere tribal or territorial deity. *The Israelites* will eventually learn that their God is the God of all nations; the oppressive wickedness of Egypt draws God’s attention just as much as the well-being of Israel does.

### *WHAT GOD STILL SEES*

A wave of fear cascaded across America on December 7, 1941. Two months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which authorized his Secretary of War to designate areas as “military zones.” One result was the forcible relocation of more than 100,000 people of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast. Of the internees, 62 percent were American citizens.

Those held captive were released after the war, but it took decades for America to admit the injustice. In 1988, President Reagan signed a reparations act that acknowledged that “race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership” all played a role in what had been done.

Jacob’s family had gone willingly to Egypt to escape a famine. But 400 years later, they had become the victims of racial prejudice. The Egyptians feared that so many Israelites were a threat. So they enslaved the Hebrews to keep them under control ([Exodus 1](#)). These two episodes of history, separated by millennia, witness to the evil result of ungodly fear. But God is watching. —C. R. B.

**10. “So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”**

No doubt Moses is grateful to hear about the Lord’s concern for his people in bondage. Now, however, God is recruiting Moses to implement the plan!

## III. Supernatural Provision

([EXODUS 3:11, 12](#))

### A. Moses’ Reluctance (v. 11)

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

Moses may have been more than willing to lead the people out of Egypt when he killed the Egyptian ([Exodus 2:11-15](#)). But that was 40 years ago, when he held some clout as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter ([Acts 7:21-29](#); [Hebrews 11:24](#)). Now at age 80 ([Exodus 7:7](#)), he is but a lowly shepherd. Given his present status and age, surely he is not the kind of man whom God will send to confront the mighty Pharaoh and lead the Israelites to freedom, is he?

### *ANSWERING THE CALL*

The vast majority of those who run for elected office do so quite willingly. But that was not the case for Dwight D. Eisenhower following his success as Supreme Commander of Allied forces in Europe in World War II.

Before the 1948 presidential election, both major parties mounted “draft Eisenhower” movements, trying to persuade him to run. President Truman even offered to serve as vice president if Eisenhower would accept the Democratic nomination for president.

What convinced Eisenhower that he should run was the announcement by Senator Robert A. Taft of his own candidacy. Taft was an isolationist, but Eisenhower believed America needed to combat communism actively. Eisenhower finally affirmed, “I do not believe that you or I or anyone else has the right to state, categorically, that he will not perform any duty that his country might demand of him.”

Moses was also reluctant: he tried to fend off God’s “draft Moses” call by focusing on his own lack of ability, even disability (see [Exodus 3:13-4:13](#)). But God would not take *no* for an answer. He still doesn’t. —C. R. B.

*What Do You Think?*

How do we recognize the difference between humble, honest self-doubt and mere lack of desire to “get involved”—or worse?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

In circumstances that cry out for a leader

In circumstances that desperately need more follower-participants

### B. God’s Reassurance (v. 12)

**<sup>12</sup> And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”**

Like many people in the pages of Scripture (including individuals we are studying this quarter such as Gideon and Jeremiah), Moses comes to learn that his sense of unworthiness does not disqualify him from the Lord’s service; if anything, it makes him just right for God’s holy purpose. Moses asks, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?” Therein lies the basis of Moses’ state of readiness. The key to delivering the Israelites from their bondage is not in who Moses is but in who God is and the certainty of his promise to be with Moses.

Gideon ([Judges 6:16](#)) and Jeremiah ([Jeremiah 1:8](#)) both receive similar assurances from God before they embark on their respective ministries. The promise of God to be with his people is one of the most significant in all of Scripture. It reminds us that our God is not a far-removed, unfeeling, fickle deity who leaves his people to fend for themselves in a world suffering from the ravages of sin.

Ultimately this is demonstrated most powerfully in the birth of Jesus, who is Immanuel, meaning “God with us” ([Matthew 1:23](#)). This same Jesus will, by his own suffering at the cross, deliver humanity from the ravages of sin to allow us to enter the ultimate “promised land” of Heaven. There God will declare, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God” ([Revelation 21:3](#)).

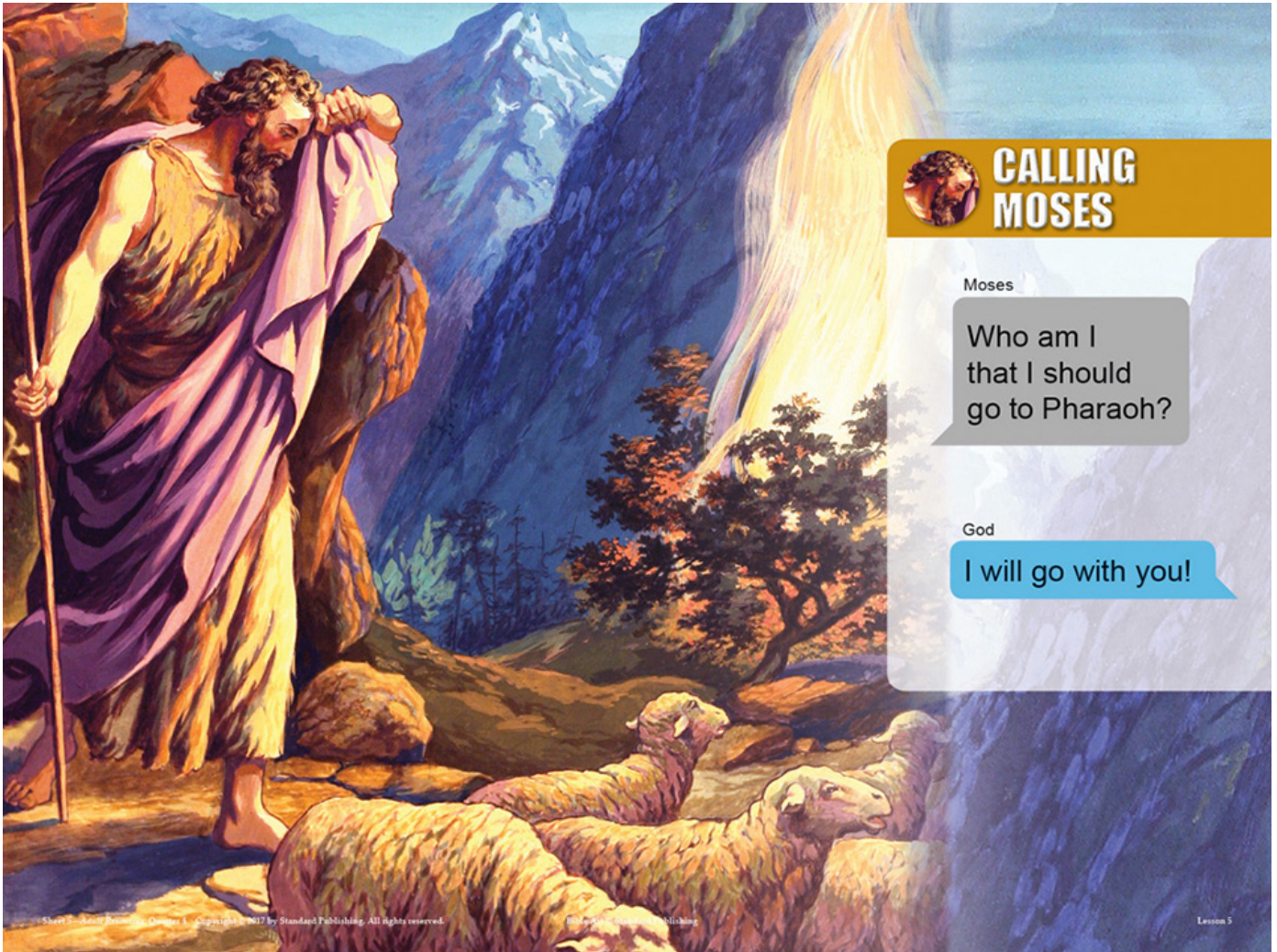
God also provides Moses with a *sign* as part of his assurance: *When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain*. Indeed, Horeb (or Mount Sinai) will be the place where God assembles his people to establish his covenant with them and give them his laws ([Exodus 19:2-6](#)).

*What Do You Think?*

How do we know when we should actively seek out service opportunities vs. letting others seek us to serve in those ministries?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- Regarding potential dangers of each approach
- Regarding potential benefits of each approach
- Regarding our motives
- Considering the nature of the opportunity
- Other



**Visual for Lesson 5.** Start a discussion by pointing to this visual as you ask, “In what circumstance did you realize most powerfully that God was with you?”

## Conclusion

### A. The With-ness in Our Witness

When God chose Moses for leadership, did Moses anticipate the thrill of victory or the agony of defeat? Confronting the leader of a great empire was quite a task! Like Moses, we too can be intimidated by the seeming impossibility of our tasks. We can be intimidated into silence by peer pressure, social media, our workplace atmosphere, and other sources of opposition. But before we ask *Who am I?* let us remember who God is.

Jesus concluded his commission to his disciples with these words: “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” ([Matthew 28:20](#)). Moses was called to lead Israel from physical bondage to freedom. The church is called to lead people from spiritual bondage to eternal life. The God who assured Moses of his presence with him assures us of the same thing now. Jesus has done the hardest work; we point others to him.

### B. Prayer

Father, let us take courage from knowing that your presence sustains us. May we never be so intimidated by troubled times that we lose sight of the one who is above us. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

### C. Thought to Remember

God’s promise to be with us still applies!



# INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

## Into the Lesson

As class begins, ask learners to engage in a quick game of Simon Says. Acting as Simon, give learners a series of simple commands (example: lift your right arm, nod your head). Precede some with “Simon says!”

As learners accidentally complete commands for which you didn’t specify “Simon says,” disqualify them from the game. When the game has dwindled to two or three learners, give an impossible command, such as “Simon says ‘fly,’” or “Simon says, ‘end world hunger!’”

Allow learners a moment to object to or puzzle over this. Then say, “Obviously, I know you aren’t able to do these things! But what if instead of Simon, God asked you to do the impossible?”

*Alternative.* Distribute copies of the “It’ll Never Happen” quiz from the reproducible page, which you can download. Have students work in pairs or small groups.

After either activity, lead into the Bible study by saying, “We have all faced situations in which we felt we were being asked to do the impossible. In today’s lesson, we will see Moses face this dilemma when God asked him to lead the enslaved Israelites to freedom. Let’s see how Moses reacted.”

## Into the Word

Divide your class into three groups, giving each one paper and pens. Each group will be assigned a section of the lesson text and should quickly draw a sketch that summarizes its contents.

Scripture assignments and some suggestions concerning sketches follow:

*Group 1*—Incredible Meeting ([Exodus 3:1-5](#))

Sketch ideas: a flock of sheep, since Moses was called to be a shepherd of another sort; a mountain, since this event took place on or near Mount Horeb; a burning bush, since that was used to indicate God’s presence.

*Group 2*—Impossible Demand ([Exodus 3:6-10](#))

Sketch ideas: eyes wide open, indicating God’s seeing the condition of his people; eyes crying, indicating the suffering of God’s people; milk and honey, indicating where God wanted Moses to lead Israel; pyramids, indicating from where God wanted Moses to lead his people.

*Group 3*—Supernatural Provision ([Exodus 3:11, 12](#))

Sketch ideas: a hand held up in refusal, since Moses did not feel qualified to perform the task; two sets of footprints, one large and one small, indicating that God would go with Moses; an altar, indicating that Israel was to come out of Egypt and worship God.

After groups finish, reassemble the class and have groups share their sketches and summaries of their Scripture assignments.

## Into Life

Close the class by giving each group member a few slips of paper and a pen. On each slip, ask students to write a word beginning with the letters *UN* that gives a reason why they cannot do what God asks (examples: feeling *UNqualified*, *UNwilling*, *UNable*, *UNtalented*, and/or *UNavailable* to serve).

Remind students that God’s answer to those excuses is his promise to be with them. Have students carefully tear the *UN* from their slips of paper, revealing what they are with God’s presence.

*Alternative.* Distribute copies of the “Who Am I That ...?” activity from the reproducible page. Have students review the common excuses people make for not serving God. Challenge them to check two or three items on the list, committing to no longer use those excuses.

