

FALL 2026

YOU®



HOW GOD SPEAKS

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THE BEAUTY OF
FORGIVENESS



A STUDY ON THE WAYS GOD SPEAKS TO BELIEVERS

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Most of us have had moments when we really wished God would just speak clearly—like a friend sitting across the table. I remember a season when I was trying to make an important decision, and no matter how much I prayed, I felt like heaven was silent. But one morning, while I was going through my normal routine, a verse I'd read dozens of times suddenly stood out in a new way. It wasn't loud or dramatic, but it was timely, and I knew God was gently nudging my heart. That experience reminded me that God does speak—just not always in the ways we expect. And learning to recognize His voice is something that grows over time as we walk with Him.

Some people believe that God no longer speaks. Others believe that God speaks all the time and says whatever they want to hear. The truth is that God does speak all the time, but He does this in a unique way. If you spend enough time talking

with someone, you learn to pick up patterns in their speech. You can quickly identify their tone, pitch, diction, and cadence. God's desire is that we spend time with Him and learn to identify His voice. Because God made us to bear His image, we can talk to Him, but not like we talk to other humans.

Instead, God does not leave us alone to try and figure out how to live life. In this study, we will examine how God Speaks:

- ...to His People
- ...through His Word
- ...through circumstances
- ...through His Church
- ...and we respond

We can discern God's voice, and as we seek to follow Him, He graciously provides avenues for us to know and follow Him.

SESSION 1

GOD SPEAKS TO HIS PEOPLE

Leader pages on pp. 102-105

THE POINT:
GOD LOVES US
ENOUGH TO SPEAK
TO US.

EXODUS 3:1-5,11-14; 4:28-31

Meanwhile, Moses was shepherding the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

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."

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

MEMORY VERSE

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 ancestors 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."

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^{4:28} Moses told Aaron everything the Lord had sent him to say, and about all the signs he had commanded him to do.

²⁹ Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the Israelites.

³⁰ Aaron repeated everything the Lord had said to Moses and performed the signs before the people.

³¹ The people believed, and when they heard that the Lord had paid attention to them and that he had seen their misery, they knelt low and worshiped.

KEYWORDS

Angel of the Lord (v.2)—The term angel means "messenger." The special title the angel of the Lord does not designate ordinary angels. The term becomes interchangeable with the Lord Himself in some biblical passages (see Judg. 6:11-16). In the book of Genesis the angel of the Lord acted to inform,

rebuke, protect, and provide success and guidance.

I AM WHO I AM (v.14)—God revealed the significance of His name *Yahweh*. The name *Yahweh*, typically translated as LORD using both large and small capital letters, is derived from the Hebrew verb "to be."

WHAT SHOULD BELIEVERS KNOW ABOUT HOW GOD COMMUNICATES TO HIS PEOPLE?

Relationships require effort and the people involved must agree to communicate regularly. The same conditions are needed for a good company to thrive, for a church to prosper, and for married couples to be joyful. But these conditions do not just appear out of thin air. Someone must take the initiative and vulnerably communicate, hoping their efforts are reciprocated. I find myself doing this every time I visit a new church or get invited to a social event.

In my younger days, I would often think that no one cared about my presence at church or the gathering because no one came and spoke to me. I would hang around, endure some of the awkwardness for a while, and swiftly exit once I felt it was appropriate. I have learned that situations like this can often be avoided when I take the initiative and engage with people. But I must force myself to act lovingly for the benefit of my neighbor. God always takes the initiative and does this for our benefit. He is not distant. He desires to bring us closer to Himself. Moses is just one of the many individuals who have experienced God's loving initiative.

God Initiates Conversation

// Exodus 3:1-5

You probably know Moses as a famous deliver of God's people. His importance is highlighted by the fact that the New Testament mentions him more frequently than any other Old Testament individual. But, as you might recall, the famous Moses was not always a hero. His first encounter with God took place while he was living in Midian on the run from the Egyptian authorities for murder. He acted as a vigilante trying to bring justice to his people, but they did not affirm him as a Hebrew (see Exodus 2:11). They viewed him as a murderer (see Exodus 2:14-15).

To make matters worse, when Moses arrived in Midian, he was identified as an Egyptian

(see Exodus 2:19). Moses ends up helping the daughters of Reuel, the priest of Midian, and is invited into his home. Reuel, also known as Jethro, is the first person in this section of Exodus to refer to Moses simply as a "man" (see Exodus 2:20). Thus, Moses's identity transitions from the label of "Hebrew" to "murderer" to "Egyptian" and finally to "man."

Each of us might have experienced similar identity issues based on decisions we made in the past and others' perceptions of us. The labels placed on Moses were arguably true. However, none of these labels replaced the one that was given to him at birth. Moses was a man, a human. At the time, he was an ordinary man working an ordinary job. While there is an unstated time gap that occurs between the birth of Moses's son Gershom (see Exodus 2:22) and Moses's encounter at the burning



THE POINT: GOD LOVES US ENOUGH TO SPEAK TO US.

bush, Stephen explains that Moses lived in Midian for 40 years (see Acts 7:30). Moses chose to live a humble life as a shepherd for his father-in-law's flock simply as a man. He left past labels behind.

Still, we might have expected God's first encounter with Moses to have come while he was at the peak of his life, living in the royal court of Egypt. We might have expected God to speak while Moses was on the run to reassure him of His presence. Instead, God was silent for 40 years. He did not speak to Moses for the first time until he was roughly 80 years old (see Exodus 7:7).

Moses was near the end of his life. But God spoke to Moses anyway. God wants to speak to us because we are his creation, because we are human. Our wealth, status, power, or youth have nothing to do with God's desire to communicate with us. Moses had lost all these things, and God still spoke to him. God took the initiative at the right time, in the right place, and while Moses was living the right way. This appears to be part of the reason that God chose to appear in a burning bush. The event is supernatural, but the bush is something that Moses would have seen every day. God chooses to speak to his people during the daily activities of life.

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS GOD SPEAKS TO YOU DURING DAILY ACTIVITIES?

God Authenticates His Voice

// Exodus 3:11-14

In Scripture, to know someone's name is to know their reputation. This is why God changing the name of Abram to Abraham was so important. We just read through all the negative labels and names that had been given to Moses. Moses was a man who was unworthy of meeting with God. We are all unworthy. Still, God chooses to commune with us. The divide between our unworthiness and God's holiness is greater than we can comprehend. This might cause us to doubt whether God really wants to speak with us. Why would He make Moses wait 80 years to hear from Him if He really cared? I can't answer this question directly. However, I can reaffirm that God does want to speak with us and that when He does speak, He will always prove that His voice is valid and true.

God caused the bush to break the normal rules of nature so that Moses would break from his normal routine. This is the first authentication of God's voice. We should expect a consistent pattern to transpire during our daily lives. The only thing that can change our daily habits and move them to be something better is God's voice. Just like the burning bush was something natural made supernatural, God's voice enhances our daily experiences.



DIGGING DEEPER A CALL OF REDIRECTION

Did you notice God's first words to Moses? God repeated Moses's name twice. This is a literary technique often used when God wants someone to redirect their attention. The angel of the Lord called Abraham's name twice right before Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:11). God wanted Abraham to notice the ram in the thicket. God repeated Jacob's name in a vision to reassure him that his family would be safe in Egypt (Genesis 46:2). Jacob needed to focus on moving to a new location so he could participate in God's plan of redemption. Samuel was only a boy when God spoke to him. After receiving some basic training from Eli, Samuel heard his name called twice as he responded to God's curse against the house of Eli (1 Samuel 3:10). In His conversation with Moses, God redirects Moses life and focus so that he can redeem His people in Egypt.

When have you been blessed by God's redirection in someone else's life?



The second authentication came when God provided Moses with the proper context for understanding His voice. God called Moses by his name to let him know that He was aware of his reputation (see Exodus 3:4). God reminded Moses that His holy nature needed to be respected (see Exodus 3:5). Then God summarized how He had communed with others in the past (see Exodus 3:6). When God's voice appears to us it will always affirm God's holy status while also affirming who we are to God. Realizing exactly what was going on, Moses hides in fear. This response should give us pause and is the third authentication. The burning bush did not scare Moses. Hearing God's voice and being told to remove his sandals did not cause Moses to want to hide. Instead, Moses does not become afraid until God formally introduces Himself as the God of his fathers.

This is the moment Moses came to realize exactly how unworthy he was to be able to have this encounter. He was not just meeting with a messenger of God, or a priest. God had shown up to meet with him directly.

DOES THE WAY YOU APPROACH GOD REVEAL HOW YOU VALUE HIM?

This is why Moses says, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" How could an outcast refugee Hebrew born into Egyptian culture who chose to become a murderer be able to go before Pharaoh? This seems like the least likely scenario to lead to a positive outcome for the Hebrew people. Moses's first attempt to liberate his people had led to his

rejection, why would a second attempt be any different? This attempt was different because this time God was with him. Moses learned how to deal with injustice God's way. God guided Moses just like He did with those He spoke to in the past.

God Validates His Servants

// Exodus 4:28-31

The importance of this last point cannot be underestimated. God not only validates His voice. He also validates those who pass His word on to others. We might be led to think that God spoke to us because we are special or holier than someone else. We might want to hear God's audible voice so that we can prove to others, and to ourselves, that we have a genuine connection to God. Reasons like these will cause us to undervalue the reality of hearing from God. God is always doing more than just dealing with our own insecurities. God wants to help us deal with these issues, but God does not stop there.

We don't need to be special to have a genuine connection to God. We just need to be human and humble. Human in that we seek to bear the image of God in our actions, thoughts, and words. This is God's original purpose for humanity. Humble in that we need to remember our place before God. We are all just "men" like Moses and should reverently seek to encounter God.

Now, Moses was the main character in this story, but Aaron played an important role as well. Moses came up with five different excuses for why he could not be the one to deliver God's message to Pharaoh (see Exodus 3:11-4:17). God did not let him off the hook. Instead, God sent Aaron to help validate Moses's experience and His message. We should expect the same to happen to us when we hear from God. God expects us to be part of a local church. The people in this congregation should know us well enough to validate our reputation and experiences.

When Moses hears God's voice, and agrees to obey, he does not become prideful and demanding. He instead humbly requests to leave the service of his father-in-law so that he can respond to God's voice. He then explained everything that had transpired to Aaron before delivering God's

THE POINT: GOD LOVES US ENOUGH TO SPEAK TO US.

message to the final recipients, the enslaved Hebrews in Egypt. We should want to hear from God because we want to encourage ourselves and others to worship Him. This is what the Hebrews did when Moses delivered God's message to them. If I tell others what I heard from God and they only seek to honor me, I have missed the point.

God was on the move, so Moses got on the move. And once he was on God's agenda, he moved other people onto God's agenda with him. The people of God had concluded that He had forgotten them. They were discouraged. Moses and Aaron contradicted that flawed perception. Often, God will confront our inadequate or incorrect perspectives with a clear and compelling picture of the way things really are.

When God speaks it will be to call people to Himself. "The people believed" (v. 31). They worshiped God. They were filled with joy by the good news Moses preached to them. Has God spoken to you? Then you can be sure that He intends for you to act on what He has said. Obedience to God is the doorway for you to experience everything He intends for your life.

HOW WILL YOU RESPOND WHEN GOD CALLS YOU TO SERVE?

DID YOU KNOW?

You have probably heard someone say, "God works in mysterious ways." Christians have always affirmed that God is at work bringing redemption to people even when we are unaware of His exact actions. It can be hard to trust God while we wait. Often skeptics doubt God's very existence because, according to them, He does not respond quickly or directly enough. Christians should remember that God is often slow to act because He is just as merciful as He is purposeful. God spoke to Aaron long before Moses saw the burning bush (Exodus 4:14). In perfect conditions the journey from Egypt to Horeb would have taken several weeks. God orchestrated the reuniting of Moses with his brother by calling on everyone involved to trust Him. They had to be obedient at the journey's beginning, when only part of the plan was revealed, to see the results. God does not solve every mystery, but He does support His people.

Biblical Truth: God is always at work, even if we don't see it.

What are some ways you can remember that God is working things out for our good and His glory?

LIVE IT

Can you recall a moment when your curiosity caused you to encounter God?

God initiated the situation that led to His conversation with Moses, but God did not speak until He saw that Moses had decided to turn aside. Moses could have missed hearing directly from God had he placed his commitment to his routine over his curiosity to see the source behind this supernatural event. God wants us to explore the world around us and find ways to be salt and light.

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- **Pause.** Spend time considering ways to encounter God more in your daily activities. You might need to adjust your routine to accomplish this.
- **Reflect.** Pick a Bible verse that reminds you to slow down and reflect on what God might be doing in your life and community. Memorize that verse this week.
- **Reach Out.** Invite someone to church or Bible study. Encourage them by explaining God's desire to speak to His people. Help them know that you are willing to walk with them as they seek to hear from God.

DAILY READINGS

1. NO MORE FEAR //1 KINGS 19:12

In this passage of Scripture, Elijah was running for his life. God spoke directly to him in the cave that he was hiding in. God asked him what he was doing there; He wanted Elijah to know that he did not need to hide. God could have spoken to him in the fierce wind, the loud earthquake, or the consuming fire; but instead, He spoke to Elijah in a soft whisper. God's whisper has power. God told Elijah to stop hiding and do what he was called to do. God has a plan for our lives; we must silence the noise of our fears so we can hear His still small voice. We do not have to live in fear, when we live in faith.

Father, allow us to be so close to You that we hear Your still small voice.

2. HIDDEN TRUTH //JEREMIAH 33:3

Can you think of a situation you've been in when you called everyone in your contact list, and no one answered? That's a hard position to be in. Have you ever had difficulty understanding something and asked someone to explain it and they couldn't? Do you remember how you felt? Jeremiah was a prophet to the nation of Judah. God spoke to him directly and told him he could call on Him and He would answer him. He told Jeremiah that He would reveal to him things that were not only great but things that he had not known before. God not only answers when we call Him in prayer, He reveals things we can't get from anyone else.

Lord, thank You for always answering our call.

3. FAILURE-PROOF DIRECTIONS//PSALM 32:8

I have a terrible sense of direction. I can't go anywhere without using my GPS. I'm turned around and headed in the wrong direction when I don't. The bad thing about that is GPS is sometimes wrong or not updated. It has taken me to construction sites and closed roads. This passage of Scripture is encouraging because God assures us that no matter what we go through in life we can be confident that He will instruct us and teach

us in the way we should go. He will counsel us and keep His eye on us. There is no greater source of direction in life than God. His directions never fail.

Lord, teach us to follow Your instructions in all areas of our lives.

4. RIGHTEOUS INSTRUCTIONS // 2 TIMOTHY 3:16

The Word of God is our instruction book for life. This passage of Scripture reminds us that God is the author of the Bible no matter what translation you read, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness." Through His careful instruction manual He speaks to us, directs us, teaches us, corrects us, and helps us become holy like Him. His Word speaks truth. Unlike people, we can count on the Word of God to speak truth to us. God is our Father. Just as our earthly father corrects us when we are wrong, our heavenly Father corrects us, so we are trained to be righteous. God wants us to be equipped to do the work He called us to do.

God, thank You for guiding our lives to Your truth through Your Word.

5. CUTTING EDGE WORD //HEBREWS 4:12

The author of Hebrews describes God's Word as living and active. Being active means it has power to change things and cause growth. His Word is sharper than any two edge sword. The author wants us to know that the Word can do what no human or human made instrument can do. God's Word cuts through deception to reveal truth. It reaches the deepest parts of us to include our will, emotions, and inner being to expose our hidden motives, sin, and weaknesses. This divine dissection exposes our true selves. This is not done to condemn, but to bring us to healing, confession, and repentance, allowing God's Spirit to work. God loves us and His Word draws us back to Him.

Lord, thank You for Your Word that cuts to reveal truth and causes us to grow.

LEADER GUIDE

UNIT 1: HOW GOD SPEAKS

INTRODUCTION

The best life to live is the one lived according to God's plan, but how do we know what that plan is? What if I have the best intentions but still miss the mark on following God's plan for me? Thankfully, God does not leave us alone to try and figure out how to live life.

Nor does He simply leave it in our hands to hope we get it right in finding His specific plan for us. We can discern God's voice, and as we seek to follow Him, He graciously provides avenues for us to know and follow Him.

Writer Bio

Valerie Burton

is a writer, public speaker, and serves as assistant director in the Sunday School ministry at Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, LA. Valerie is a registered nurse and certified diabetes care specialist. Her passion is to make the Word of God a reality in believer's lives.

BEFORE YOU TEACH

Speak Lord

In preparation for this week's session, Research the many diverse methods that God used to speak two people throughout the Bible. Note who he spoke to, how he spoke whether audible, dreams and visions, through the prophets, or nature. Reflect on how you hear God and speak to you in your day-to-day actions. Pray that God will increase your desire to hear Him speak through His word.

Consider Questions

This unit focuses on the ways God speaks to His people. As you prepare to teach, consider the questions learners may ask about how God speaks. Explore the questions you may have of the Scripture passage. Most likely learners will have the same thoughts and concerns. Research answers and be prepared to share your findings should the opportunity present itself. Pray that God will help you fully believe that He desires to commune with you.

LOOK BACK

As you begin this week's unit about how God speaks to us, reflect on the previous lesson about loving others as God loves us. Allow volunteers to share their experience with last week's session. Explain that today's lesson focuses on how God initiates communion with his people. Encourage learners to reflect on the fact that God loves us enough to speak to us and we should share that love with others.

TEACHING PLAN

INTRODUCTION

DO: Direct learners to the "Object Lesson" (p. 104) and use the activity to introduce the lesson. Invite volunteers to share their childhood nicknames and share why they received that name. Have fun while sharing.

EXPLAIN: For most of us, our childhood nicknames typically identified with a personality trait, habit, or outward appearance. They also may have been shorter versions of our proper names. Share that in biblical times names were very important. They represented a person's character, destiny, or relationship to God. More importantly, God reveals who He is through His names.

PACK ITEM: Display **Pack Item 1, "How God Speaks"** poster, to introduce the major theme of this study, along with the focus of each session.

TRANSITION: Invite a learner to read the introduction. Point out that God initiated conversation with Moses by revealing who he is. Recruit a learner to read **The Point: "God loves us enough to speak to us,"** and the session question: **"What should believers know about how God communicates to His people?"**

DIG INTO THE TEXT

God Initiates Conversation

// Exodus 3:1-5

GUIDE: Use the commentary (p. 104) to give insight on the setting of verses 1-5. Point out that the events leading up to Moses' encounter with God were his life experiences that prepared him for the relationship God would now initiate.

READ: Invite a learner to read the first paragraph that begins "you probably know ..." (p. 12). Explain that in Exodus 2:22 Moses also gives some insight into his struggle with his identity when he gave the reason for the name he chose for his son.

ASK: "How does your internal sense of self impact your actions?"

READ: Invite a learner to read the Exodus 3:1-5.

ASK: "Why do you think God chose a burning bush, not being consumed, as a means to get Moses's attention?"

EMPHASIZE: Point out how God intervened in an ordinary circumstance and revealed himself to Moses through fire. Explain that fire represents an

THE POINT: GOD LOVES US ENOUGH TO SPEAK TO US.

important symbol in the bible that is associated with God's presence.

DISCUSS: Invite a learner to read the paragraph from the learner page that begins "Still we might ..." (p. 13) and discuss the unexpected way God chose to speak with Moses.

ASK: "How does it encourage your faith to know there are no limitations in God's desire to communicate with you?"

DIGGING DEEPER: Invite a learner to read "Digging Deeper" (p. 13) to explain the significance of God calling Moses' name twice.

God Authenticates His Voice

// Exodus 3:11-14

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Exodus 3:11-15 and encourage the group to pay attention to God's response to Moses.

GUIDE: Using the commentary (p. 105), explain Moses's disposition toward returning to Egypt. Emphasize that his view was based on his past experience, not on God's ability to give him success. Invite learners to discuss God's responses to Moses. Highlight how God did not respond to Moses' perceived inabilities. God responded to Moses' objections with the promise to be with him and to return to Mt. Horeb.

SAY: "Verses 11-15 focuses on Moses's feeling inadequate, and rightly so, based on his past experiences; versus God's sufficiency. Every promise God made countered Moses's self-doubt. In the same way, when we feel inadequate in any situation; we can always counter those feelings with the truth of God's word."

DO: On a board or tear sheet make the following list of things that make us feel inadequate. You may add to the list. For each inadequacy, invite learners to share a verse from God's word that would counter it. Some examples are listed below.

1. I feel weak - 2 Corinthians 12:9.
2. I don't know what to do - James 1:5
3. I feel alone- Isaiah 41:10

ASK: "How can we apply the principle of focusing on God's sufficiency (I AM) rather than our own shortcomings when facing life's challenges?"

DISCUSS: Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins with "This is why..." (p. 14) and allow learners to discuss the difference it makes when we are being led by God in difficult circumstances.

EXPLAIN: Read verse 15. Explain that our ever-present Father had demonstrated His faithfulness in the past to the Patriarchs, to Moses, and He will do the same for us.

God Validates His Servants

// Exodus 4:28-31

READ: Invite a learner to read Exodus 4: 28-31.

GUIDE: Use the commentary for verses 28-31 (p. 104) to explain that this was a critical moment where God reveals his plan for their deliverance through Moses and Aaron. Even though Moses was reluctant, God gives him Aaron as a helper showing that God will provide and equip his people for his calling.

ASK: "How has God provided for you in times of feeling inadequate to do what he has called you to do?"

SUMMARIZE: Moses obeyed the voice of God. Once back in Egypt, Moses and Aaron gather the elders of the Israelites. They tell the people the news that the Lord had seen their misery and has promised to deliver them from their bondage. In response the people worshiped the Lord.

ASK: "How will you respond when you experience God's presence or concern in your own life?"



PACK ITEM 1



PACK ITEM 2



OBJECT LESSON

DO: Bring a childhood photo of yourself or of someone learners will know and display it in front of the class.

DISCUSS: Give some hints and allow learners to guess what your/person pictured nickname was. Share how important names were in biblical times and how important they are to God.

By revealing His name, God initiates communion and makes Himself accessible to his people. Share how we are able to have a deeper understanding of who God is by the way he reveals Himself to us.

CHALLENGE: This week, when you hear someone being called by their nickname; be reminded of how much God desires to reveal himself to you. Live life in such a way that displays the privilege of hearing from our Father, the one true God.

CLOSE THE SESSION

PACK ITEM: Make copies of **Pack Item 2, the "How God Speaks Memory Verses"** handout, and distribute to the group to help them memorize Bible verses that will help them hear God speak.

LIVE IT: Encourage learners to consider this truth as they spend time applying the "Live It" (p. 15) section to their lives. Encourage learners to contact you for any follow-up conversations they may need to have regarding the lesson.

PRAY: Lead learners in a time of prayer. Pray that they will know with certainty that God desires to speak with His people.

COMMENTARY

EXODUS 3:1-5

Connection to the Point. God initiated a conversation with Moses through a burning bush.

The Setting. Moses, adopted and named by Pharaoh's daughter, was born to Hebrew parents Amram and Jochebed. When Moses had grown up and saw an Egyptian taskmaster striking a Hebrew, Moses killed the Egyptian. Moses fled to Midian, where he shepherded the flock of Reuel, also called Jethro. Meanwhile God had not forgotten His suffering people. He heard their cries in Egypt. And remembering His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God determined to act to deliver them (Ex. 1–2).

Verse 1. Jethro, the priest of Midian. Jethro, whose name means "superiority," was Moses's father-in-law. His name is elsewhere identified as Reuel (Exodus 2:18). While the Scripture does not explicitly state the name of the deity Jethro served, he recognized the Lord (Yahweh) as greater than all gods (18:9-11). *Horeb, the mountain of God.* Horeb is an alternate designation for Mount Sinai.

Verses 2-3. *The angel of the LORD.* The term angel means "messenger." Angels are created beings with the primary function of worshiping and serving God. The special title the angel of the LORD does not designate ordinary angels. The term becomes interchangeable with the Lord Himself in some biblical passages. Many Bible scholars have concluded that the angel of the LORD is the Second Person of the Trinity, later incarnated as the Lord Jesus Christ. *Fire.* Fire represents an important theological symbol in both the Old and New Testaments. It is associated with God's presence, divine judgment, and purification. In the Old Testament, fire functioned as the primary way in which God made His presence known as well as exercised His judgment. He revealed His presence to Moses in the burning bush, and later He came down on Mount Sinai in fire.

Verses 4-5. "Holy ground" (v. 5). One major theme in Exodus is that of the divine Presence. Because he stood on holy ground at the burning bush, Moses was to keep a proper distance and remove his sandals. It was customary for people to remove their shoes when they entered the presence of someone superior to themselves. Mount Horeb, or Sinai, was the Lord's mountain (see v. 1), so the ground itself was holy.

EXODUS 3:11-15

Connection to the Point. Moses acknowledged God and wanted to know His name.

Verse 11. *God.* This Hebrew word for God is often transliterated (written substituting English letters for their equivalent Hebrew letters) as 'Elohim. While it is plural in form, it is not intended to be a true plural when used of God. The term consistently appears with a singular verb. The plural form emphasizes the one true God's majesty. The name suggests that there is a mystery to the Creator God that humanity can never fully fathom. God remains the absolute, infinite Lord over both creation and history. "*Who am I that I should go?*" Upon hearing the Lord's call to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, Moses began to protest the assignment. During his years in Midian, Moses evidently had learned humility and a healthy distrust of his own power and ability.

Verses 12-13. God responded to Moses's initial protest by promising His presence. Moses would not face this daunting task alone. The value of this promise depends on who the Lord is. Moses would be accompanied by the all-powerful God who created the universe. God gave Moses a sign to confirm His call. The sign God gave Moses in Exodus 3:12 related to the future. Moses must act in faith on God's call. The assurance would come later after he led the people out of Egypt and brought them to Mount Sinai.

Verses 14-15. "I AM WHO I AM" (v. 14). Here God revealed the significance of His name Yahweh. The name was known previously (Gen. 15:1-2), but Moses and biblical writers after him used it more often. The name Yahweh, typically translated as

LORD using both large and small capital letters, is derived from the Hebrew verb "to be." In Exodus 3:14 God stated His name in the first person verbal form. It refers to His being the Creator and Sustainer of all that exists. "*The God of your ancestors*" (vv. 13,15). Moses anticipated that the Israelites would question the basis of authority on which he approached them. God responded by equating His name Yahweh with the God of the patriarchs. Yahweh, or the Lord, is the same God whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had worshiped.

EXODUS 4:28-31

Connection to the Point. Moses acted on what God told him to do.

Verses 28-29. The Hebrew word translated elders can designate either people who are aged or people who have authority. In Exodus 4:29 the term apparently designates a ruling body. The Old Testament does not specify the age required to qualify a person for membership in this body. Nor does the Scripture provide details of appointment to this group. Seventy elders witnessed the covenant ceremony at Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:1,9).

Verses 30-31. The Lord had responded to Moses's plea that the Lord send someone else by allowing Aaron to accompany Moses as his spokesperson (vv. 14-16). In his role as spokesman, Aaron would be able to provide immediate credibility with the Israelite elders, while Moses would be viewed as an outsider. The Hebrew verb, *believed*, is written substituting English letters for the equivalent Hebrew letters as 'aman. We usually end our prayers with the related term amen. The basic idea of the verb is firmness or certainty. The verb, knelt, low, often rendered "bowed down," appears rarely in the Old Testament. Its action indicates reverence and submission. The Israelites responded in this way when the Lord initiated the Passover (Ex. 12:27). The verb worshiped conveys the concept of bowing down or prostrating oneself before God in worship.

Note: Additional commentary can be found at you.lifeway.com.

HOW GOD SPEAKS

The best life to live is the one lived according to God's plan, but how do we know what that plan is? What if I have the best intentions but still miss the mark on following God's plan for me? Thankfully, God does not leave us alone to try and figure out how to live life. Nor does He simply leave it in our hands to hope we get it right in finding His specific plan for us. We can discern God's voice, and as we seek to follow Him, He graciously provides avenues for us to know and follow Him.

THE BEAUTY OF FORGIVENESS

One of the greatest needs in our culture and inside the church is the need for forgiveness. We all need forgiveness from God, and we often need the forgiveness of others. While we crave forgiveness, we often struggle with extending forgiveness to others. The lack of forgiveness among believers can be one of Satan's greatest ploys in seeking to weaken the witness of God's people. As Paul addressed the matter of forgiveness, he wrote, "Anyone you forgive, I do too. For what I have forgiven —if I have forgiven anything — it is for your benefit in the presence of Christ, so that we may not be taken advantage of by Satan. For we are not ignorant of his schemes" (2 Cor. 2:10-11).

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