

Chapter 4: Deliverance

Key Question: How can we nurture faith rather than doubts?

The Call

Pages 43–47

God warned Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved and mistreated in a foreign land for four hundred years, after which he would bring them to the Promised Land.¹ As we pick up the story, four hundred years have passed since Joseph's family came to Egypt, and the people were indeed suffering under Pharaoh.

1. (a) In what ways did Pharaoh oppress the Israelites (Exodus 1:11–16, 22)? (b) Do you think the Israelites would have been willing to follow Moses out of Egypt if their lives were prosperous and comfortable? Why or why not? (c) If possible, briefly describe a time God used difficulties to guide you to make a change.

When Moses was born, Pharaoh's daughter rescued him from the Nile and raised him as her son. When he grew up, he killed an Egyptian who mistreated a Hebrew² and fled from Pharaoh to Midian. That Pharaoh eventually died, but the new Pharaoh continued mistreating the Hebrews, and the people cried out to God in their misery.

¹ Genesis 15:13–15.

² At this time, the Israelites (descendants of Israel) were often called *Hebrews* (descendants of Eber, Genesis 11:14). After the Assyrian exile they were also called Jews (from Judah).

One day on Mount Horeb,³ Moses saw a bush that appeared to be on fire without being consumed by the flames. As he approached to see this wonder, the Lord God called to him from the bush.

2. (a) How did God first identify himself to Moses (Exodus 3:6)? (b) What had God seen and heard, and what was his reaction (3:7, 9)? (c) What did God plan to do about what he had seen (3:8)? (d) What do you learn about God from this passage?

Moses asked God his name.⁴

3. (a) What name did God give himself (Exodus 3:14)? (b) What does this name tell you about God? (c) Whom did God tell Moses to say sent him (3:15)?

The Hebrew word translated *LORD* in capital letters is “Yhvh,”⁵ which means the “Self-Existent or Eternal,”⁶ and is the third-person form of the Hebrew for “I AM.”

³ Mount Horeb is probably another name for Mount Sinai.

⁴ The Hebrews lived among Egyptians who worshipped many gods.

God told Moses he was sending him to Pharaoh to bring the Israelites out of Egypt into the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses asked what to do if the Israelites didn't believe God had sent him—a valid concern—and God enabled him to give miraculous signs.

4. (a) What was Moses' reaction (Exodus 4:10)? (b) What was God's response (11–12)? (c) What do you learn from this about how God equips us to do that which he calls us to do? (d) Is there anything you think God may be calling you to do that you don't feel equipped for yet? If so, what encouragement can you take to step out in faith as Moses did?

The First Signs

Pages 47–50

Initially God allowed Moses' brother Aaron to accompany him and speak for him. Moses and Aaron met with the Israelite elders, told them all God had said, and showed them signs as proof. The elders believed and worshipped God in gratitude for his concern over their misery.

But when Moses told Pharaoh that God said, "Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert," Pharaoh refused. He accused the Hebrews of laziness and told them he'd no longer supply the straw they needed to make bricks: they'd have to search for their own straw to make the same number of bricks. The slave drivers beat the Israelites for not meeting their impossible quota, and the Israelites blamed Moses.⁷

Dismayed, Moses asked God why things got worse instead of better when he did what God told him to do.

⁵ Or "Yhwh"; sometimes transliterated "Jehovah."

⁶ *Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary* (Austin: WORDsearch, 2008).

⁷ Exodus 5:21.

5. (a) What did God tell Moses to tell the Israelites (Exodus 6:6)? (b) What do we learn about God from the fact that he planned to judge Egypt for mistreating the Israelites? (c) What relationship did God want to have with them (6:7a)? (d) Once they saw God redeem them mightily, what would they know (6:7b)?

God promised to redeem them with mighty acts of judgment so they would have no doubt that he was God.

6. (a) Where was God going to take them (Exodus 6:8)? (b) What comfort might they have taken in being reminded of God's promise to their forefathers? (c) Briefly describe the last time you were reminded of one of God's promises. How did that encourage you?

But the discouraged Israelites wouldn't listen to Moses. God told Moses to approach Pharaoh again. Moses replied, "If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me?" Despite his misgivings, he obeyed God and went.

As a sign to Pharaoh that God sent Moses, Aaron threw down his staff and it became a snake. Pharaoh's magicians did likewise, but Aaron's staff swallowed the other staffs, showing God's power was greater.

7. (a) What was Pharaoh's reaction to Moses' repeated call to let the people go (Exodus 7:13)? (b) Had God called Moses to convince Pharaoh, or to simply say what God told him to say? (c) When you share a truth about God, are you ever discouraged when people don't respond positively? Why or why not? (d) Moses obeyed even though he felt inadequate; briefly describe a time you obeyed God in something you didn't feel capable of doing and saw him come through in an amazing way.

God's judgment on Egypt now began. Nine times Moses went before Pharaoh and announced a plague unless Pharaoh let God's people go: the Nile turned to blood, frogs encroached, gnats clung, flies swarmed, livestock died, boils infected, hail destroyed, locusts devoured, and darkness overcame.⁸ Nine times Pharaoh refused.⁹

⁸ The Egyptians believed in many gods, each of which had power over aspects of nature. These plagues showed the God who sent Moses—the God of Abraham—had the true power over all of nature.

⁹ Pharaoh hardened his own heart after the first five plagues. After that, his judgment was sealed and God hardened his heart.

The Passover

Pages 50–52

After the ninth plague, Pharaoh told Moses if he ever saw him again, he would kill him. Moses announced the tenth and final plague: at midnight, every firstborn male of Egypt would die.

Moses told the Israelites what they must do to escape the plague that night.

8. (a) What kind of animal were the Israelites to slaughter (Exodus 12:21)? (b) What were they to do with the animal's blood (12:22)? (c) What would happen when the destroyer came to Egypt (12:23)?

The Israelites followed Moses' command.

9. (a) What happened at midnight (Exodus 12:29–30)? (b) How did Pharaoh respond to the tenth plague (12:31–32)? (c) What indication is there in Pharaoh's words that he realized God was greater than he?

Judgment came, and the nation which had murdered Hebrew sons now lost their own.

The Deliverance

Pages 52–55

The Lord led the Israelites in a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. Meanwhile, Pharaoh changed his mind about letting the Hebrew slaves leave. He pursued them with chariots, horsemen, and troops, finally hemming them in next to a sea. The Israelites cried out in fear.

10. (a) What did Moses tell the Israelites to do (Exodus 14:13–14)? (b) What would the Lord do (14:14)? (c) What do we learn about God from this?

11. Summarize how the Lord fought for the Israelites (Exodus 14:15–29).

Something important happened that day: The Israelites learned that the Lord was God and had power to save.

12. (a) In whom did the Israelites put their trust (Exodus 14:30–31)? (b) Would they have trusted as much if Pharaoh had let them go easily so there was no need for a miraculous salvation? (c) Word of God's

miraculous salvation spread all around;¹⁰ what did that tell people of other nations? (d) If possible, describe a difficulty you went through that helped others see God's glory.

The Journey

Pages 55–57

The angel of the Lord led the Israelites towards Mount Horeb, where Moses had encountered the burning bush. But the people's memory was short. They focused not on their destination, but on the difficulties of their journey.

13. (a) As they trekked through the desert, what did the people do (Exodus 16:2)? (b) What things slipped from their memory that enabled them to speak as they did (16:3)?¹¹ (c) We're on a journey to the heavenly Promised Land. What things slip from our memory when we grumble against God?

¹⁰ Joshua 2:10–11.

¹¹ Consider what they'd cried out for God to rescue them from, what they'd seen of God's power and care, and where God promised to take them.

In the midst of barren desert, God caused manna to appear each morning to feed the multitude. Once again, God proved he was able and willing to carry out his promise to deliver the people to the Promised Land.

Fed by manna, the people traveled for three months to Mount Horeb.¹² When nearly there, the angel of the Lord led the Israelites to camp in a waterless spot, and they again doubted God.

14. (a) Instead of asking God for water or patiently waiting, what did the people do (Exodus 17:2)? (b) What question did the people ask that tested God (17:7)? (c) How had God already answered that question? (d) Of what else did they accuse Moses and God (17:3)? (e) Was that a valid accusation? Why or why not?

15. (a) How did the Israelites' grumbling show lack of faith? (b) What could they have done to nurture their faith instead of their doubts?

¹² Exodus 19:1.

There near the base of Mount Horeb—the holy Mountain of God—God instructed Moses to strike a rock, and when he did, out flowed water.

16. (a) How did Moses' obedience to God grow his faith between the time God first called him from the burning bush on Horeb until he returned to the mountain? (b) What is a practical way you can nurture your faith today, based on what you learned from Moses and the Israelites?

God told the people to commemorate their deliverance with an annual feast called Passover. Families reenacted events and ate a meal of an unblemished roasted lamb, bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast.¹³ Parents told their children how on the day of Egypt's judgment, the

¹³ Exodus 12:5–8. Moses interspersed instructions about the annual ceremony with the actual telling of the story.

destroyer passed over all who trusted in lamb's blood so that God might deliver them from slavery to Egypt.

God commanded the Israelites to celebrate this Passover yearly so that they would remember his power to deliver ... and so that they would recognize the true Passover Lamb when he came. For there will be a final Judgment Day in which another destroyer will pass over all who have trusted in that Lamb's blood so that God might deliver them from slavery to sin and death. That story is coming, but first we continue with God's revealing of himself to Abraham's descendants.