

Exodus: What We Mean When We Say God
Part 5: Dealing with Discouragement
Exodus 6

By Pastor David Fields

I. The Name and the Promises

The Name

God answers Moses' in his discouragement by pointing to *his* strength and his Name: "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of ***my mighty hand*** he will let them go; because of ***my mighty hand*** he will drive them out of his country." (Ex 6:1)

"God also said to Moses, **"I am the Lord."** And he uses the divine name *Yahweh*, again. And then he reaches back to the past: "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty [*El-Shaddai*], but by my name the Lord [*Yahweh*] I did not make myself known to them." – Exodus 6:3.

The ways God deals with the doubts and discouragement that Moses feels is by bringing him back to God's central nature and character.

"When we are afraid. When we are doubting ourselves. When we are suffering. What we need is not a pep talk. What we need is not someone to blow sunshine at us. What we need is a deeper understanding – a more intimate encounter with our God." – Paul Carter

The Seven Promises

"**I am the Lord**, and **I will** bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. **I will** free you from being slaves to them, and **I will** redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. **I will** take you as my own people, and **I will** be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And **I will** bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, Isaac and to Jacob. **I will** give it to you as a possession. **I am the Lord.**" – Exodus 6:6-8

As the story unfolds God will make good on every single one of them. And not only then, but this first exodus points to how these same kinds of promises are ours as well. Like, God keeps keeping ***these promises to us***.

Take Home One: Are you afraid? Are you doubting yourself? Are you suffering? Are you discouraged? The first thing this tells us is to look again; look at who it is who loves you and leads you; to the God who has acted powerfully to rescue you through Jesus and promises us a home with him forever.

When we do, we can say with Paul: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." – Romans 8:18

II. Even When We Can't See It, God is Still Working

Now, Moses might have been encouraged by this fresh reminder of God's nature and name, or at least he's obedient to report the Name and promises of God to the people again. But look again: the narrator tells us "...but didn't listen because of their discouragement and harsh labour." – Exodus 6:9

It's hard for people to even listen to good news when they are hurting, or hungry, or overwhelmed by life circumstances.

Take Home Two: We often need to meet physical needs before someone can hear the news of Jesus. Mission that is faithful will do both.

"Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his country." – Exodus 6:10

God is still at work on behalf of his disheartened people, who are so discouraged they can't even hear the promises, he is still working.

Take Home Three: Even when you can't hear it. Even when you can't see it, or feel it, God is working.

III. Feel the _____ and Do It Anyways

"If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips [Hebrew: "I am uncircumcised of lips"]?" – Exodus 6:12

Moses' expression isn't just about a speech impediment. It's a deeper sense that he lacks the spiritual fitness for this sacred task. It's not just "I can't speak well," but "I'm overwhelmed by this sacred calling."

Take Home Four: God works with us, even when we don't feel we are worthy of the task. "God doesn't call the qualified. He qualifies the called."

Take Home Five: God made us to be resilient. God will call us to do hard things and enable us to do it in his strength. "Feel the fear and do it anyways." "Feel the inadequacy and do it anyway." "Feel the sense of "I'm not worthy to do this", do it anyway."

But this isn't just "you can do it!" It's still not just a "pep talk." We do it because of who God is. Because of *his mighty arm*.

IV. Linked into the Bigger Story

The Genealogy

- 1) Through this genealogy God is saying, “I’m still working in this. Things are not out of control.” By linking Moses and Aaron to the bigger story. See, back in God’s promises to Abraham in Genesis 15 God says to him: “But I will punish the nation that they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.” – Genesis 15:14
- 2) This genealogy is the hinge which marks a turn in the story – where all human efforts are obviously not going to work. And so begins God’s dramatic intervention.

Freedom for God’s people won’t be a function of Moses’ ability to persuade. It will be utterly a work of God. God’s “mighty hand”.

V. Mighty Hands

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” – Matthew 5:3

“Blessed are those who recognize their need for God.” (NLT), those who come to the point of knowing “I need *his* rescue.”

See, as the biblical story moves forward, this same “mighty God”, will let his “mighty hands”, his literal *hands*, be nailed to a cross out of love for you.

We look to the cross and see Jesus – *Yahweh in the flesh* – with his mighty hands, that were pierced for us. Inviting us. This is God’s ultimate “I am for you.” His great big, “you are mine – my beloved.”

Take Home Six: What do we do with our fear, our worry, our disappointments, or sense of inadequacy? We can still “get to work” with what God has called us to because we belong to him – are marked by his name. “They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.” – Revelation 22:4

Life Group Discussion and Reflection:

Open Up

Though most of us will never have to deal with the level of anguish and mistreatment the Israelites faced in Exodus 5, or that Moses faced in his leadership task, we will all have to deal with discouragement – in certain seasons, sometimes weekly, sometimes daily.

What are some of the most common ways that people respond to discouragement or disillusionment? Or, if you are willing, share what do you do with your discouragement?

Dig In

1. **Read 5:22-6:8.** How does the Lord respond to Moses in his discouragement? Why do you think the Lord addressed Moses in this way? How might it encourage you?
2. Consider how the seven-fold promises to Moses and the Israelites are again realized for us through Jesus' ministry. How might remembering the freedom he brings in Christ (Gal 5) and the promise of 'land' – which now means the promise of God's renewed heavens and earth, finally coming together (Rom 8; Rev 22) – how might that encourage your heart in moments of disillusionment? If you can, share example of remembering these have helped you.
3. In his frustration and discouragement, Moses stated – twice – his sense of inadequacy, and even unworthiness (Ex 6:12; 6:30). And yet, *Yahweh* tells him three times to get on with his task anyways, and address Pharaoh (Ex 6:12; 13; 29).

What hard things is God calling you to do where you need to “feel the fear and do it anyways”? How will remembering the Lord's Name, *Yahweh*, and that you are “marked by his name” (see Rev 22:4) help you in that? How will remembering that God's work is ultimately a function of “his mighty hand” help you to keep going?

Prayer

Take time to pray for each other – for those areas of discouragement people may be feeling, and for the courage to do that hard things God calls each of us to. Pray for our broader community – that as we approach our Easter Outreach event God would supply all our need for people to serve, and that God's Spirit would be stirring the hearts of our neighbours to come, and to draw more and more people to himself.

Technical Notes

Exodus 6:3

“God also said to Moses, “I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty [*El-Shaddai*], but by my name the Lord [*Yahweh*] I did not make myself known to them.” – Exodus 6:3

People have noticed a problem with this. If you read through Genesis, you'll know that the all-caps, upper case “LORD” is used there. The name “Yahweh”, the four Hebrew letters that make up the name – YHWH – is used in Genesis in the story of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. So, is Ex 6:3 factually wrong? No, and there are at least two good explanations. This matters so you trust that the Bible is reliable.

The first, and most common answer, is that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob *did* know the name *Yahweh*, but that they didn't know what his name *meant*. They knew the name but had never seen the Lord's power applied in such a personal, redemptive way. It's only as God progressively reveals what his name means to Moses, and as he "shows" what his name means that they will actually know who this God "Yahweh" is. Okay. That makes sense to me.

The second, and probably better answer, is that we know Genesis was written after the events of the Exodus take place. The written form of Genesis is only put down on paper after God reveals his name to Moses and rescues his people from Egypt. So, from the perspective of the author of Genesis and Exodus, the written document of Genesis uses the name *Yahweh* to mark out that the God who rescues Israel from bondage in Egypt is the same God who had met Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob earlier in the story, and made these promises to them. So, it's not until Moses meets *Yahweh* at the burning bush that God first reveals "the name."

But what does it all mean? For God to speak to Moses, to reveal his name again at this place is saying: "Just watch. I'm making good on my promises to them, and to you. I've heard the cries of my people and I will keep my promises. I will bring them out by my mighty arm."

So, God answers Moses' doubts, his sense that maybe God's got it wrong and needs a new plan by bringing him back to God's central nature and character.