



LifeLight

"In Him was life, and that life was the light of men." John 1:4

Exodus, Part 1

—
Exodus 1–19

LEADERS GUIDE



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2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20

Contents

Introducing the LifeLight Program		5
Session 1—Lecture Leader	Hopeless Suffering Exodus 1:1–2:25	9
Session 2—Lecture Leader	The Lord Calls Moses to the Rescue Exodus 3:1–4:31	14
Session 3—Lecture Leader	Facing Roadblocks Exodus 5:1–7:13	19
Session 4—Lecture Leader	Signs of Power Exodus 7:14–9:12	24
Session 5—Lecture Leader	Proof of the Lord's Authority Exodus 9:13–11:10	28
Session 6—Lecture Leader	The Passover Exodus 12:1–13:16	32
Session 7—Lecture Leader	Rescue to Freedom Exodus 13:17–15:21	36
Session 8—Lecture Leader	Providing in the Desert Exodus 15:22–17:16	40
Session 9—Lecture Leader	The Lord Calls Israel to Himself Exodus 18:1–19:25	45
<hr/>		
Session 1—Small-Group Leader	Hopeless Suffering Exodus 1:1–2:25	53
Session 2—Small-Group Leader	The Lord Calls Moses to the Rescue Exodus 3:1–4:31	57
Session 3—Small-Group Leader	Facing Roadblocks Exodus 5:1–7:13	60
Session 4—Small-Group Leader	Signs of Power Exodus 7:14–9:12	63
Session 5—Small-Group Leader	Proof of the Lord's Authority Exodus 9:13–11:10	66
Session 6—Small-Group Leader	The Passover Exodus 12:1–13:16	69
Session 7—Small-Group Leader	Rescue to Freedom Exodus 13:17–15:21	72
Session 8—Small-Group Leader	Providing in the Desert Exodus 15:22–17:16	75
Session 9—Small-Group Leader	The Lord Calls Israel to Himself Exodus 18:1–19:25	78

Introduction

Welcome to LifeLight

A special pleasure is in store for you. You will be instrumental in leading your brothers and sisters in Christ closer to Him who is our life and light (John 1:4). You will have the pleasure of seeing fellow Christians discover new insights and rediscover old ones as they open the Scriptures and dig deep into them, perhaps deeper than they have ever dug before. More than that, you will have the pleasure of sharing in this wonderful study.

LifeLight—An In-depth Study

LifeLight is a series of in-depth Bible studies. The goal of LifeLight is that through a regular program of in-depth personal and group study of Scripture, more and more Christian adults may grow in their personal faith in Jesus Christ, enjoy fellowship with the members of His body, and reach out in love to others in witness and service.

In-depth means that this Bible study includes the following four components: individual daily home study; discussion in a small group; a lecture presentation on the Scripture portion under study; and an enhancement of the week's material (through reading the enrichment magazine).

LifeLight Participants

LifeLight participants are adults who desire a deeper study of the Scriptures than is available in the typical Sunday morning adult Bible class. (Mid-to-older teens might also be LifeLight participants.) While LifeLight does not assume an existing knowledge of the Bible or special experience or skills in Bible study, it does assume a level of commitment that will bring participants to each of the nine weekly assemblies having read the assigned readings and attempted to answer the study questions. Daily reading and study will require from 15 to 30 minutes for the five days preceding the LifeLight assembly. The day following the assembly will be spent reviewing the previous week's study by going over the completed study leaflet and the enrichment magazine.

LifeLight Leadership

While the in-depth process used by LifeLight begins with individual study and cannot achieve its aims without this individual effort, it cannot be completed by individual study alone. Therefore, trained leaders are necessary. You fill one or perhaps more of the important roles described below.

The Director

This person oversees the LifeLight program in a local center (which may be a congregation or a center operated by several neighboring congregations). The director

- serves as the parish LifeLight overall coordinator and leader;
- coordinates the scheduling of the LifeLight program;
- orders materials;
- convenes LifeLight leadership team meetings;
- develops publicity materials;
- recruits participants;
- maintains records and budgeting;
- assigns, with the leadership team, participants to small discussion groups;
- makes arrangements for facilities;
- communicates outreach opportunities to small-group leaders and to congregational boards;
- follows up on participants who leave the program.

The Assistant Director (*optional*)

This person may assist the director. Duties listed for the director may be assigned to the assistant director as mutually agreeable.

The Lecture Leader

This person prepares and delivers the lecture at the weekly assembly. (**Lesson material for the lecture leader begins on p. 9.**) The lecture leader

- prepares and presents the Bible study lecture to the large group;
- prepares worship activities (devotional thought, hymn, prayer), using resources in the study leaflet and leaders guide and possibly other outside sources;
- helps the small-group discussion leaders to grow in understanding the content of the lessons;
- encourages prayer at weekly leadership team and discussion leaders meetings.

The Small-Group Coordinator (*optional; the director may fill this role*)

This person supervises and coordinates the work of the small-group discussion leaders. The small-group coordinator

- recruits with the leadership team the small-group discussion leaders;
- trains or arranges for training of the discussion leaders;
- assists the director and discussion leaders in follow-up and outreach;
- encourages the discussion leaders to contact absent group members;
- participates in the weekly leadership team and discussion leaders equipping meetings;
- provides ongoing training and support as needed.

The Small-Group Discussion Leaders

These people guide and facilitate discussion of LifeLight participants in the small groups. (**Lesson material for the small-group leaders begins on p. 51.**) There should be one discussion leader for every group of no more than 12 participants. The small-group discussion leaders are, perhaps, those individuals who are most important to the success of the program. They should, therefore, be chosen with special care and be equipped with skills needed to guide discussion and to foster a caring fellowship within the group. These discussion leaders

- prepare each week for the small-group discussion by using the study leaflet and small-group leaders guide section for that session (see p. 51);
- read the enrichment magazine as a study supplement;

- guide and facilitate discussion in their small group;
- encourage and assist the discussion group in prayer;
- foster fellowship and mutual care within the discussion group;
- attend weekly discussion leaders training meetings.

Leadership Training

LifeLight leaders will meet weekly to review the previous week's work and plan the coming week. At this session, leaders can address concerns and prepare for the coming session. LifeLight is a 1½-hour program, with no possibility for it to be taught in the one hour typically available on Sunday mornings. Some congregations, however, may want to use the Sunday morning Bible study hour for LifeLight preparation and leadership training. In such a meeting, the lecture leader and/or small-group coordinator may lead the discussion leaders through the coming week's lesson, reserving 5 or 10 minutes for problem solving or other group concerns.

While it requires intense effort, LifeLight has proven to bring great benefit to LifeLight participants. The effort put into this program, both by leaders and by participants, will be rewarding and profitable.

The LifeLight Weekly Schedule

Here is how LifeLight will work week by week:

1. Before session 1, each participant will receive the study leaflet for session 1 and the enrichment magazine for the course. The study leaflet contains worship resources (for use both in individual daily study and at the opening of the following week's assembly) and readings and study questions for five days. Challenge questions will lead those participants who have the time and desire for a greater challenge into even deeper levels of study.
2. After the five days of individual study at home, participants will gather for a weekly assembly of all LifeLight participants. The assembly will begin with a brief period of worship (5 minutes). Participants will then join their assigned small discussion groups (of 12 or fewer, who will remain the same throughout the course), where they will go over the week's

study questions together (55 minutes). Assembling together once again, participants will listen to a lecture presentation on the readings they have studied in the previous week and discussed in their small groups (20 minutes). After the lecture presentation, the director or another leader will distribute the study leaflet for the following week. Closing announcements and other necessary business may take another five minutes before dismissal.

In some places some small groups will not join the weekly assembly because of scheduling or other reasons. Such groups may meet at another time and place (perhaps in the home of one of the small group's members). They will follow the same schedule, but they may use the cassette tape to listen to the week's lecture presentation. The discussion leader will obtain the tape and leaflets from the director. A cassette tape version of the lecture is available for purchase from CPH (see your catalog). Or a congregation may record the lecture given by the lecture leader at the weekly assembly and duplicate it for use by other groups meeting later in the week.

3. On the day following the assembly, participants will review the preceding week's work by rereading the study leaflet they completed (and that they perhaps supplemented or corrected during the discussion in their small group) and by reading appropriate articles in the enrichment magazine.

Then the LifeLight weekly study process will begin all over again!

Recommended Study Resources for Exodus

Cole, Robert A. *Exodus*, TOTC. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1972. A popular but generally helpful treatment of the text.

Concordia Self-Study Bible, New International Version. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. Interpretive notes on each page form a running commentary on the text. The book includes cross-references, a 35,000-word concordance, full-color maps, charts, and time lines.

Davis, John D. *Moses and the Gods of Egypt: Studies in Exodus*, 2d ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986. A study of the text with special reference to the first 12 chapters in the light of recent archeological and historical studies, with special reference to Egyptian religious and political customs.

Keil, C. F. *Biblical Commentary on the Pentateuch*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, reprinted in 1975.

Roehrs, Walter R., and Martin H. Franzmann. *Concordia Self-Study Commentary*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979. This one-volume commentary on the Bible contains 950 pages and is tailored for lay use.

Every Voice a Song. Pipe Organ Accompaniment for 180 Hymns and Liturgy. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House (order no. 99-1565). Use this music CD for worship hymn accompaniment.

Hopeless Suffering

Exodus 1:1–2:25

Preparing for the Session

Central Focus

On the one hand, God has richly blessed His people Israel by multiplying them greatly in Egypt. But, on the other hand, they are enslaved and cruelly oppressed. One of them, Moses, was raised in Pharaoh's court. He tries to take matters into his own hands when he kills a brutal taskmaster. But then he has to escape to Midian to save himself. The plight of Israel appears hopeless against the mighty Egyptians.

Objectives

With God's help and blessing the participants will

1. understand the plight of Israel in Egypt;
2. understand how even the princely Moses could not help the Israelites on his own;
3. recognize signs of God's providence;
4. appreciate how some of Jesus' life paralleled Moses' life;
5. trust that God in Christ actively works for the good of His people even in the midst of crises in their lives.

Note for the small-group leaders: Lesson notes and other materials you will need begin on page 53.

For the Lecture Leader

If available, you may want to review the manual for the lecture leader distributed in connection with LifeLight training of congregational leaders. The manual outlines ways to present the weekly lecture in an exciting and professional fashion. If audiovisual aids are used to enhance the lecture, they should be seen clearly from the back of the room, or reduced versions of the visuals may be duplicated and distributed.

The first lecture in this series becomes one of the most important messages you will deliver. It sets the tone for the presentations in the weeks ahead and has the greatest influence on new participants, who may be apprehensive about their commitment to in-depth Bible study. Prepare well, pray, and God's Spirit will be upon you, blessing every word you say.

Here are five steps to follow as you prepare to present the lecture effectively each week:

Step 1: Pray for God's blessing and for the guiding presence and help of the Holy Spirit. Know that you have a part in transmitting God's own holy Word. Speak that Word boldly.

Step 2: Read and study God's Word yourself. The Word will strengthen your own faith and life in Christ. The Word will also make you a faithful witness. Study Exodus as a LifeLight participant. Read the daily assignment and answer the study questions. Take part in a discussion group.

Step 3: Prepare your presentations carefully. If possible, make the presentation in your own words, using the printed lecture as a guide to follow closely. If you do read the printed lecture, practice reading it several times so you are thoroughly familiar with it and can read it fluently in your own presentation style. Know it well enough to maintain eye contact with your audience. You do not need to stick slavishly to the printed words. If the printed version is foreign to you, say it the way you would say it. Substitute your own illustrations and applications when these better fit your situation or audience.

Using PowerPoint or overhead transparencies. Some lecture presenters like to use PowerPoint or an overhead projector. Others find it a hindrance. We recommend that you use one of these or a chalkboard to show at least the outline of each lecture presentation. You may also want to make overhead transparencies from the maps and other visuals in the enrichment magazine or other sources. The overheads can help the presenter stay on track, enhance interest, and still allow for flexibility in the oral presentation.

If your congregation has classes throughout the week, consider making an audiotape (or even a videotape) of your presentation, so these other classes may listen to it after the class discussion. A cassette tape may also be purchased from Concordia Publishing House to serve as an additional help in preparing your own presentation or as a substitute for your presentation, particularly in a home setting.

Step 4: Ask someone in your audience to help you by watching and listening for ways in which you might make your presentation more effective. Pick someone who will be a positive and helpful critic.

Step 5: Pray again. Thank God for giving you an opportunity to pass His Word along to others. Ask Him to bless your effort.

Session Plan

Worship

Begin the session with the hymn printed in the study leaflet. Accompaniments are available in denominational hymnals, such as *Lutheran Worship* (refer to hymnal index). Note: Concordia Publishing House has available *Every Voice a Song*, a 9-CD set of organ accompaniments for 180 hymns and liturgy. All the initial worship hymns in the LifeLight courses are included in this resource. It's especially helpful for mission congregations and small parishes. See the list of study resources on page 7.

Scripture Reading (Romans 8:35, 37–39)

Devotion

Zia Nodrat, a blind Afghan boy raised as a devout Muslim, came to believe in Jesus Christ through hearing the Gospel on the radio. Blessed with a brilliant mind, he learned Arabic, Persian, German, and English and translated the New Testament into Afghan. He became director of an institute for the blind in Kabul but was imprisoned and tortured terribly by the ruling regime for several years. He managed to escape from Afghanistan to Pakistan, where he founded an institute for the blind and worked to propagate the Gospel. But he was captured by a fundamentalist Muslim group, tortured, and murdered as an apostate from Islam.

The 20th century was a century of persecutions. But we take heart from the examples of Zia Nodrat and the thousands of other contemporary fellow believers. Our peace and joy is with Christ, even if that means suffering as He did, for He is our strength and comfort, and He has prepared our eternal home and rest with God.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we praise You for protecting the Israelites during their long suffering in Egypt, for the example of the faith of Zia Nodrat despite great hindrances, for the example of many thousands of Christians in the past and in our own time for remaining true to You despite great persecution. Please strengthen also our faith in You so that we may always remain faithful to You whenever we may have to endure suffering, persecution, or death; through Your Son, our Lord, who suffered everything for our sake. Amen.

Lecture Presentation

Introduction

The book of Genesis shows us God's response to the introduction of sin into His creation. He established a lifeline, which enables us to trace through the generations a thread of faith in God's promise to send a Savior from sin. That lifeline of faith ran from Seth through Noah, through Abraham, through Isaac, and through Jacob and his 12 sons.

We now take up the thread of that lifeline in the book of Exodus. Exodus shows that Genesis sets the stage for the even greater history that unfolds throughout the rest of the Old Testament and even throughout the New Testament. Exodus is the Greek word for "exit" or "departure"; the book we are now beginning to study was given this name by the Jews who translated it into Greek in approximately 200 B.C. It tells about the exit or departure of God's people from Egypt and their journey under God to the Promised Land.

1 The Israelites Multiply in Egypt

Genesis closes with the descendants of Jacob in Egypt (Genesis 50:22); they numbered 70 when they settled there (Genesis 46:27; Exodus 1:5). Exodus opens with the names of Jacob's sons and with the encouraging notice

that, as the generations passed, they remained “fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them” (Exodus 1:7). By “the land” Moses evidently meant the land of Goshen (Genesis 45:10), a fertile area of the eastern Nile Delta on Egypt’s northeast frontier, adjacent to the Desert of Shur. **Show Goshen on map of Egypt, if available.**

Thus were fulfilled God’s promises to the patriarchs to make them fruitful (Genesis 17:6) and increase their numbers (Genesis 17:2; 35:11) “into a great nation” (Genesis 12:2; 18:18; 46:3). God’s people had become a definite people in their own right; they were no longer just the “sons of Israel” (Genesis 50:25; Exodus 1:1). We may now speak of them as “the Israelites” (1:7). But the Bible continues to refer to them, in Exodus and generally throughout the Old Testament, as “sons (children or descendants) of Israel.”

God’s blessing, seen in the increase and prosperity of the Israelites in Egypt, reminds us that God keeps the promises He makes. We too can depend on God’s faithfulness, for He will surely keep the promises He has made to us. God’s faithfulness is particularly important when we remember the promises He makes to us in the Gospel. God’s promises are kept even when God’s people must endure hardships, as we see in the experience of the Israelites in Egypt.

2 The Israelites Are Enslaved and Cruelly Oppressed

Before long, the Israelite blaze was dampened, and their lifeline became endangered. Earlier Egyptian rulers, probably of the 12th dynasty, knew they were indebted to Joseph and had been very friendly to his family and their descendants. But these rulers were overthrown about 1750 B.C. by foreign invaders from the east who were called “Hyksos.” They in turn were expelled by the Egyptians around 1550 B.C., and the 18th dynasty was established by Ahmose. He may have been the (Exodus 1:8) new king, who did not know about Joseph. This king saw the Israelites as a source for cheap labor, so he imposed slavery upon them. This included building the storage centers of Pithom and Rameses in the delta near Goshen (1:11). **Locate on map, if available.**

1:9–10—Despite being enslaved and persecuted, the Israelites multiplied and became far more numerous. Besides, the Israelites were strategically situated on the

country’s frontier; they might unite with foreign enemies. (1:12–14) But God kept blessing the Israelites, and they continued to increase in number. This alarmed their oppressors even more, so they forced the Israelites to perform the hardest slave labor: making bricks of clay, constructing buildings, and working the fields, which included digging and cleaning irrigation ditches.

(1:15–16) Pharaoh tried to stem the Israelite growth by commanding the two Hebrew women who were in charge of midwives to have all the baby boys killed at birth. (1:17–19) However, these women demonstrated surprising courage and ingenuity in deceiving the Egyptians into believing that Israelite women were so healthy and vigorous that their babies were delivered quickly, before the midwives could arrive.

God blessed these women because of their courage in preventing the great evil that threatened God’s people of promise. God calls us to obey our government as His servant. But when government leaders demand that God’s people obey them rather than God—as did the Egyptian leaders—then God’s people must disobey their government in order to obey God.

1:20–21—God rewarded the midwives by preserving their posterity through families, which means they also had sons. The brave action of these women shows that, despite the passage of over 300 years since Joseph, including about 200 years of slavery, the faith and hope of many Israelites was still burning. God blesses courage that flows from faith. Sometimes He gives His blessing in this life, as He did for these brave women. Sometimes the blessing is saved for heaven. But the Lord never forgets the courageous faith of His people. We can find courage to act bravely by trusting in God, despite the consequences with which this evil world may threaten us. We may know that God is much greater than any power in this world, and that He is strong to save.

3 Pharaoh’s Daughter Adopts an Israelite Boy

1:22—But the fire of hope was quickly dampened by a new threat: Pharaoh now turned to his own people and commanded them to throw newborn Israelite boys into the Nile. This order would have been given after the birth of Moses’ older brother, Aaron, but before that of Moses, who was three years younger (6:20; 7:7). Thus, according to the most probable chronology, the date

would have been about 1526 B.C. The ruling Pharaoh would have been Thutmose I (1539–1520). It was then that a devout couple of the tribe of Levi, Amram and Jochebed (whose name means “the Lord is glory”), were blessed with their third child, a boy. (2:1–2) The mother recognized him to be particularly “fine,” that is, not only especially healthy and well-formed, but also evidently determined by God for some peculiar purpose.

3:22—Though she hid her beautiful baby boy for three months at home, Jochebed knew she could not do this indefinitely because of her Egyptian neighbors. Perhaps inspired by God, Moses’ mother devised an ingenious plan. She waterproofed a covered basket made of papyrus reeds. (2:3–5) She put the baby into the basket and placed it by the riverbank. Moses’ older sister, Miriam, watched it. Egyptian women of rank would bathe in the Nile as a holy and revered river for the sake of fruitfulness and long life. What should have brought death to the Israelite boy—discovery by the Egyptians—saved his life, since the Egyptian princess had borne no sons, who would be heirs to the throne.

We begin to see a number of parallels between the lives of Moses and Jesus. Both were endangered in infancy; both were saved from murderous decrees in Egypt, away from their people (Matthew 2:13–18).

We presume the princess in question must have been Hatshepsut, since she is the most likely candidate of the historical period. Hatshepsut was the peculiarly strong-willed only child of Thutmose I by his official wife. She would have had the audacity to ignore her authoritarian father’s command by not only saving the Israelite boy instead of drowning him, but also by legally adopting him as her own son. Indeed, she gave him the name Moses, which in Egyptian means “son” (as in Thutmose). (Exodus 2:10) Moses’ name also was a reminder of how God preserved his life, since “Moses” comes from the Hebrew word meaning “draw out.”

2:7–9—Jochebed’s plan was fulfilled to her greatest expectations, for at Miriam’s suggestion, the princess engaged her to nurse her own baby for pay until he was weaned! Since children then were not weaned until about age three, this gave Jochebed the opportunity to instill in her precocious son the rudiments of Israelite faith and language and the realization of solidarity with his people. What an example she is to us of the importance and effectiveness of early spiritual education of children!

So once again we see how the Lord uses the leaders of this world and their policies for His own saving purposes. While the rulers of this world may imagine themselves to be in control, they are God’s servants whether or not they realize it. History, also secular history, is, in fact, “His story.”

4 Moses Must Flee into the Desert

In the meantime, by growing up in the palace, Moses would have received a thorough Egyptian education and training in all areas of knowledge as well as in sports and the arts of warfare (e.g., archery, horsemanship, chariotry, military strategy; see Acts 7:21–22). This not only included a complete grasp of the Egyptian language, but also, because of international trade and diplomacy, of the dominant Semitic languages in the Near East.

According to the biblical chronology, it was about 1486 B.C., when Moses was 40 years old (Acts 7:23), that he demonstrated how he had not forgotten his original religious and ethnic roots. He was well aware of the tragic plight of his enslaved and sorely oppressed people. Had God made it possible for him to be raised and trained in the palace in order to become His instrument to relieve their misery (Acts 7:24–25)? (Exodus 2:11–12) Evidently displaying something of the self-confident arrogance of the Egyptian court, Moses acted single-handedly on the spur of the moment when he killed a cruel Egyptian slave driver.

2:13–14—When Moses on the next day tried to arbitrate between quarreling Israelites, the one in the wrong rebuked his unauthorized audacity and revealed that Moses’ murder of the taskmaster was known. In this way, Moses suffered as Jesus did later, by not being recognized by his own kinsmen as their deliverer, but rather being put into danger by them (Luke 4:16–30).

We can also learn two other lessons from Moses’ failure. First, specifically, we should not take the law into our own hands (as vigilantes) to bring about justice. Second, and more generally, it is not for the church to preach and act in favor of a violent revolution against oppression, but rather to pray to God to provide the opportunity for a peaceful change—as actually happened in modern times in Poland, East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union.

2:15—Moses correctly feared for his life and fled deeply into the desert of the Sinai Peninsula, which is not constituted of sand, but of mountains and valleys of mostly barren rock.

Although Moses had acted on his own without a directive from God, he proved his faith by identifying with his enslaved people. Instead of trying to defend himself as a legal prince of Egypt and take advantage of his royal connections and all the luxury and power that they offered, he demonstrated solidarity with oppressed Israel and shared their suffering by choosing banishment into a bleak and uncertain existence (Hebrews 11:24–27), commending himself to God’s care. Similarly, Jesus renounced all wealth and power twice, first, in coming from eternity to earth as a human being (Philippians 2:6–8), and second, when rejecting Satan’s offer (Matthew 4:8–10). And as Moses was “alone” in the desert for 40 years, so Jesus was for 40 days (Matthew 4:2).

Moses’ education at the palace had trained him to rule, but he manifested this rashly and precipitously. Perhaps God might have made use of him as an Egyptian prince to free His people at that time; God’s possibilities are manifold. However, considering the difficult trials that awaited the Israelites, it is clear from God’s point of view that Moses required additional training, namely, in humility and complete dependence on God. This he could learn in the wilderness. God is patient and would not mind waiting another 40 years (2:3; 7:7), while He managed to keep alive the suffering Israelites’ smoldering faith and hope.

5 God Provides for Moses, but Israel Appears Hopeless

2:15b—On his flight Moses “chanced” upon a certain well in the general area of Midian. Of course, for believers in the true God, there is no such thing as chance or luck; what may appear to be a coincidence is an opportunity given by God. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham by his wife Keturah (Genesis 25:2, 4). They settled east of the Gulf of Elath, ranging north up to Moab and carrying on trade between Canaan and Egypt. **Locate these on a map if one is available.**

2:16–17—Moses again displayed his audacity and courage by rescuing Reuel’s daughters. The girls came to draw water from the well, but other shepherds drove them off. Moses single-handedly chased the villains away and watered the girl’s flocks.

2:18–21—Moses’ deliverance of the shepherdesses proved to be God’s way of initiating providence for him. For Reuel invited Moses to sojourn with them and even to marry one of his daughters, Zipporah. She probably died after many years, and Moses took a Cushite as a sec-

ond wife (Numbers 12:1).

2:22—At the birth of their first son Moses showed that he had not yet learned the lesson God wanted him to learn, for he expressed his bitterness for having to live as a fugitive and alien by naming his son Gershom, meaning “an alien there.” But later Moses’ attitude changed, and he put his complete hope and confidence in God, naming his second son Eliezer, meaning “my God is helper” (18:4). Trusting no longer in his own training, position, or ability but in God alone, Moses could finally be used by God for His purpose.

But, humanly speaking, the Israelites were now utterly hopeless. The one Israelite who might have been eminently prepared to help them failed miserably in a rash attempt and was now a fugitive in an isolated situation devoid of potential resources. (2:23) They cried out to their God for help.

Significantly, Scripture records that God (2:24–25) “heard . . . remembered . . . looked . . . and was concerned.” Despite all hopeless indications to the contrary, God had neither forgotten nor abandoned His people. His notice of them was full of divine love and pity. As the God of ancient Israel so loved and pitied them, He will show the same love and pity toward us, on account of His own Son.

How well we might profit from the experience of the Israelites and of Moses! Our God is faithful and patient with us. He knows our hardships and miseries, and He cares for us. We can entrust ourselves with confidence into His loving hands. And even when we mess up, faithlessly taking matters into our own hands instead of leaving things to God, He patiently undoes the damage we do and continues to cause all things to bring about good for us! We will see in the next lesson how this happened with Moses and the Israelites.

Concluding Activities

Ask the group to join you in standing and singing “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow.” Have copies available or print the words on a chalkboard or other location.

Make any necessary announcements and distribute study leaflet 2 and the enrichment magazine. Encourage participants to read the magazine for further enrichment and background to accompany their study.

The Lord Calls Moses to the Rescue

Exodus 3:1–4:31

Preparing for the Session

Central Focus

The Lord called and commissioned Moses to be His agent in leading His people, Israel, to freedom out of the oppression in Egypt. In order to convince Moses to accept the calling, God empowered him to perform miraculous signs; He revealed to Moses His true nature and character; He promised him His empowering and protecting presence; and He appointed Aaron as His spokesman. Moses returned, was united with Aaron, and they were able to convince Israel's elders to believe them.

Objectives

With God's help and blessing the participants will

1. sympathize with the reluctance of Moses;
2. believe in the Lord according to His nature as He revealed Himself to Moses;
3. understand why Pharaoh was difficult to deal with;
4. appreciate why God would use miraculous signs to convince Israel's elders;
5. believe that Christ is the fulfillment of God's revelation to Moses.

Note for small-group leaders: Lesson notes and other materials you will need begin on page 57.

Session Plan

Worship

Begin the session with the hymn printed in the study leaflet. Accompaniments are available in denominational hymnals, such as *Lutheran Worship* (refer to hymnal index), or on the *Every Voice a Song* CD set.

Scripture Reading (Genesis 28:10–15)

Devotion

As a child, were you ever so frightened at night that you left your bed to crawl into your parents' bed? Perhaps you had just had a nightmare and were afraid to stay alone in the dark room. You needed the closeness of your parents, the assurance of their presence, and the comfort of being with them. In a real sense, that is what God promises us. It may be said that all our faith and theology depends on this one fact: God is with us.

With this promise of His presence, God gave assurance to Jacob on his lonely flight from home; to Moses when He gave him the great responsibility to lead Israel out of Egypt; to King Ahaz of Judah when faced by an enemy invasion (Isaiah 7:14). Indeed, this was God's basic promise throughout the history of His people, until finally Christ Himself, when He left His disciples by ascending into heaven, promised: "Surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). He also echoed this in His final revelation to John: "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with Me" (Revelation 22:12).

It is only our God who can promise this, for He is the only God, and He is truly a personal God. He comes so close to us that we can snuggle up to Him like a child seeking comfort in bed with his or her mother after a frightening dream.

On his way from Beersheba to Haran, Jacob, too, had a frightening dream. It was frightening because in it God the Lord revealed Himself. But it was also a most comforting dream, for Jacob was a refugee trying to escape from his twin brother, Esau. Esau had vowed to kill Jacob for having tricked him out of his birthright and his paternal blessing (Genesis 27:36, 41). Jacob was also traveling through a strange land, where he could at any time be attacked by bandits or marauders. The Lord had protected him in Beersheba, and his relatives in Haran worshiped the true God, but what about the areas of Canaan and Syria in between, where heathen people worshiped false gods? Besides, the Lord had promised Jacob's father and grandfather the land of

Canaan as an inheritance and that all peoples of the earth would be blessed through their descendants (12:3, 7; 26:3–4). Would the Lord be able to fulfill these promises if Jacob had to flee to Haran?

The Lord assured Jacob that He would not only keep him safe, but He would also fulfill all His promises (28:13–15). Similarly, God assures us of His protection, not only after a bad dream but also amid the stark realities and ever-present dangers of this world. Most of all, He assures us of His own presence. Jacob's good dream, in which he saw angels ascending and descending on a ladder (28:12), was fulfilled by Jesus (John 1:51): He is the ladder who connects us with God Himself, bringing our needs and cares to the Father and conveying the Father's aid to us. It is Christ Himself who is always "interceding for us" (Romans 8:34). Thus, we can both face life's dangers with assurance and always go to bed in peace.

On the cross, Jesus prayed David's prayer, spoken at bedtime by pious Jews: "Into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Psalm 31:5; Luke 23:46). So, let us learn and teach to our children a similar prayer: Now I lay me down to sleep; I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take. Amen.

Prayer

Speak a prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to guide the discussion groups as Jesus promised: He "will teach you all things" (John 14:26).

Lecture Presentation

1 Out of Fire, God Calls Moses

"Fire!" How frightening the cry "Fire!" can be! We may envision the house going up in flames! And how fascinating fire can be: sitting by the fireplace or campfire, singing, chatting, letting the dancing flames conjure up dreams and memories. Or fire may be used as a signal: the stranded motorist lights a warning flare beside the highway, protesters burn their enemy in effigy, American Indians of old light fires on hills to send smoke signals.

Over several days Moses had driven the flocks of sheep and goats belonging to his father-in-law, Reuel, for

miles across the desert. (3:1; 18:1–27) Reuel (2:18), which means "friend of God," was probably his father-in-law's given name, while Jethro was perhaps a title (for he was a priest), likely meaning "his excellency." (3:1) Arriving at his destination, the slopes of the mountain range of Horeb, Moses could easily find grass and oases, food and water for the animals. The difficult journey over, he might now relax while watchfully observing the flocks. Perhaps Moses mused about his luxurious past at Pharaoh's court, the tragic struggle of his Israelite people as slaves in Egypt, and his inability as a fugitive to help them.

3:2–3—Fire! Suddenly, there it was: fire in the wilderness! Frightening. Could a Bedouin's tent be burning? No, not that. Could it be a signal fire? No, only a bush burning. Still, fascinating! How did it start? By lightning? But there was no thunderstorm! Fascinating indeed, for the fire kept on burning, but the bush didn't burn up!

Moses was drawn to the burning bush, fascinated, but then he learned that it was indeed a signal for him that became frightening. (3:2, 4) A divine messenger, an angel, was the cause of the fire, and God Himself spoke to him out of it. Fire was often a symbol of God's presence or activity, usually of His anger and judgment, and therefore was frightening. But it might also indicate His holiness or a revelation, as here. God being present, the place became holy, sacred. It was like the place where God appeared to Jacob with the vision of the angels ascending and descending on the ladder, so that he consecrated it and named it "Bethel," which means the "house of God" (Bethel; see Genesis 28:16–19). (Exodus 3:5) The ancients among various peoples, and many even today, would remove their shoes at a sanctuary, for shoes become dirty from profane ground and were out of place on holy ground. Fire also became the symbol of revelation in the New Testament, as divine "tongues of fire" appeared on the disciples' heads when the Holy Spirit inspired them to preach the Gospel in languages unknown to them (Acts 2:3–4). Here the Lord God spoke to Moses from the revelatory fire that burned but did not consume.

3:6—Who was this God? The Egyptian god of fire? The Canaanite Baal, god of lightning and storm? No, He was Moses' own God, the Israelites' God, the God of their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This God had

revealed Himself to these patriarchs, promising them protection, descendants, land, and especially that they would be a blessing to all the peoples of the world (Genesis 12:23, 7; 26:2-4; 28:13-15).

Jesus, in His debate with Sadducees (Matthew 22:23-33), used this self-identification by God as proof from the books of Moses for the resurrection of the dead. He reasoned logically: Because God "is not the God of the dead but of the living" (v. 32), the deceased patriarchs must still be alive, awaiting the resurrection of their bodies to fulfill their everlasting life with God as human beings. But here this God of the Israelites had a purpose in this unique means of self-disclosure to Moses through the burning bush. (Exodus 3:7-9) He revealed that He had "come down to rescue them" from the power of the Egyptians and "to bring them up" into that good land He had long ago promised them. (3:10) He called Moses, instructing him: "Go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring My people the Israelites out of Egypt."

2 Moses Objects, But God Insists

3:11—Have you ever been bowled over by a request to fulfill a task for which you were absolutely convinced you were unqualified and incompetent? So was Moses overwhelmed: "Who am I?" We might ask, "Who, me?" Sure, he had been raised in Pharaoh's palace, but now he was a fugitive with a price on his head, an outlaw. Besides, he had once tried to help the Israelites but had failed miserably. In the many intervening years, Moses had learned well the lesson of humility. He was a simple shepherd; all he had now were several hundred sheep and goats, whereas he would need an enormous army of thousands of chariots and hundreds of thousands of soldiers.

3:12—But God brushed aside Moses' first objection with a simple promise: "I will be with you." This was the assurance of God's presence, protection, and empowerment. Indeed, it was the basic foundation of all biblical faith. If God is with us, then we never need be afraid (Genesis 15:1; 26:24; 28:15). If God is with us, then "who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31; see Genesis 39:2, 23; Judges 6:16; 1 Samuel 18:14). If God is with us, then "who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Romans 8:35). For, ultimately, God is with us

in Christ Jesus, our "Immanu-El" ("with us is God"; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23), our divine Redeemer, Savior, and Intercessor. God also promised Moses a sign for proof (Exodus 3:12): "When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

3:13—Moses countered with a second objection: he would have to know God's name. Since the name of a person stands for his significance, character, and potential, Moses means that God must reveal His true nature to him. After all, so far (3:15) "the God of your fathers" had only helped and protected individual families. But it was a different matter to rescue a people numbering many thousands out of slavery to the strongest world power! What's more, He would have to overpower all the mighty gods of Egypt! What kind of a God is He to claim to pull that off?

Genesis 4:3-4, 26—God did not reveal to Moses a new name, for His name Yahweh (usually translated LORD) was known already from the beginning. But never before had God revealed the full significance of His name, that is, His real nature and character. True, He had saved Noah and his family from the flood and had protected the patriarchs from various dangers. But never before had He rescued an entire people from slavery or proven Himself victorious over mighty gods. (Exodus 3:14) God indicated He could do this and wanted to do this when He explained the true meaning of His name for the first time (this is the sense of Exodus 6:3): "I AM WHO I AM." His name Yahweh can be understood in Hebrew to mean "He is," "He will be," or even "He causes to be." So, with God speaking of Himself, it is rendered "I am." (3:12) God describes Himself as the God who will be with His people to save them and bless them.

Here, God extends it: "I AM WHO I AM," as if to say: "I Myself am the one who is!" Since He is God, this well implies that He is the *only* one who is, the *only* God there is, the *only* one who can "cause to be." If so, then all those mighty gods of the Egyptians were nothing but a human delusion. Then it would be an easy matter for the one true God to help His people and to overcome the Egyptians themselves, who really had no god to help them.

3:15—Therefore, since Genesis 1, this is the first great

declaration of monotheism, that the God of Israel is the one and only God. This truth Moses later clearly confessed in his final song (Deuteronomy 32:39; see also Exodus 15:11). Yahweh in the original Hebrew text included only the consonants. By the time the scribes added vowels, the name of God was no longer pronounced. These Jews feared that the name of God would be profaned if spoken by the human voice. So the Jews added the vowels for "Adonai," which means "Lord," which is why their Greek translation of the Old Testament and general Christian usage, too, renders God's name, Yahweh, as "the Lord."

3:16–18—Besides revealing His true character as Moses requested, the Lord promised Moses that the elders of Israel would "listen to" him, that is, believe him when he told them their God had truly authorized him to lead them out of Egypt. (3:19–20) These were the recognized leaders of Israel's clans and tribes. Besides, the Lord would work miracles ("wonders") among the Egyptians to convince their king to let the Israelites go. (3:21–22) In fact, as the unbelievable topping to the whole fantastic scenario, the Lord would even move the Egyptian people to shower the Israelites with going-away presents of clothing, silver, and gold!

4:1—Moses, however, could not picture his people buying such tall promises. His third objection demanded proof that would overcome their unbelief. (4:2–5) Obviously irritated at Moses' steadfast reluctance, the Lord turned Moses' shepherd's staff into a snake and then back again. (4:6–8) Then He made Moses' hand first leprous and then healthy again. (4:9) Finally, as a third miraculous sign, He told Moses that when he would pour water from the Nile onto the ground, it would become blood. Surely all that should convince the worst doubter! Except for Moses. (4:10) He played his last trump card, pleading that his speech was not eloquent enough for such a significant role that demanded public speaking before Pharaoh.

4:11—But the Lord trumped him with His ace. Has He not created every person with eyes, ears, and tongue? Can He not give the gift of eloquent oratory to the slow of speech? His directive to Moses is a great encouragement to every one of us whenever God calls us to speak in His name (4:12): "Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say." This promise Jesus fulfills by

sending us the Holy Spirit (Matthew 10:18–20).

4:13—Out of arguments, Moses in desperation simply begged God to find someone else for the awesome responsibility. The Lord became angry. Yes, He would send someone else, namely Moses' own brother, Aaron, but only to speak for Moses. But Moses himself must go, too, as the leader. (4:14–15) The Lord would speak to Moses, and he would relay the message to his brother. This arrangement illustrates for us the function of a prophet as the mediating spokesman between God and the people. (4:16) Since Moses would tell Aaron what to say, Moses would be like God to Aaron. And since Aaron would relay the Word of God to the intended audience, Aaron would be like a prophet (7:1), that is, God's mouthpiece or spokesman. So, too, our pastors today, insofar as they are called by Christ and their congregation and base their messages firmly on the Word of God, are His spokesmen to His people (Matthew 10:40–41).

3 Moses and the People Are Prepared

Did Moses feel overpowered by God when He countered all of Moses' objections, or did he feel emboldened to undertake the impossible? By not revealing to his father-in-law the true purpose for his return to Egypt, it appears that Moses was not confident of his task.

4:18—Nevertheless, he dutifully set out for Egypt, taking along his wife and sons. (4:19) The Lord gave him further encouragement. First, God informed him that his former enemies in Egypt were now all dead so that he could expect to return safely. (4:21) Second, God tried to strengthen Moses' resolve before the great Pharaoh, whom God Himself would make obstinate for His own glory. (We will be saying more about God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart in the next lessons. At this point we will point out that God hardened Pharaoh only after Pharaoh himself had repeatedly refused God's commands and stubbornly set himself against the Lord's will.) (4:22–23) The Lord gave Moses an appropriate threat to almighty Pharaoh: If he would not let Israel go (who, as the Lord's chosen people, was His "firstborn son"), then the Lord would kill Pharaoh's firstborn son. That would be the Lord's ultimate show of force, for the Egyptians considered their pharaoh to

be a god incarnate! Could the God of the Israelite slaves defeat the gods of mighty Egypt?

4:24—A strange event transpired on the way, probably at an oasis where there was a place for lodging. The Lord suddenly met Moses and was about to kill him. Moses' wife, Zipporah, quickly sized up the situation. God must be angry at Moses for failing to circumcise their second son, Eliezer (see Genesis 17:9–14). She took a ceremonial knife of sharp flint stone and immediately performed the operation on their son, thus sparing Moses. (4:25–26) She declared Moses to have become "a bridegroom of blood" to her, because she had to perform the bloody act of circumcision.

This must have been a grave lesson to Moses that no one should embark on a mission for God if he himself is not faithful to His will! For circumcision is symbolic of removing everything unpleasing to God's calling; true circumcision is inner dedication (Genesis 17:10–11; Jeremiah 9:26; Romans 2:29). After this close call, Moses reconsidered the gravity of his mission and the dead earnestness of his God. He sent his family back home (see 18:2–4). Jethro later brought them back to Moses when the Israelites were on their way to Mount Sinai (18:5–6).

In the meantime, the Lord called Aaron to meet Moses in the desert. Their joyful reunion took place in the general vicinity of God's revelation to Moses, the mountain range of Horeb ("the mountain of God"). (4:27–28) There, Moses informed Aaron of everything the Lord had instructed him. (4:29–30) After making their way through the Sinai Desert to their people in Goshen, they called together all the elders, and Aaron related to them what God had promised Moses. Before a crowd of their people, Aaron performed the miracles with which God empowered them. (4:31) This convinced the people, and they believed. Indeed, they were so impressed that their God was concerned about their misery and had taken steps to relieve it that they reverently bowed and worshiped Him. The people believed in the Lord; Moses and Aaron were ready to lead them. Now, all was set for the Lord to bring His people out of Egypt—or was it?

Closing Activities

Make any necessary announcements and ask for any comments or questions about the enrichment magazine.