

MOSES

A Man of Selfless Dedication

STUDY ONE

Misery, Midwives, and Murder

Exodus 1

In hard times, you may wonder, “Where’s God?” He’s right here. He hasn’t left. He’s part of the process.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IN the movies, heroes always appear larger-than-life. Actors who have portrayed Moses are handsome, rugged, and tall. With a backbone of steel, they stand up to Pharaoh and command in a baritone voice, “Let my people go!” No shakiness in their faith. No knee-knocking trepidation. No cracks in their character.

The real Moses, however, was not so ideal. He was fearful at times. Impetuous, rash, and foolish on occasion. The fault lines in his personality often threatened to undermine his mission, but God never gave Moses the boot. He called Moses to what seemed like an impossible task, and He carried Moses all the way through it, despite Moses’ faltering steps along the way. Studying the real Moses gives us hope. If God can use Moses, he can use us.

We find the account of Moses’ life in Exodus, and the name of the book says it all. It’s about *exiting*. It’s an account of God’s people leaving behind their lives of slavery and going to God’s promised land.

Our lives are on a similar path from bondage to freedom. Moses anticipated the ultimate Deliverer, Jesus Christ, who rescues us from slavery to sin and leads us into God’s promised land of eternal life.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study series, we’ll follow Moses through the highs and lows of his life and discover a powerful lesson: if we’re willing to do what God calls us to do, frail and fallen as we are, there’s no limit to what God can do through us. Let’s begin!



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Pastor Chuck Swindoll always begins his *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method with hands folded and head bowed, praying, “Lord, speak to me. Help me understand what this passage is saying. I am listening. I am sensitive to Your truth. Lead me into it.”¹ In the space below, offer your heartfelt prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to guide your study.



Searching the Scriptures Study Tool

To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to “[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)” You can also [purchase a copy](#) of Pastor Chuck’s book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, at insight.org.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Exodus is a continuation of Genesis, which opened with God creating all things. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, however, their sin brought death into God’s beautiful world. In response, God promised to redeem humankind and restore creation through Abraham—a man of faith from whose seed the Deliverer would come.

But the obstacles to God’s plan seemed insurmountable. Abraham and Sarah were childless. The land God promised was occupied. Abraham kept making foolish decisions—including having a son by Hagar ([Genesis 16:1–16](#)). God remained faithful to His covenant with Abraham, though, and, despite the impossibilities, Sarah gave birth to Isaac.

God passed His covenant to Isaac and then to his son, Jacob, and to his sons. Even when Jacob’s sons sold their brother Joseph into slavery in Egypt, God was at work uniting this fractured family and keeping His promise alive. He elevated Joseph from the pit to the pinnacle, making Joseph prime minister. When famine struck, Joseph was in a position to save his father and conniving brothers and give them a secure home in Egypt.

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Read *Genesis 50:14–26* and summarize how Genesis ends with the theme of hope that God will fulfill His promise of deliverance.

Jacob and his sons and their families settled in Egypt around 1875 BC, and with the death of Joseph about seventy years later, the book of Genesis closed. When the curtain rose on Exodus, the date was 1525 BC, three-hundred-fifty years since Abraham’s descendants left Canaan.² After all this time, they were still in Egypt—but *how times had changed!*



Observation: The Good Life Turns to Misery

Searching the Scriptures is a four-step Bible-study method beginning with *observation*. During observation, we look closely at what the biblical passage says. Take your time as you read. Careful observation is the key to accurate understanding.

The following chart overviews the main outline of Exodus and highlights the main themes. Look over the chart to familiarize yourself with the plot, and then we’ll dive into the first chapter which sets the stage for the rest of the book.

EXODUS OVERVIEW BIBLE CHART

350 years between Genesis and Exodus	BONDAGE	DELIVERANCE	JOURNEY	LAW	TABERNACLE	GLORY OF THE LORD
	Exodus 1–2	Exodus 3–12	Exodus 13–18	Exodus 19–24	Exodus 25–40	
GROAN OF THE ISRAELITES	Multiplied Israelites New pharaoh Plan to destroy Israelites Moses	Blood Frogs Gnats Flies Livestock Passover Exodus	Boils Hail Locusts Darkness Death Grumbling	Cloud and fire Red Sea	Moral Civil Social	Courtyard (150 feet by 75 feet) Sanctuary (45 feet by 15 feet)
LOCATION	Egypt		En route	Mount Sinai		
TIME	430 years		3 months	1 year		
THEME	Suffering and liberation of the people of God		Guidance of God	Worship of God		
KEY VERSES	Exodus 6:6; 12:40–42; 19:5–6					
CHRIST IN EXODUS	Passover lamb (<i>Exod. 12</i>); sacrificial offerings, tabernacle, articles of worship (<i>Exod. 25–40</i>); His leadership and deliverance pictured in Moses; His purity and intercession pictured in the high priest					

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The Good Life in Egypt—Exodus 1:1–7

Joseph was in his thirties when his father and his brothers moved to Egypt. Pharaoh gave them “the best land of Egypt,” the land of Goshen (Genesis 47:6). Showers of God’s blessing through Joseph and an amenable Pharaoh caused the Israelites to blossom in the desert. How does *Genesis 47:27* and *Exodus 1:1–7* describe the good life they enjoyed?

Misery in Egypt—Exodus 1:8–22

As time passed, however, the gentle hand of the Egyptians closed into an iron fist. What changed, according to *Exodus 1:8–14*? What was this Pharaoh’s fear? What subjugating tactics did he use? What resulted?

The Israelites had known peace, joy, and relaxation in their land of Goshen as long as Joseph lived. By and by, a change came. They no longer led sheep as shepherds; they made bricks under the whip of the taskmasters.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

When brutality failed to reduce the population, what cruel scheme did Pharaoh devise in *1:15–21*? How was this scheme foiled?

What genocidal brutality did Pharaoh unleash in *1:22*?

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Brutal people are driven by fear. Fear of losing what they want. Fear of something they can't control. And so it was among the Egyptians. The fear of losing their land drove them. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: The Faith of the Midwives

Interpretation seeks to understand the meaning of the passage as the original readers would have understood it. Probably, Shiphrah and Puah were midwife supervisors. Pharaoh commanded them to “watch as [the mothers] deliver”—literally, “look upon the two stones,” which was a reference to the birthstool (Exodus 1:16)—and kill the newborn males before the mothers realized what happened and assume the child was stillborn.

The midwives, however, disobeyed Pharaoh’s order because they “feared God” (1:17). What does it mean to fear God? How did their faith reveal God’s presence behind the scenes?

What biblical principle do you draw from the midwives’ stand? How did their defiance resemble Peter and the apostles’ response to ungodly authority in [Acts 5:28–39](#)?

The midwives lied to cover their disobedience ([Exodus 1:19–20](#)), and God honored them—which poses an ethical puzzle. Is it ever ethically justified to lie? In what situations, based on the midwives’ example?

*When the king told the midwives to violate God’s basic principle of the preservation of life, they refused out of their reverence for God. Despite their deceit, God rewarded them for doing what was right in His eyes.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

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Correlation: A Candle of Hope

Correlation examines similar passages to deepen our understanding of our study's main subject. The Israelites were now slaves in the land where they once prospered freely. As the years of misery dragged on, they must have cried out to God, wondering whether He had forgotten them.

Their forefather, Abraham, also doubted God's promise when he and Sarah remained childless. But God assured him: "Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That's how many descendants you will have!" (Genesis 15:5). Abraham believed God, and God spoke to him in a dream about his future descendants. What did the Lord prophesy in [Genesis 15:12–16](#)?

What candle did this prophecy light for the Hebrew people? How did this flicker of hope help them endure their trials?

After hundreds of years immersed in Egyptian culture and idolatry, the Israelites never abandoned the God of their forefathers. They never lost hope that someday He would send a deliverer.



Application: Living with Hope in Desperate Times

The Israelites clung to God's promise through desperate times. Their example offers four key principles that encourage us as we navigate our own desperate situations.

First, *submitting to civil authority has limits*. The midwives couldn't obey Pharaoh if it meant disobeying God. What are the limits of your obedience? In what cases might it be right to violate a civil law?

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Second, *hard times don't erase God's promises*. Have your trials caused you to question God? If so, what reassurance does our passage offer?

Third, *harsh treatment doesn't escape God's notice*. The real Moses was born into a real world of pain and suffering. What clues in our passage point to God's presence with His suffering people? What evidence tells you that God is with you?

Fourth, *heavy tests don't eclipse God's concern*. God proved His love for you by sending His Son to enter your suffering and die for you (Romans 5:8). As you close this study, call out to the Lord in prayer. Express your need for Him and profess your faith. Tell Him that you will stand firm in your convictions, regardless of the pressure to compromise, and promise to lean on His love through whatever tests you may endure.

With the help of a few faithful midwives in a shabby hamlet in Goshen, a slave-woman named Jochebed gave birth to a baby boy named Moses. Even Pharaoh with all his power couldn't hinder the coming of Israel's deliverer and the fulfillment of God's redemption plan.

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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, the example of the faithful midwives gives me courage to be faithful to You above all others, to say no when a person in authority tells me to disobey You, and to always hold fast to Your promise of deliverance. May I always be true to my Savior, the One who loves me most. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 128.
2. John C. Whitcomb, Jr., "Chart of Old Testament Patriarchs and Judges," *Study-Graph*, 3rd rev. ed. (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books), 1968.

For the 2024–2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1975, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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