

MOSES

A Man of Selfless Dedication

STUDY THREE

God's Will, My Way

Exodus 2:11–15; Acts 7:21–29

It's one thing to know God's will. It's another thing entirely to do it God's way.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

HAVE you known people who were all-thumbs mechanically speaking, but they tried to repair their own car anyway? They wrenched a bolt the wrong way and stripped the threads. They crossed electrical wires and shorted out several circuits. They poured radiator fluid instead of motor oil in the crankcase, and the engine seized up!

They had the best of intentions, the right objective, but the wrong approach. *Disaster.*

Many people desire to do God's will, but problems arise when they try to do it their own way. They aim at the right goal but, like our home-mechanic friends, go about it the wrong way and run into trouble.

Early in Moses' life, he sensed God's calling for him to deliver the Hebrews from bondage. He knew God's will for his life, but he didn't know *how* or *when* to accomplish it because God hadn't shown him what to do yet.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll see what happened when Moses took matters into his own hands. Despite his good intentions, Moses forced his will on a situation and his plan backfired. Thankfully, God remained in control and would teach Moses a valuable lesson on the importance of doing God's will, God's way—a lesson we all need to remember.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Humbly ask the Lord to reveal to you His way through His Word. Start with the psalmist's prayer, "Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your instructions" (Psalm 119:18), and then write your own prayer.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The few precious years of Moses living under his parents' godly care passed too quickly. It soon became time for Jochebed to bring her little boy "back to Pharaoh's daughter" (Exodus 2:10). As Moses grew up in his royal adoptive home, he was given the best education the Egyptians had to offer. He was trained in court life and protocol, advised on cultural and traditional matters, and instructed in astronomy, medicine, mathematics, architecture, military strategy, literature, and the arts.

In this message, how did Stephen describe Moses in [Acts 7:20–22](#)?

As a young man, Moses was the pride of Egypt. Jewish historian Josephus recorded that Moses led the Egyptian army in a decisive victory over Ethiopia.¹ A brilliant student and military strategist, a respected leader and experienced commander, Moses was uniquely *qualified* to deliver his people from slavery's chains and lead them to freedom. But was he *ready*?



Observation: The Self-Will of Moses

Observation is the first step in careful Bible study. Read the passage several times and linger over the words as you read. Look for key phrases. Follow the sequence of events and note cause-and-effect and literary devices.²

The account picks up with Moses at forty years old. Read the incident described in [Exodus 2:11–15](#) that caused Moses to leave Egypt and flee to Midian. Find Goshen in your Bible maps or the online map, "[Exodus from Egypt](#)" at [insight.org](#), and then locate Midian, which is southeast of Egypt through the wilderness and across the Sinai peninsula.

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What do you observe about the distance Moses traveled from Egypt to Midian, the terrain, and the extreme contrasts?

Let's look closer at the steps that led Moses from Egypt's lush landscape to the wasteland of Midian.

An Idea Initiated by Moses—Exodus 2:11; Acts 7:23

What did Moses do and see in [Exodus 2:11](#)? What information does [Acts 7:23](#) add?

The idea of rescuing his people must have been on Moses' mind, and seeing firsthand “how hard they were forced to work” (Exodus 2:11) crushed his heart. The emphasis of the Hebrew word for “saw,” *ra'ah*, is on “Moses' observing their labor with sympathy or grief.”³

The cruel injustice of the taskmaster beating a defenseless Hebrew man angered Moses and started his mind spinning wildly. *Something must be done!* This was a *critical moment*. His decision in this instant would determine the next forty years of his life.

Moses prompted a premature plan that resulted in disaster. So desirous of doing great things for God, he forced a situation which led to murder.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

A Plan Energized by the Flesh—Exodus 2:12; Acts 7:24–25

What clues in [Exodus 2:12](#) and [Acts 7:24–25](#) reveal Moses' plan? What did he intend his vengeful deed to accomplish?

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What clues reveal Moses acted with self-will and in the flesh?

Invariably, when you act in the flesh, you will have to cover up something. Your motive. Your manipulation. The “corpse” created by your fleshly act. It’s just a matter of time before your deed catches up to you. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

An Action That Led to Confusion and Failure—Exodus 2:13–14; Acts 7:26–28

Moses already sensed his destiny as deliverer of the Hebrews, and he “assumed his fellow Israelites would realize that God had sent him to rescue them” (Acts 7:25). However, he was still thinking like an Egyptian commander, not like a prophet from God. Leading was well within his range of competence, but leading a revolution was *not* God’s plan.

How did Moses’ scheme fall apart in [Exodus 2:13–14](#)? Compare with [Acts 7:26–28](#) for further insight.

Moses thought murdering the Egyptian would rally others around him. But they did not understand. Moses’ action confused them. He knew God wanted to use him, but he set out his own way, and it didn’t work. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Results Were Unbearable Conditions—Exodus 2:15; Acts 7:29

What bitter consequences did Moses reap in [Exodus 2:15](#) and [Acts 7:29](#)? What were the conditions like for Moses in Midian compared to what he was used to in Egypt?

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What waves of thoughts and emotions do you think washed over Moses in the wake of his failure?

Guilt hounded Moses all the way to the end of his running. Eating at his heart was the thought, God can never use me. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: From Palace to Desert

After observing what the passage says, *interpretation* helps us understand what the passage means. Moses left behind his privileged status as a son of Pharaoh and his strategic position to help his own people. He lost all his comforts, his clout, and his control. He lost everything.

In writing Exodus, why did Moses paint such an honest portrait of his failure? What lessons do you think Moses wanted his mistakes to communicate to his readers?

In the next *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll explore more lessons that Moses learned through failure. For now, try to boil down the passage into a principle—a timeless truth that applies to all people—regarding doing God's will.

Can you identify with Moses' mistakes? Have you made assumptions based on your own understanding? Ever run ahead of God and wish you'd waited for His timing? Have you ever tried to force your will and got wounded as a result? Use the following space to reflect on your own experience.

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Correlation: Lean Not on Your Own Understanding

All the wisdom of Egypt couldn't help Moses in his critical moment of decision when he witnessed the taskmaster's brutality. His emotions boiled with rage. His thoughts raced for how to respond, but he had no godly source from which to draw counsel.

What wisdom would *Proverbs 3:5–6* have given him? What difference would it have made had he followed this counsel?

If you're facing a difficult decision, what wisdom does this passage offer you?

We don't need more schooling. We don't need more education. We need wisdom. Learning wisdom takes time, and it requires failure. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Two Lingering Lessons

One impulsive act, energized by anger in the flesh, ignited a flash point. Moses lost control and acted brashly. Then, his life spun in a direction he never expected with no chance to return to the way it was.

We can learn from his example: first, *when the self-life runs its course, it settles in a desert*. What are the harshest consequences you've endured because of a flashpoint? How did God meet you in the desert?

And yet, notice how the account concluded in Exodus 2:15: "When Moses arrived in Midian, he sat down beside a well." How inviting that well must have been to Moses on the run, thirsting for refreshment and any sign of hope!

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So, the second lesson we can learn is that *when the self-life finally sits down, the well of new life is near*. Moses had to stop running and sit down long enough to know that God was still with him. God's purpose is not to abandon us in the desert but help us come to the end of ourselves so we can be filled with His Spirit.

What drink of new life has God given you when you reached the end? How has God refreshed you from the well of His presence when you felt parched with guilt and remorse?

In the concluding moments of your study, remind yourself that God's well of refreshment is near. Let Him renew your strength, restore your spirit, and reset your vision . . . just as He was about to do for Moses.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, only when I stop running and sit down can I settle my racing mind on You and rest. Your living water is always within reach. "Where can I go from Your Spirit?" the psalmist asks (Psalm 139:7 NASB). Even in the remotest places, You are with me. Thank You for never giving up on me and always being near. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, book 2, chapter 10, trans. William Whiston, [gutenberg.org/files/2848/2848-h/2848-h.htm#link22HCH0010](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2848/2848-h/2848-h.htm#link22HCH0010).
2. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"
3. New English Translation (n.p.: Biblical Studies Foundation, 1997), see note on Exodus 2:11, "observed."

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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