

MOSES

A Man of Selfless Dedication

STUDY NINE

Going from Bad to Worse

Exodus 5–6

We don't want to think about difficulties . . . we just want to think about deliverance.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

How do you see yourself? Most likely, you see yourself in one of your roles. Husband or wife, parent or grandparent, salesperson, art-lover, sports enthusiast, neighbor, church-goer, child of God. God sees you, however, in a role that you may not see . . . as a soldier.

You don't wear a uniform or don a helmet, but you still engage in battles every day. We all live in a spiritual war zone, and that's how it's going to be until Christ returns to vanquish evil, sin, and death—the final enemy.

While Christ guarantees our ultimate victory, we shouldn't be surprised by setbacks when they come. There are good days and bad days and sometimes worse days when it seems the enemy has the upper hand.

Moses had one of those “worse days” when he and Aaron faced Pharaoh for the first time. We'll see what happened in this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study. We'll also hear God's pep talk to His discouraged soldiers. It's a message we all need to hear when we face those periods in life when the battle goes from bad to worse.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

“The battle is the LORD's,” David boldly declared when facing Goliath (1 Samuel 17:47 NASB). In whatever battle you may be facing, offer it to the Lord in prayer as you begin your study.



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TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The first task when Moses and Aaron arrived in Egypt was to meet with Israel's leaders (Exodus 5:1). What did Aaron and Moses say to the elders of Israel in *Exodus 4:29–31*? What support did the leaders give them?

With the whole nation of Israel behind them, the brothers marched directly into Pharaoh's throne room. Heads high and confident, they thought, *This battle is already won!* Everything was happening just as the Lord told Moses it would. Boldly, they pronounced the message to Pharaoh that the Lord had given to Moses. Compare *Exodus 3:18* with *5:1* and note the similarities.

Instead of waving a white flag, however, Pharaoh sounded the charge! The battle to free the Hebrew slaves had begun.



Observation: Journey to Egypt

Observation is simply paying close attention to the words on the page. Read slowly and thoughtfully.¹ Notice the tone, the pace, unexpected turns, and key phrases that seem to jump off the page. Answer the following questions as you dig into the details of the passage.

Pharaoh—Exodus 5:1–21

The first character to observe is Pharaoh, whom the Egyptians revered as a god. What retort did he give in *Exodus 5:2–5*? What was his tone? What was the main reason he dismissed Moses and Aaron's request?

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How did Pharaoh make the Hebrews' terrible conditions even worse in *Exodus 5:6–14*? Notice what Pharaoh called God's message in *5:9*. What faith foundation was he trying to undermine?

When the workers couldn't meet the impossible demands, the taskmasters lashed the Israelite foremen. What was Pharaoh's response to their complaints, according to *5:15–18*?

What curses did the foremen unleash on Moses and Aaron in *5:19–21*? What emotions do you think Moses and Aaron felt?

Moses told Pharaoh what God told him to say, and as a result, people were beaten. They stood before Moses and said, "May God judge you!" Ah, that's pain. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Moses—Exodus 5:22–6:1; 6:9–12, 30

The second character is Moses. Observe his complaint in *Exodus 5:22–6:1* and the Lord's response. What was Moses' tone? Why did he aim his grievance at the Lord and not Pharaoh?

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Next, observe Moses' words to the people and their response in [Exodus 6:9](#). What were the two reasons their initial favor shifted against Moses?

What did the Lord tell Moses to do in [6:10–12](#)? How did Moses react? What old feelings surfaced in Moses?

The Lord didn't say to Moses, "You should be ashamed of yourself." God loves us, and He never slaps us when we come to Him with an aching question.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Lord—Exodus 6:1–8; 13, 29

The final and main character is the Lord, *Yahweh*. How did He respond to Pharaoh's arrogant defiance in [Exodus 6:1–8](#)? Record the number of times He says, "I am." What point was He emphasizing? What guarantees did He make?

Based on *who* He is and *how* He would act, what orders did the Lord issue to Moses and Aaron in [6:13, 29](#)?

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What similar words do you observe in the Lord's promises here and the ones He made at the burning bush in [Exodus 3:7–10](#)?

The first thing God told Moses was who He was. The next thing was what He will do. The order is as important as the facts. First, He said, "I am." Then the Lord told His servant, "I will." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: The Supremacy of Israel's God

Moses and Pharaoh fought over freeing the Hebrew slaves, but the real battle was between Israel's God and the so-called gods of Egypt—the evil forces of darkness behind Pharaoh's throne. Pharaoh rightly sneered, "I don't know the LORD" ([Exodus 5:2](#)), because darkness was all he knew.

The Lord's statement about Himself in [Exodus 6:2–8](#) is the center point and apex of the passage. What was the Lord declaring in His name, "I am Yahweh," and His title, "El-Shaddai" ([6:2](#))?

What attributes of His nature did the Lord display by affirming His covenant with Israel in [6:4–5](#)?

Out of His person and His attributes flowed His promises: "I will free you," "[I] will rescue you," "I will redeem you," "I will claim you," "I will be your God," "I will bring you into the land," and "I will give [the land] to you" ([6:6–8](#)).

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What is the significance of these promises? How should they prompt God's people to respond?

Moses asked two questions of the Lord: *Why* did You allow Your people to suffer even more? *How* will I go forward? The Lord answered Moses' *why* with "I am," and He answered Moses' *how* with "I will." Moses must only fix his eyes on God Almighty and watch Him work.

What central principle does the Lord's answers to Moses teach God's disheartened soldiers?

God's great message to Moses was this: "Because I am who I am, I will do what is best for you." Live with that theme as your focus, and it will help you get better when things get worse. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Disappointed Expectations

When the pain we hope would end only intensifies, we naturally cry out to the Lord. Job complained to the Lord through his unrelenting suffering. Sit with him in his agony as you read [Job 16:12–17](#). What was Job's inner turmoil? What implied question in [16:17](#) caused his heart to ache?

Moses vocalized similar anguish after he did no wrong but suffered anyway. He pleaded with the Lord, "Why have you brought all this trouble on your own people, Lord? Why did you send me?" (Exodus 5:22). *Why?* This was the throbbing question in Moses' heart, Job's heart . . . and perhaps yours? Let's explore God's hope-filled answers in the next phase.

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Application: The Lord’s Message to Us and Our Response

Moses had done everything God asked, and then God’s people became worse off than before. Have you been in a situation in which you did what was good but had bad results? Perhaps people were hurt and you felt responsible. If so, what was the situation? How did you feel?

Moses blamed God: “Why did you send me?” (Exodus 5:22). He blamed others: “My own people won’t listen to me anymore!” (6:12). He blamed himself: “I’m such a clumsy speaker!” (6:12). Does his blaming sound familiar? How have you reacted similarly when things went from bad to worse?

With his eyes fixed on the bloody battlefield and with volleys of criticism pounding his ears, Moses sunk into a pit of hopelessness—“Why should Pharaoh listen to me?” (6:30). What lifelines of hope did the Lord offer Moses? Look back at the Lord’s message to him in [Exodus 6:1–8](#) and the principles you wrote in the *interpretation* section.

The Lord offers you the same lifelines—His person (“I am”) and His promises (“I will”). Fix your eyes on Him not your circumstances. Tune out the criticism and listen to His words found in Scripture. What is He saying to you about Himself through the passage you studied?

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Three principles wrap up our study:

1. *Circumstances that turn against us force our dependence. We learn to trust the Lord.*
2. *Circumstances that force dependence teach us patience. We learn to wait on the Lord.*
3. *Circumstances that teach us patience make us wise. We find peace in the Lord.*

What have you learned in your bad-to-worse experience? Which of these principles resonate deeply with you in your season of life?

A final take-away is God’s reassurance: “Because I am who I am, I will always do what’s best for you.” Moses and Aaron tucked that promise in their packs when they marched back into battle with Pharaoh. Carry it with you in whatever battles you might face. ***Stand firm in the Lord!***



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I believe You know what You’re doing in my world. Nothing happens by chance or by mistake. You can do anything You determine. I know that You will only do what is best because of who You are. Faithful. Loving. True. Thank You for being a good Father whom I can trust. In Jesus’ name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. 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?](#)”

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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