



Lesson Two



STANDING ON HOLY GROUND (Exodus 3:1-15)

Day One: Backside of the Mountain

Moses's life was a rags-to-riches—and back to rags again—story. After he was born, his underprivileged mother tucked him into a boat made of bulrushes and launched him afloat on the Nile River. The Pharaoh's daughter discovered the baby, and the child grew up to become second-in-command of Egypt. However, as an adult, Moses discovered his Jewish heritage and chose to abandon the riches and advantages of Egypt to identify with the Hebrew slaves. This week, we find Moses serving his father-in-law as a lowly shepherd wandering through the desert.

This wasn't just any desert—it was “the backside of the desert” (Exodus 3:1, KJV). If a desert is a barren place, then the desert's backside must be utterly desolate. That was certainly the case for Moses. His life can be divided into three segments of forty years. The first forty were spent in splendor as a member of Pharaoh's family. The second forty years were spent in squalor in Midian, tending his father-in-law's sheep. His final forty years would be spent leading the children of Israel through the desert as they traveled to the Promised Land.

During our own *backside of the desert* seasons, we can begin to doubt a future of any value—even if God has promised it. The waiting is wearying, and we are prone to wallow in self-pity. We think, *Maybe I heard God wrong*. Or we think that surely no one sees the latent potential deep within us. But the waiting is part of the preparation. It's during this time that God changes us, shapes us, humbles us, and molds us into the person He can use. This time is not wasted.

We discover that the backside of the desert is the thin place where Moses encountered God and received his calling to be Israel's deliverer.

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, ‘I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn’” (Exodus 3:1-3).

PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. Describe what Moses was doing according to our text today.

2. Who did the flock belong to? What was Moses’s occupation?

3. Describe where Moses led the sheep.

4. Explain who appeared to Moses and how He was manifested.

5. Describe what was unusual about the burning bush.

6. How did Moses respond to this apparition?

3. HOREB and Sinai refer to the same location in Scripture. One may refer to the mountain range while the other refers to a particular peak. The highest peak in this range measures about 7,500 feet high. Our text calls it the “mountain of God” in anticipation of the place Moses would meet God to receive the Ten Commandments.

5. BURNING BUSH: This was no verdant shrub. It was barely a bush—more of a bramble. It was dry, brittle, and thorny. It likely resembled the tumbleweed of America’s great Southwest. It must have been startling to see this overgrown weed burn without being consumed.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

7. Journal about a time you had a backside of the desert experience. How did it make you feel? What did you learn during this time?

8. Fill in the chart to discover who else encountered the Angel of the LORD.

SCRIPTURE	WHO SAW THE ANGEL OF THE LORD
Genesis 16:7-9	
Numbers 22:22-23	
Judges 13:2-3	
2 Kings 1:3-4	

8. ANGEL OF THE LORD:
Scripture didn't reveal the identity of this person. Angel means messenger. Some believe this person to be a messenger for the LORD, while others believe this is the LORD Himself. This apparition is known as a theophany, meaning a visible manifestation of God.

“Moses was a forgotten man in the wilderness, but God had Moses right where He wanted him and met him at a burning bush.”

—Michael Catt

Day Two: Take Off Your Shoes

When Skip and I visited Japan, we practiced the custom of removing our shoes before entering a home—an act of respect to the family that lives there. Japanese people also eat their meals on mats placed on the floor, so the custom is one of cleanliness, too. Today, we see God call to Moses from the burning bush, saying, “Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet” (Exodus 3:5). God asked Moses to offer his respect to the God of the universe.

I believe there are other deeper meanings to the act of Moses removing his sandals. God was commanding him to cast off his old life and get ready for a new one. He would no longer be the shepherd of his father-in-law’s sheep. He would now become the shepherd of Abraham’s people. Moses needed a new pair of shoes for the calling God was placing upon his life.

There was another reason for the prophet to go barefoot on holy ground. Perhaps God was saying He wanted Moses to feel the ground beneath his feet, as shoes protect us from heat and pain. God had come to tell Moses that He had seen the sorrows of His people and wanted to comfort them in their suffering. Moses needed to get in touch with the injustice in the world and feel the pain of others more intensely.

Have you grown out of touch with the less fortunate in our world? Do you turn a blind eye to the homeless? Maybe it's time to remove your shoes and feel the pain of others—just like Moses did.

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“So when the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, ‘Moses, Moses!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then He said, ‘Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.’ Moreover He said, ‘I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God” (Exodus 3:4-6).

PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. Explain what God saw Moses do, referring to verse 2, explain why Moses did that.

2. What did God call out from the midst of the bush? Explain how that must have made Moses feel.

3. Describe how Moses responded to God's call.

4. What two things did God tell Moses to do and why?

3. HERE I AM: *Imagine hearing God call out your name. How would you respond? God often called out someone's name twice in a row. The LORD called out “Jacob, Jacob” during a night vision, and the patriarch also responded, “Here I am” (Genesis 46:2). Perhaps God has to repeat Himself because we wouldn't believe our ears if He just called our names once.*

4. HOLY GROUND: *No doubt this ground had never before been holy in the forty years Moses tended sheep. What made the ground holy now was the presence of God. Holy means to be set apart for God's purpose. God's purpose—in this place, at this time—was to meet Moses and call him to be Israel's deliverer.*

5. How did God introduce Himself?

6. Explain how Moses responded and why?

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

7. Today's lesson reveals that God knows His people by name. Rewrite the following verse as a prayer, asking God to teach you to hear His voice and follow Him wherever He goes:

"The sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice" (John 10:3-5).

8. When Moses removed his shoes, it was a sign of respect. Journal about something in your life that God would like you to remove as an act of holiness.

8. FATHER GOD: *God the Father is the first person of the Trinity. The Apostles' Creed says He is "Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth." While His grandeur is fixed, Father also implies familiarity. He calls Himself the Father of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob specifically. As Christians, we know Him as Abba Father, meaning Daddy.*

"He knows my name
He knows my every thought
He sees each tear that falls
And hears me when I call."

—Tommy Walker

Day Three: Land of Milk and Honey

The phrase *milk and honey* is repeated over twenty times in the Old Testament, referring to the promise of the Jews' return to the land of Israel. What many don't know is that the milk refers to goat milk, and honey refers to the thick syrup that comes from dates. It also predicts that the land would one day bear abundant crops.

That has not always been the case for the Promised Land. After Mark Twain visited the land in 1867, he described the desolation of Palestine in his book *Innocence Abroad*: "The further we went the hotter the sun got, and the more rocky and bare, repulsive and dreary the landscape became.... There was hardly a tree or a shrub anywhere. Even the olive and the cactus, those fast friends of a worthless soil, had almost deserted the country." Did you know that Jeremiah prophesied that this would be the case? "This whole country will become a desolate wasteland" (Jeremiah 25:11, NIV).

Today, Israel once again flows with milk and honey. It's one of the world's leading fresh citrus producers and exporters of oranges, grapefruit, and tangerines. The *Jerusalem Post* reported that "even in the Negev Desert, modern agriculture practices have turned sand into rich soil, ripe with cherry tomatoes, citrus and other fruits and vegetables."¹

It's mind-blowing to realize that some of the prophecies in Scripture have had a dual fulfillment. Moses would bring Israel to the land flowing with milk and honey. And, after World War II, the Jews would once again inhabit the land, reintroduce Hebrew as the national language, and restore the desolate ground to create a land full of milk and honey.

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

"And the LORD said: 'I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites'" (Exodus 3:7-8).

¹Eliana Rudee, "'Land of milk and honey:' Ancient promise, modern reality," *Jerusalem Post*, February 15, 2022, <https://www.jpost.com/christianworld/arti->

PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. Describe what God saw in the land of Egypt.
2. What did God hear, and who was the source of what He heard?
3. Explain why God decided to rescue His people from the Egyptians.
4. In your own words, describe the land where God said He would take His people.



1. OPPRESSION is such a sad word. It means depression, affliction, or misery. The Jews came to Egypt when Joseph brought great favor to his people as Egypt's second-in-command. Exodus begins, "Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph" (Exodus 1:8). A new administration brought great oppression.



2. TASKMASTERS: This word comes from a root word that means to drive an animal, human, or army. The Jews' taskmasters drove them through harassment and tyranny "They set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens" (Exodus 1:11a).

5. Make a list of the people who were dwelling in the Promised Land.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

6. Today we learned that God had seen, heard, and known what was happening to His people in Egypt. In the space provided below, recall a time in your life where God saw, heard, and knew what was happening in your life.

He saw:

He heard:

He knew:

7. Egypt used taskmasters to force the Jewish slaves to make bricks. Forced labor still exists to this day. Spend time praying for slave laborers around the world.

6. DELIVER: *The Angel of the LORD spoke with Moses to promise to deliver the children of Israel from their oppressors. David, too, believed that the Angel of the LORD would come to rescue him in his time of trouble. “The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them” (Psalm 34:7).*

7. SLAVE: *According to the Global Slavery Index, “an estimated 50 million people were living in modern slavery on any given day in 2021. This is nearly one in every 150 people in the world. Modern slavery is hidden in plain sight and is deeply intertwined with life in every corner of the world.”²*

“There is no university for a Christian, like that of sorrow and trial.”

—Charles Spurgeon

²“Global Slavery Index,” Walk Free, accessed December 16, 2023, <https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/map/>.

Day Four: Who Am I?

“Who am I?” asked Moses. This once-confident and impulsive man had learned humility. Back in Egypt, he had witnessed a taskmaster beating a Hebrew slave. After looking around to make sure no one could see him, Moses killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. But someone had witnessed the crime. Fearing retribution from Pharaoh, Moses ran for his life. That’s how he ended up tending sheep in Midian.

Someone once said that Moses spent the first forty years of his life trying to become somebody. He spent the next forty years becoming nobody. And he spent the last forty years learning what God can do with a nobody.

Moses felt unworthy of the task ahead. He needed courage to confront Pharaoh, who might have demanded his head. He longed for the skill to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, for they were unarmed, undisciplined, and unable to help themselves. But most of all, he needed faith.

In truth, Moses was the best qualified candidate for the job. He knew the inner workings of the Egyptian court. He had studied their language and culture thoroughly. He was also acquainted with the desert and how to survive its hostile environment.

Although Moses was suitable for the task, it was not something to be accomplished in the flesh. God provided the best solution of all—the promise of His presence. “I will certainly be with you” (Exodus 3:12).

Jesus told His disciples, “Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). It’s true that our strength and ability are not enough to do what God has planned for us to do. But there is another promise that makes us invincible: “With God nothing will be impossible” (Luke 1:37).

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.’ But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?’ So He said, ‘I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain’” (Exodus 3:9-12).

PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. What did God tell Moses that He had heard and seen?
2. Explain the solution God had in mind.
3. What two doubts did Moses give God in response to His solution?

4. Describe the promise God made to Moses and how it must have made him feel.

5. What sign did God give Moses that what He said would come to pass?

6. Describe what future event this sign represents.

4. HIS PRESENCE: *In the Old Testament, saints feared the loss of God's presence. In the New Testament we have the promise that God will stay with us always. In fact, it is how Jesus concluded the Great Commission: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).*

6. HIS SIGN: *God's sign to Moses that His promises would be fulfilled was the return to this mountain—Mount Sinai. The children of Israel would journey there to worship. It was also there that God met Moses face to face and gave him the Ten Commandments.*

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

7. God gave Moses a commission to deliver His people from slavery. Jesus left us with the Great Commission to tell people how He will deliver them from their sin. “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16, NIV).

a. List three people you know who need to hear the gospel, or good news.

b. Pray that God would open their hearts to be saved.

c. Write down a time and place you can share the gospel with them.

8. David feared the loss of God’s presence. There are times we feel forsaken, too. Use the following verse to write a prayer to God asking for His presence to go with you always.

“Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me by Your generous Spirit” (Psalm 51:10-12).

7. GREAT COMMISSION: *The Great Commission includes three commands: 1) we are to go wherever God sends us; 2) we are to baptize those who are saved; and 3) we are to teach these new believers God’s commands.*

“Peace comes not from the absence of trouble, but from the presence of God.”

—Alexander MacLaren

Day Five: I Am Who I Am

A Chinese proverb says, “He who asks a question is a fool for five minutes; he who does not ask a question remains a fool forever.” Our text today begins with Moses asking God a profound question: “What is Your name?” I’m really glad that he did, because we get the answer.

Think about it. Until now, Moses did not know God’s name, and neither did the children of Israel. Sometimes we find it hard to follow Jesus because we can’t see Him. The Jews followed a God they could not see—Him whose name they did not know. Thomas missed seeing the resurrected Christ when He first appeared to the disciples in the upper room. He told the other disciples that he would not believe the LORD had risen from the dead until he saw Him personally and put his finger in the hole in His hand. Eventually, Jesus appeared to Thomas. And when He did, He chided the doubting apostle, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). We are some of those blessed people who believe, yet have not seen.

Moses seemed to be saying to God, “We haven’t been formally introduced.” The prophet knew He was the God of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He wanted to know, “Are You my God, too?” Yahweh was the God of Israel, who proclaimed himself as, “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14). He is the singular God. Completely unique. No one else compares to Him. He is “the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last” (Revelation 22:13). God told the Egyptians that He would send the plagues as judgment against Egypt’s idols so “you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth” (Exodus 9:14).

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“Then Moses said to God, ‘Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you,” and they say to me, “What is His name?” what shall I say to them?’ And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, “I AM has sent me to you.”’ Moreover God said to Moses, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: “The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations”’” (Exodus 3:13-15).

PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. What name did the children of Israel have for God?

2. Do you think that the Hebrews asking Moses if he knew God's name was a test? Why or why not?

3. How would you describe God's name "I AM WHO I AM"?

4. What phrase was used twice to explain who had sent Moses to the Hebrews?

5. Describe the permanence of God's name.

3. YAHWEH: *The Hebrew language does not use vowels. The literal spelling of God's name is YHVH, which consists of four consonants. It is believed the name is derived from a verb that means "to be," or "to exist," or "to become." The pronunciation is universally known as Yahweh, while some use Jehovah as an alternative.*

5. FOREVER: *God is self-existing. No one else, nothing else, and nowhere else can define Him. He is eternal, which means that He has no beginning or end. He is the God who changes not. "For I am the LORD, I do not change" (Malachi 3:6).*

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

6. Some believe this Bible passage is Moses's conversion experience. Up until now, he had known of God, but after this encounter, he knew Him personally. Journal about your salvation. How did God make Himself known to you?

7. Jesus made several “I am” statements. Fill in the following chart to discover who Jesus identified as.

SCRIPTURE	I AM
John 6:35	
John 8:12	
John 10:7	
John 10:11	
John 11:25	
John 14:6	
John 15:1	

7. I AM WHO I AM: *This name for God sounds like a blank check. In other words, “I Am whatever it is that you need.” God is all that you will ever need. Explore the vastness of His character. He will show you how to fill in the blanks of your life.*

“[He is] EVERYTHING we will ever need Him to be to fulfill us.... He tells us to stand in awe of a Being who is so completely, comprehensively, supremely, and totally sufficient; who always has been, is now, and always will be so perfect that there is no way to describe Him other than I AM.... He is waiting for us to give Him the only response of true faith—

You are! You are! You are!”

—Joy Dawson