

The Call of Moses: Background Information

Goals:

- To help children make a connection between this portion of the Exodus Story, “The Call of Moses,” to the plagues, crossing the Red Sea, the Ten Commandments and the story of Joseph and how the Israelites came to be slaves in Egypt. One of these stories is taught each year to help kids keep the connections going strong.
- To teach that even a person who feels unworthy and inadequate, such as Moses, may be called by God to do His will.
- To teach that even children who are God’s people by faith in Jesus Christ may be called and used to proclaim God’s greatness.
- To teach that God has a plan for His people; He cares for and delivers His people when they are in need, just as He cared for and delivered the Israelites from Egypt.
- To teach that wherever we meet God is a holy place, and that “prayer” is two-way communication with God.
- To teach that God loves all people everywhere.

Concepts:

1. We don’t have to be perfect or an adult to do God’s will.
2. God gives us the ability to do His will when we obey Him.
3. God is always with us to help us do His will.
4. Wherever we meet God is a holy place.
5. When meeting God in prayer we must be as willing to listen as to speak.
6. Remembering that God loves all people everywhere, we can also pray for other people.

Biblical Explanation and Background

The history of Moses life and an explanation of how the Hebrew people became enslaved in Egypt is contained in Exodus 1 and 2. It will be briefly repeated in our teaching about Moses before God in the burning bush, so it is necessary for the teacher to know the content of those chapters.

The fact that God foreknew the enslavement of the Hebrews in Egypt is shown in Genesis, as God gives the covenant to Abraham: Genesis 15:13 – 14, “Know for certain that your descendents will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.”

This enslavement came about after Abraham’s grandson, Jacob, took his family to Egypt to live. While Jacob’s son Joseph was alive, and while Pharaohs (Kings of Egypt) reigned who remembered Joseph, the Hebrew people enjoyed a good life in Egypt. Then “a new king, who did not know about Joseph” (Exodus 1:8) came to power in Egypt, and in fear that the Israelites might join Egypt’s enemies in battle, he imposed slavery on them. When you teach this to the children, explain what “slavery” is (all work,

no pay or play), and how the king also decided to kill all the little boy babies, so that when Moses was born his mother had to hide him. When he grew too big to hide in the house, she made him a little floating basket bed so that his sister Miriam could watch him from the riverside. Thus it happened that when Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe in the river Nile that she found baby Moses and adopted him as her own. The princess, thanks to Miriam's vigilance, chose Moses' mother to be his nurse, and so his mother was able to teach him about his people and about God's ways.

Upon reaching maturity (Exodus 2:11), Moses' sympathies lay with obtaining freedom for his own people, and he murdered an Egyptian who was mistreating a Hebrew. Moses fled from Pharaoh's wrath and settled in the land of Midian east of the Sinai Peninsula, across the Gulf of Aqaba. He lived in Midian as a shepherd, married a woman named Zipporah who was a daughter of the priest of Midian, and had sons, one of whom was named Gershom. Meanwhile the Israelites suffered in their slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt.

At the right time, God decided to get Moses' attention as Moses pastured his flock at Horeb, "the mountain of God" (Exodus 3:1). God appeared to Moses as a bush that was burning, but not burned up, and God called Moses from the bush. Moses answered, "Here I am", and he obeyed when God said, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." When Moses realized he was talking to the Almighty, he "hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God." (Exodus 3:6) Later in his life Moses would beg God, "show me your glory" (Exodus 33: 18), and God would answer, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." (Exodus 33:19 – 20)

When God spoke to Moses and promised to deliver the Israelites from the Egyptians and lead them to "a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8) by sending Moses to Pharaoh and causing Moses to lead the people out of Egypt, Moses protested, "Who am I..." (Exodus 3:11). We also often answer God with our inadequacies, and God answers with His abundant presence and supply, revealing Himself as "Jehovah-shammah", "the LORD is there" (Ezekiel 48:35), and as "Jehovah-jireh", "the LORD our provider" (Genesis 22:13 – 14).

When Moses asked God for His credentials, His Name, God revealed Himself to Moses as the eternal, self-existent God, "I AM", and He gave Moses his instructions. Moses protested that neither the leaders of Israel nor the pharaoh would believe that God had sent him, and so God gave Moses three miraculous signs. Moses' walking stick became a snake and then returned to being a stick (Exodus 4:2 - 4), his hand became leprous and then was healed (Exodus 4:6 – 7), and God promised to turn a sample of Nile river water to blood when Moses poured it on the ground (Exodus 4:9).

Moses protested again that he was a poor speaker, "slow of speech and tongue" (Exodus 4:10), and God replied, "Who gave man his mouth?" (Exodus 4:11),

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and promised to help. Moses protested again, and even asked God to send someone else, and God said that Moses' brother Aaron would help him, and promised, "I will help both of you speak and teach you what to do." (Exodus 4:16)

God had a plan for Moses; He says to Pharaoh in Exodus 9:16, "...I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." Believers in Jesus in whom God's Holy Spirit dwells are also called to be humble and obedient so that God can show His power, and so that His "name may be proclaimed in all the earth." The believer, even as a child, is called to seek God's presence, to listen to His Word, and to listen and obey in prayer. We continue throughout our lives to know more of who God is and of who we are as His people.

Footnote: This is the first of a series of rotation lessons for Silverdale United Methodist Church (SUMC) on the theme "Proclaim His Name to..." written for September, 2003, through May, 2004 rotation Sunday school at SUMC. The lesson material is largely derived from material posted on <http://www.rotation.org> by various other authors; that material is available without copyright restrictions as long as credit is given to the original authors, and it is not used for commercial purposes. Gail Smith is the author of this present series of lessons for SUMC; resources are listed in the "references" section.

SUMC's rotation Sunday school is called Kids Faith T.R.E.K. (Totally Receiving and Embracing God's Kingdom).