

# Ministry of Grace Church

## Exodus 6 - Speaker Notes

Last time, in Exodus chapter 5, we learned the basic differences between polytheism (paganism) and monotheism. In pagan worship, there is no personal relationship between man and his god (or gods). Man offers his sacrifices in hopes of appeasing the anger of the gods so that they will not make life even more difficult for man. In monotheism, however, there *is* a relationship between man and God and that relationship is initiated by God, not by man.

Last time, we also looked at the basic credo of the Jewish faith, called the Shema. It says:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

We noted in this that the Christian faith, like the Jewish faith, is not just an intellectual recognition of who God is. It also involves an emotional relationship with our Creator.

Between chapter 5 and chapter 6, in the narrative that Moses recorded, it appears that there has been an interval of time, perhaps a few months. This period of severe labor, most likely on the part of all the people of Israel not just the men, was preparing them for the exhaustive and physically demanding journey through the wilderness.

Do you remember the question that Moses posed to God through his prayers?

... “O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? (Exodus 5:22)

Have you ever felt like God is not answering your prayers, even those earnestly laid before Him? When in a difficult situation are you tempted to ask God “Why?” And, have you noticed that He seldom answers that question directly? Perhaps, as He did with Moses, He is going to show you, in time, that through His powerful hand His answer will be demonstrated for you. Notice that God never directly answered Moses’s prayerful question. When we don’t understand what God is doing in our lives, we need to learn to ask, not “why,” but “what?” It is during these times that God is showing Himself to us and we need to have our eyes, ears, and heart open to what it is He is telling us.

We will learn that Moses didn’t handle himself very well the first few times that he encountered difficulty in the task that God was calling him to. But, in time, as a result of his gaining experiential knowledge of God, he learned how to handle these situations in a godly manner.

### Exodus 6:1

**But the LORD said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.”**

God assured Moses that he (Moses) will ultimately succeed in his assigned task of leading the children of Israel out of Egypt. We will see in verse twelve, however, that Moses is not yet convinced that he is the right person or that he will succeed.

In this verse, we are told that the people of Israel will be led out of Egypt, “with a strong hand” This is from the Hebrew verb *yad chazakah*. The root of this is *chizuk* which is elsewhere incorrectly translated as “harden.” The proper translation of *chizuk* is “strengthen.” Therefore, *yad*

*chazakah* refers to strength and power, forcibly applied. God was about to demonstrate his sovereign power over all of creation in the sight of Pharaoh, after which Pharaoh would exert his sovereign authority of Egypt in releasing the children of Israel.

There is some question as to whether God is telling us that it is by Pharaoh's strong hand or by God's strong hand that the Israelites will be driven out of Egypt. It's all a matter of translation. The New International Version of the Bible translates this verse as:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of **my** mighty hand he will let them go; because of **my** mighty hand he will drive them out of his country."

This translation makes more sense to me because, as we will see, the strength, or might, of Pharaoh and all of Egypt is nothing compared to the power of our God. It is God's mighty hand that will release the Israelites from Egypt.

### **Exodus 6:2-5**

**God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant."**

By now we should recognize the word "LORD" as coming from the Hebrew *YHVH*. This is the special, personal relationship name of God (the covenant name of God) which occurs more than 6800 times in the Old Testament. In ancient Temple times, only the high priest would utter the Name and only during Yom Kippur. As a result, the Jewish tradition is to not utter the sacred Name at all, but to substitute the word *Adonai* (Lord) when reading the sacred writings. The Jews consider the name *YHVH* so holy that it has never been written with the vowel markings. As a result, no one knows how the name was originally pronounced.

The Masoretes, who from about the 6th to the 10th century worked to reproduce the original written text of the Hebrew Bible, ensured that the Name of the LORD would not be taken in vain by substituting the vowel marks for *Adonai* and putting them under the letters *YHVH* to form the word *Yehovah*, or its Anglicized form, Jehovah. It was later speculated that perhaps the Masoretes reversed the vowels for *Adonai* when applied to the letters *YHVH*, so some attempted to "correct" the pronunciation by pronouncing the Name as "*Yahoveh*" or "*Yahweh*." This, too, may be incorrect (though the construct form "Yah" probably is part of the original pronunciation).

Another name of God that we encounter here is *Elohim*. This is the Name given for God as the Creator of the universe (**Genesis 1:1-2:4a**) and implies strength, power, and justice. *Yahweh*, on the other hand, expresses the idea of God's closeness to humans. For example, *Yahweh* "breathed into his (Adam's) nostrils the breath of life" (**Genesis 2:7**).

A third name of God that we encounter here is "God Almighty" This comes from the Hebrew *El Shaddai*, which is composed of two words:

- *El* – We learned previously that this word means "possessor of power." When referencing God, *El* is almost always qualified by additional words that further define the meaning that distinguish Him from false gods. These other names or titles for God are sometimes called "construct forms."

- *Shaddai* – The predominant belief is that the root of this word is *shadad*, meaning "to overpower" or "to destroy." If this is the case then *El Shaddai* is best translated, "Almighty God." Some, however, believe the root word to be *shad*, meaning "breast," and carries the meaning of "one who provides for, cares for, and sustains." If this is the case, then *El Shaddai* would best be translated, "All-sufficient God."

God tells Moses, "but by my name the LORD (*YHVH*) I did not make myself known to them." There has been considerable discussion about the meaning of this phrase for millennia. After all, how can this be true when in Genesis it is clear that name of *YHVH* was known: Remember that *YHVH* is always translated as LORD or GOD.

But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" (*Genesis 15:2*)

And he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" (*Genesis 15:7-8*)

Though there have been a number of explanations given for this apparent contradiction, the most reasonable explanation seems to be:

From the beginning, mankind knew (men were aware of) the personal name of *Yahweh*, but it was only in the fulfillment of the promises to them that they could really "know" Him. We learned previously that the Hebrew word *yahdaw*, translated "know," refers to intimate knowledge. However, it is not just intimate *awareness*, but intimate *experiential knowledge* of who God really is. Recall that this is the same word used of Adam in *Genesis 4:1*,

Now Adam *knew* Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain

It's fairly obvious that Adam was not simply intimately aware of Eve, but that he had intimate experiential knowledge of her. This is an important concept to grasp as we strive to know our God better.

Since Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not have intimate experiential knowledge of God's fulfillment of the promises He made to them, they did not yet **know** Him as *YHVH*.

### **Exodus 6:6-9**

**Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'**" Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery.

Notice the seven "I will" covenants that God makes with the children of Israel, revealing Himself as the personal, covenant fulfilling God of Israel:

1. I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians
2. I will deliver you from slavery to them
3. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment

4. I will take you to be my people
5. I will be your God
6. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob
7. I will give it to you for a possession

He brackets these seven covenant statements with the proclamation, “I am the LORD” before, after, and in the middle (a trinity of *Yahweh*). So, we see that it is through the intimate experiential knowledge of God as He fulfills this covenant with Israel that He will become *Yahweh* to them.

But, the children of Israel did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and the harsh slavery that they were under. In spite of God’s revealing Himself as *Yahweh* to them, the children of Israel were still focused on their own misery. They were unable to believe what Moses was telling them. As we will see later, when the miraculous plagues are laid against Egypt, the Israelites begin to understand *Yahweh* and He begins to become real to them (intimate, experiential knowledge).

### **Exodus 6:10-13**

**So the LORD said to Moses, “Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the people of Israel go out of his land.” But Moses said to the LORD, “Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?” But the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge about the people of Israel and about Pharaoh king of Egypt: to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt.**

Though some time has passed, *Yahweh* once again commands Moses to go to Pharaoh. This time, Moses is not to ask for permission, but to command Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go.

**Objection #5 – I should just quit** (see Exodus chapter 4 for the first four objections) – Although Moses has twice seen God’s miracles in turning the staff into a snake and producing a leprous hand (the first time at the burning bush and the second time before the leaders of the children of Israel) and he has gone to Pharaoh as God commanded him the first time, Moses is now ready to give up. One of the reasons for his wanting to quit is that the children of Israel have ceased believing him, therefore Pharaoh will be strengthened against him. His other reason is an old excuse, “I am not a good speaker, LORD, I can’t do it!” Instead of Moses being a positive example of faith and obedience to the children of Israel, Moses has allowed the discouragement, lack of faith, and disobedience of the children of Israel to affect him. Instead of standing up like a follower of God and a persuader of people, Moses has allowed himself to become a follower of people and tries to be a persuader of God.

God’s response to Moses is to once again make it clear that Moses is to take Aaron with him. No longer giving instruction to Moses and Aaron, God now commands them to obey (**and gave them a charge about the people of Israel**). He also includes the children of Israel with Pharaoh as the ones whom Moses is to command (not ask) regarding the exodus from Egypt.

### **Exodus 6:14, 15**

**These are the heads of their fathers' houses: the sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi; these are the clans of Reuben. The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman; these are the clans of Simeon.**

The storyline takes a sudden and unexpected turn here. For some reason, God saw it necessary to spend some time here talking about the lineage of the Israelites. Having once again declared to Moses that he is to go with his brother, Aaron, to speak to Pharaoh, God now gives us the genealogy of these two brothers. Notice that only the line of the first three sons of Jacob (Reuben, Simeon, and Levi) are given and that only the direct descendants of the first sons are enumerated here. That allows the writer to focus on the tribe of Levi (later declared to be the priestly tribe).

### **Exodus 6:16-19**

**These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, the years of the life of Levi being 137 years. The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, by their clans. The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, the years of the life of Kohath being 133 years. The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the clans of the Levites according to their generations.**

The writer here now focuses on the grand-children of Levi. Notice, he gives the age of Levi as the father of those who will follow in the narrative. Notice also that he interjects the age of Kohath, the father of those who will be described next. Why their ages are given is unclear.

### **Exodus 6:20-22**

**Amram took as his wife Jochebed his father's sister, and she bore him Aaron and Moses, the years of the life of Amram being 137 years. The sons of Izhar: Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri. The sons of Uzziel: Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri.**

The writer now lists the great-grandchildren of Israel in the tribe of Levi and of the clan of Kohath. Once again, he gives the age of the father of the line he is pursuing.

### **Exodus 6:23 - 25a**

**Aaron took as his wife Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and the sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. The sons of Korah: Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph; these are the clans of the Korahites. Eleazar, Aaron's son, took as his wife one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas**

The writer continues with the grandchildren of Amram. One curious thing is that he includes the sons of Korah here, not mentioning any other of the grandchildren of Izhar, Hebron or Uzziel. It is possible that this emphasis is given to Korah in order to single him out, for he will later lead a rebellion against Moses and Aaron as the rightful leaders of the Israelites (see Numbers chapter 16 for a description of their rebellion and God's ensuing judgment).

### **Exodus 6:25b, 27**

**These are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites by their clans. These are the Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said: "Bring out the people of Israel from the land of Egypt by their hosts." It was they who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing out the people of Israel from Egypt, this Moses and this Aaron.**

The writer explains why the genealogy of the previous twelve verses was provided. It was to demonstrate the lineage of Moses and Aaron as direct descendants of Levi.

## **Exodus 6:28-30**

**On the day when the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, the LORD said to Moses, “I am the LORD; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you.” But Moses said to the LORD, “Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips. How will Pharaoh listen to me?”**

God now picks-up the narrative at the point where Moses had objected to His command to go speak to Pharaoh because of not being a great speaker. God’s response and Moses’ obedience will be revealed in the next chapter of Exodus.

## **So What?**

Throughout this chapter we have focused on the covenant name of God, *YHVH (Yahweh)*. We learned from this the importance of the bondage and suffering of the children of Israel, without which they would never have developed an intimate, experiential knowledge of God. In chapter 5 of Exodus we learned how we often respond to difficulties in our own lives with complaining and blaming. We learned that instead of complaining, we should count it all joy because the trial of our faith develops patience, which strengthens our faith, making us more complete.

Now, we learn in this chapter that it is not just the intimate knowledge of God (knowing factual things about Him) but the *experiential*, intimate knowledge that makes us more like His Son, Jesus. This kind of knowledge can only come by *experiencing* God’s fulfillment of his promises in our lives as we encounter trials and difficulties. That’s why James says:

**My brethren, consider it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfecting work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (James 1:2-4)**

The word translated “testing” is *dokimadzō*, which means “to prove by refining.” That’s why we can consider it joy when we encounter these trying times, because it is through these trials that we experience the reality of God’s promises and our faith is made stronger. We can’t gain this experiential knowledge without trials, just as gold can’t be purified without fire! Knowing this, we can rejoice when difficulties come. Not just because He is making us more like His Son, but because we are gaining intimate, experiential knowledge of Him as the Promise Keeper. This intimate, experiential knowledge strengthens and purifies our faith and will one day result in praise, honor and glory being given to our God. That’s what Peter said:

**In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith ... may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1Peter 1:6, 7)**

In order for us to really know someone else we have to have common experiences with them. Part of the courtship process (dating) is all about having common experiences. The more things we experience together, the more we get to know about each other. But, through these experiences we may learn that we don’t really like the other person nearly as much as we thought we did, and break-off the relationship. Fortunately, with God that can’t happen. First, because the more we experience God through trials, the more we realize how much He loves and cares for us and how good He is to us (and for us). Second, we know He won’t let us go because He has chosen us and He has told us that He will never leave us nor forsake us. When we put our trust in Christ as our Lord and Savior, we became irrevocably bound to Him. The only thing to make the bond richer is to develop a more intimate, experiential knowledge of Him.

I know a lot of Christians have a hard time accepting the fact that God chooses some and rejects others, so let's look at a couple of short scripture passages regarding election. The first is from Paul in his letter to the church in Ephesus:

even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, (Ephesians 1:4-5)

This clearly states that God chose us even before He created the first atom of matter. He chose us and determined at that time to adopt us based on His own will (His own desire), not something we will do in our lifetime. But what was it that He saw in us that made Him want to choose us? I think this will blow your mind when you wrap your head around it. In his letter to the church at Rome, Paul said:

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Romans 8:28-30)

Do you see a word there that we have been learning about today? Yes, the word "foreknew." Some have tried to say that God was aware ahead of time who would accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and, as a result, He chose them. But foreknowledge is not foreawareness. This word is based on the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *yahdaw*. This verse tells us that God had a previous intimate experiential knowledge of us before creation and because of this intimate experiential knowledge He predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son. And – before creation, God called us to salvation, He justified us (He declared us to be without sin), and He glorified us (as we will be in His presence in heaven)!

Do you see that? God has already had intimate experiential knowledge of every Christian and He loves us (either because of it or in spite of it). That means that we have an obligation to develop an experientially intimate knowledge of Him. Therefore, in every aspect of our life, in every part of every path we take, let us be experiencing God's goodness and provision. Let us include God in all of our thought life. Let us invite Him into all of our activities. Let us make Him our most intimate partner through every experience of our life. Let's always keep Proverbs in mind:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In *all* your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5, 6)

We now have a fresh perspective on the difficult times of our lives. God does not bring these difficulties upon us to make us suffer and complain. He allows them so that we can develop a more complete intimate, experiential knowledge of Him.

Now what do you think of the grievous difficulties you're facing? Are they truly grievous, or are they a cause for joy and praise?

Let's pray.