The word “exodus” means “to evacuate.” The Book of Exodus is God’s revealed evacuation plan of God’s people out of Egyptian slavery. In anticipation of Easter and leading up to Palm Sunday, this series aims to show how God has always had a plan for His people to have a way out of slavery in order to be with Him in fellowship. By looking at the life of Moses (February) and the nation of Israel (March), everything aims to point to how God has always used someone He calls (Moses) to accomplish something He establishes (blood, death, Passover)—this being a pointer to the ultimate fulfillment in Christ. Because of Christ, we too can “evacuate” out of sin, slavery, and death.

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The Birth of an Evacuation: Moses’ Adoption

Summary and Goal

God’s plan for evacuation happened long before it actually occurred and in a way that was unexpected and unnatural. In the middle of a time when it seemed God had forgotten and neglected His people, He was beginning to work His unexpected plan in a most unexpected way.

Main Passages
Exodus 1:1–2:10

Session Outline
1. God’s Faithfulness Through the Generations (Exodus 1:1-10)
2. God’s Faithfulness in Hardship (Exodus 1:11-22)
3. God’s Faithfulness in Raising a Deliverer (Exodus 2:1-10)

Theological Theme
Even as the generations shifted for the Israelites and circumstances developed rapidly to their detriment, God faithfully preserved His people and prepared them for deliverance.

Christ Connection
Just as Moses was introduced as the child who would become the deliverer for God’s people in the face of evil enslavement, Christ also came as a child to be our ultimate Deliverer from the greatest evil that enslaves us.

Missional Application
Even in the face of cultural opposition, God is always mindful of His children and acts on their behalf. Knowing this allows believers to be dispensers of hope in a hopeless world.
Historical Context of Exodus

**Purpose**
To record the events of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt and development as a nation

**Author**
Moses

**Date Written**
1450–1410 B.C., approximately the same as Genesis

**Where Written**
In the desert during Israel’s wanderings, somewhere in the Sinai peninsula

**Setting**
Egypt. God’s people, once highly favored in the land, are now slaves. God is about to set them free.

**Key Verses**
7 Then the Lord said, “I have observed the misery of My people in Egypt, and have heard them crying out because of their oppressors, and I know about their sufferings. . . .
10 Therefore, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh so that you may lead My people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.”
–Exodus 3:7,10

**Key People**
Moses, Miriam, Pharaoh, Pharaoh’s daughter, Jethro, Aaron, Joshua, Bezalel

**Key Places**
Egypt, Goshen, Nile River, Midian, Red Sea, Sinai Peninsula, Mount Sinai

**Special Features**
Exodus relates more miracles than any other Old Testament book and is noted for containing the Ten Commandments.

*Excerpted from the Life Application Study Bible (NIV). Tyndale House Publishers, 2003.*
The Birth of an Evacuation: Moses’ Adoption

Introduction

1. What things that have swirled about in your soul in the last six months have caused you anxiety and heartache? How did those impact your understanding of God’s provision?

2. How do you focus yourself on God’s goodness and faithfulness in such seasons? What practices are the most helpful?

Genesis ended with the death of Joseph. The sons of Israel were still in the land of Egypt, where they had been permitted to settle by Pharaoh as Joseph led Egypt through the devastating famine. As Exodus opens, though, the seasons were changing for the Israelites. No longer guests in the land, they were made slaves because the successive pharaohs no longer honored Joseph’s kingdom saving leadership. In the midst of incredible cruelty from Egypt’s tyrannical leadership, though, God was patiently and deliberately working for the deliverance of His people.

1. God’s Faithfulness Through the Generations (Exodus 1:1-10)

The opening of Exodus 1 links the events in the lives of the Israelites with the divine covenant with Abraham, recorded in Genesis 12 and 15. When Exodus opens by recounting the names of Abraham’s great grandchildren (Jacob’s sons), followed by the number of descendants, the writer confirmed God’s faithfulness to His covenant. Verses 8-10 introduced two juxtaposed concepts: the evidence of God’s continual covenantal blessing on the Israelites and the rise of an adversary as a result.

2. God’s Faithfulness in Hardship (Exodus 1:11-22)

The Egyptian solution to what was perceived as a mounting threat of the Israelite population was absolutely horrific. The first part of the solution was placing the Israelites in labor camps. Pharaoh’s attempts to control
the number of God’s people—to prevent them from multiplying—were attempts to thwart God’s stated plan in the garden of Eden in the midst of perfection, before sin entered the world. He had made himself an adversary of God. The attempts to control the multiplication of the Israelites failed miserably. This ushered in phase two of the attempts to control the population: genocide. In a sweeping stroke of evil, Pharaoh commanded the two Hebrew midwives to kill every male child born to a Hebrew woman. Nevertheless, the Hebrew midwives feared God more than Pharaoh and refused to carry out his orders of execution.

How does the resiliency of God’s people in the face of malicious persecution shape your view about the way God is present with us? What are some ways in your regular contexts that you have to decide if you fear God or man more?

3. God’s Faithfulness in Raising a Deliverer (Exodus 2:1-10)
The misery of the people of Israel had long been a reality, certainly long enough for them to desperately desire to be freed. The opening of chapter 2, then, is the introduction to that eventual deliverer. The introduction of the parents’ being from the house of Levi is significant as Moses retold the story of his birth. Moses was born into the only proper tribe for his future calling to serve as the leader and intermediary between God and His people.

What evidences of divine orchestration do you see in the circumstances of Moses’ birth and adoption? How does it make you feel to know that God is just as mindful of you as He was of Moses?

Who are some people that God has specifically prepared to speak into your life? What experiences do you know God allowed into their life that are particularly helpful to you? What experiences in your life has God used to minister to others?

Conclusion
How would you explain the difference between allowing God to use you as part of His redemptive plan and simply being kind to people? What are some practical differences that would characterize those different types of interactions?

Who in your life that you know you will see tomorrow needs the type of interaction that moves them toward freedom in Christ? Are you prepared to be a part of that? Why or why not?

For Further Discussion
How do you handle seasons of persecution or difficulty, when God’s moving may be imperceptible to you? What are some ways we can prepare now to face those challenges when they arrive?
Introduction
Dire circumstances have a way of shaping how we view God. If we reflect on the headlines of the past six months, the number of challenging issues confronting our culture is staggering. Ranging from political unrest to multiple natural disasters, these events have a way of altering our perceptions of our world. Anxiety, heartbreak, frustration, helplessness, and hopelessness combine to push even the most ardent believer to wonder where God is in the midst of all the turmoil.

The agonizing over trying to figure out what God is doing—or why He doesn’t seem to be doing anything—amidst such difficulty is largely based on the belief that God would not want people to suffer or experience such hardship. While many believers would contradict such a statement, there is a pervasive sentiment that being “a good enough person” serves as a type of protection against such suffering. When persecution does arise, then, the expectation is that God’s protection should be immediate and observable to ensure His people that He loves them. But what if that doesn’t happen?

As the Israelites transitioned from the life and leadership of Joseph to the subsequent generations, they came to experience hardship that dwarfs anything in our culture. While they were unable to detect it, Scripture tells us that God’s faithfulness to them never wavered—even as their hardship escalated exponentially.

When you think of the last six months, what are the first things you think about in terms of headline events? Did those events cause you heartache? Frustration? Anxiety?

Aside from the events that were known on the national level, what things that have swirled about in your soul in the last six months have caused you anxiety and heartache? How did those impact your understanding of God’s provision?

How do you focus yourself on God’s goodness and faithfulness in such seasons? What practices are the most helpful?
Session Summary
Genesis ended with the death of Joseph. The sons of Israel were still in the land of Egypt, where they had been permitted to settle by Pharaoh as Joseph led Egypt through the devastating famine. As Exodus opens, though, the seasons were changing for the Israelites. No longer guests in the land, they were made slaves because the successive pharaohs no longer honored Joseph’s kingdom saving leadership.

As the circumstances of the Israelites rapidly deteriorated, though, the writer of Exodus included numerous indications of God’s continuing faithfulness to what He had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the midst of incredible cruelty from Egypt’s tyrannical leadership, God was patiently and deliberately working for the deliverance of His people.

1. God’s Faithfulness Through the Generations (Exodus 1:1-10)
The opening of Exodus 1 links the events in the lives of the Israelites with the divine covenant with Abraham, recorded in Genesis 12 and 15. To review, the essential components of the Abrahamic covenant were that God would bless Abraham by making him a great nation, give him a land for his descendants to possess, and through his descendants, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Therefore, when Exodus opened by recounting the names of Abraham’s great grandchildren (Jacob’s sons), followed by the number of descendants, the writer confirmed God’s faithfulness to His covenant. Seventy descendants might not seem overwhelming, but since it began with a barren elderly woman and her older husband, the number of descendants is nothing short of miraculous.

Verse 6 marked the transition of the “good ol’ days” in Egypt for the Israelites. When Joseph administered the plan God gave him to not only protect Egypt during the great famine, but also help it flourish, his brothers were honored guests in Egypt. They settled in Goshen, which was treasured for its lushness. Even as foreigners, whose occupations as shepherds were viewed with disdain by Egyptians, they were given access to the best Egypt had to offer. Then, Joseph and his brothers died and the honor their generation enjoyed died with them.

As if to intentionally dispute the notion that Joseph was the source of their blessing, the writer of Exodus pointed to their multiplication, even after Joseph’s generation passed. Joseph was not the source of provision and blessing; God was. Even when the role that Joseph played in God’s redemptive plan was completed, God continued to honor His covenant throughout the generations of Israel.

And . . .
In the Hebrew text of Exodus, the opening of Exodus 1:1 begins with the conjunction “And.” While its absence in most English translations does not diminish the understanding of the text, the Hebrew text clearly connects Exodus with Genesis as its continuation. Instead of being two different books, Exodus is more like Act 2 of the same divine drama. The people who are at the center of the action change, but the plot and ultimate character in the narrative—God—is the same.

Why is it important not to exclusively associate God’s blessing with an amazing leader, mentor, or colleague?
Do you tend to recognize God’s activity in your life more easily in trying times or in bountiful times? Why do you think that is the case? Please give an example.

Verses 8-10 introduced two juxtaposed concepts: the evidence of God’s continual covenantal blessing on the Israelites and the rise of an adversary as a result. Perhaps the most significant historical difference as the generations passed by was the ascension of a new Pharaoh. The description of this Pharaoh as one “who had not known Joseph” cannot mean that he did not know who Joseph was. The relatively recent events of Joseph’s leadership under God’s divine direction were significant enough to save all of the countries around Egypt during a famine that impacted the world. It is impossible that the new Pharaoh did not know who Joseph was or the degree to which his leadership had saved Egypt.

The blessing that the Israelites had enjoyed was also the cause of their transition from favored to enslaved. God so richly blessed them with descendants, according to His covenant, to the point that even the formidable might of the Egyptians was threatened by their number.

2. God’s Faithfulness in Hardship (Exodus 1:11-22)

The Egyptian solution to what was perceived as a mounting threat of the Israelite population was absolutely horrific. The first part of the solution was placing the Israelites in labor camps. The entire purpose was to oppress the Israelites with severe labor—to work them to death. Their oppressive work was so immense that they built two entire cities. Still, the attempts of Pharaoh in this regard were more profound than just keeping the Israelites in check or even killing some off. His attempts to control the number of God’s people—to prevent them from multiplying—were attempts to thwart God’s stated plan in the garden of Eden in the midst of perfection, before sin entered the world. He had made himself an adversary of God.

The attempts to control the multiplication of the Israelites failed miserably. In fact, as Moses made clear in his description of the events, the Israelites multiplied at a rate proportional to their oppression. The worse the oppression, the more they multiplied. This ushered in phase two of the attempts to control the population: genocide. If the severity of the oppressive work could not kill them fast enough, Pharaoh would kill the offspring directly.

How does the resiliency of God’s people in the face of malicious persecution shape your view about the way God is present with us?

What are some ways in your regular contexts that you have to decide if you fear God or man more?
In a sweeping stroke of evil, Pharaoh commanded the two Hebrew midwives to kill every male child born to a Hebrew woman. The literal Hebrew indicated that as soon as the midwives were able to determine gender, the males were to be killed. The horror of such a decree highlighted Pharaoh’s oppositional stance against the things and character of God. Nevertheless, the Hebrew midwives feared God more than Pharaoh and refused to carry out his orders of execution. The idea of fearing God has as much to do with fearing the consequences of God’s wrath for harming His people as it does the awe that is involved with knowing God.

It is significant that Puah and Shiphrah’s names were specifically mentioned. They are the only specific names outside of the sons of Israel that are included in this opening chapter of Exodus. Much speculation has been made as to why they were mentioned, but the greatest reason for mentioning them specifically was their heroic stance against and maniacal ruler fixated on thwarting God’s faithfulness to His covenant. They were to be remembered in Israel’s history as it was retold throughout the generations.

When the midwives refused to carry out Pharaoh’s execution orders, he commanded his own men to kill all the infant boys. The gender separation for genocide should not be understood as a distinction of superiority of one gender over the other. Rather, killing the male children would end the family lineages over time, forcing the Israelite women to intermarry or starve. Either would remove the Israelite people from existence over time—a strategy that was an affront to God’s covenant faithfulness.

3. God’s Faithfulness in Raising a Deliverer (Exodus 2:1-10)

The misery of the people of Israel had long been a reality, certainly long enough for them to desperately desire to be freed. The opening of chapter 2, then, is the introduction to that eventual deliverer. The introduction of the parents’ being from the house of Levi is significant as Moses retold the story of his birth. Moses was born into the only proper tribe for his future calling to serve as the leader and intermediary between God and His people.

The mother, later identified as Jochebed (Ex. 6), hid her baby for three months, at which point the baby would have been too vocal to conceal from searching ears. Given the dire consequences for both the baby and herself, Jochebed did the only thing she could do. She hid her son in a papyrus basket waterproofed by asphalt and pitch, then placed him in the tall, dense reeds of the Nile’s rushes.

The presence of Moses’ sister (Miriam, unless there existed an unlikely unnamed sister of Moses) marked ongoing supervision of the child from...
Moses’ Ark
The term used here for what Moses’ mother put him in is “tebah,” found in the flood story in Genesis 6–8, where it is translated “ark.” Moses consciously drew the reader’s attention to the fact that God, through Moses’ mother’s actions, was graciously protecting him from death by a small ark, just as God had protected Noah and the animals by a great ark in the days of the great flood.


a distance. Unlike her mother, she would have been able to linger on the banks of the Nile for long periods of time without arousing suspicion for doing no work. Watching over Moses, then, became a family affair. Miriam’s introduction here established her later presence and role within Moses’ life.

What evidences of divine orchestration do you see in the circumstances of Moses’ birth and adoption? How does it make you feel to know that God is just as mindful of you as He was of Moses?

Who are some people that God has specifically prepared to speak into your life? What experiences do you know God allowed into their life that are particularly helpful to you? What experiences in your life has God used to minister to others?

Miriam’s role in the unfolding events was pivotal in Moses’ upbringing. Noticing that Pharaoh’s daughter had instructed one of her slave girls to go and retrieve the basket, Miriam wasted no time in offering to help. She used the critical juncture to reunite mother and child so that Moses’ own mother was paid to take care of him in her home. When Pharaoh’s daughter sent Miriam to fetch a Hebrew woman to nurse the child, her line of address to Jochabed was “take this child and nurse him for me.” There was no possibility of a Hebrew living in the palace for the three to four years in which Hebrew children nursed, so those years were spent in Moses’ home with his mother because of Miriam’s careful watch over Moses.

Moses was the child’s Egyptian name that both described how he was discovered as well as prophetic of his coming role as the leader of God’s people. Of course, Pharaoh’s daughter would’ve had no knowledge of the coming crossing of the Red Sea at the beginning of the exodus. God was working in and through every facet of Moses’ life from the beginning, preparing him to become the deliverer Israel needed him to be.

Conclusion
The intricacy of God’s working in our world can sometimes be imperceptible to us because we do not know what He knows. Of all the Hebrews who were being oppressed in their labor while Pharaoh’s daughter was bathing in the Nile, none of them would have imagined that God was at work, making sure their future deliverer survived the royal execution decree. Such as it is in our world: where things crush us, defeat us, and even threaten our lives, we shouldn’t give up hope because we cannot see the delicate ways that God moves on our behalf.
Still in other ways, we find ourselves in positions to serve as active participants in what God is doing, albeit in a way that does not seem incredibly significant, because again, we do not know what He knows. All Miriam did was watch over her baby brother and, when an opportunity presented itself, help reunite him with his mother. Even in the midst of such a beautiful intercession on her brother’s behalf, she could not have known how she was used by God to prepare her future deliverer. Likewise, we have opportunities to act with Christ-like compassion and kindness on a daily basis. Even when we act upon those opportunities, there is very little likelihood that we see how God is using us in that moment to further His kingdom in grander ways.

God is constantly at work in our world to bring deliverance and freedom to those still trapped in their slavery to sin. Every day, believers have the gift of being part of the unexpected way He might be providing unexpected wholeness and restoration.

How would you explain the difference between allowing God to use you as part of His redemptive plan and simply being kind to people? What are some practical differences that would characterize those different types of interactions?

Who in your life that you know you will see tomorrow needs the type of interaction that moves them toward freedom in Christ? Are you prepared to be a part of that? Why or why not?

How do you handle seasons of persecution or difficulty, when God’s moving may be imperceptible to you? What are some ways we can prepare now to face those challenges when they arrive?

Prayer of Response

Pray that God would allow our group to be instruments of redemption and deliverance. Pray that the Holy Spirit would prompt us in the areas in which we need to seek preparation now.

Additional Resources

- *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* by N. T. Wright
- *The Attributes of God* by A. W. Pink
- *Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts* by Jerry Bridges
Session Title
- The Failed Evacuation: Moses Murders

Main Passages
- Exodus 2:11-25

Session Outline
1. The Right Thing the Wrong Way (Exodus 2:11-12)
2. When Sin Becomes Known (Exodus 2:13-20)

Memorize
“When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, ‘Because,’ she said, ‘I drew him out of the water.’”
- Exodus 2:10, HCSB
Exodus 1–2:10

1:1. Moses aptly opens this book with a listing of the tribes of Israel. The tribes represent the sons of Jacob, over which Jacob uttered profoundly prophetic words (see Gen. 49). From these tribes would come prophets, priests, kings, and other notable characters who would help create Israel’s unique history. Of course, Israel’s greatest contribution would be the giving of the 10 Messiah (Rev. 12:5). Moses mentions Joseph last because of his unique place in Genesis and because he comprises the two other tribes not mentioned here—Ephraim and Manasseh.

1:2-14. God had blessed these tribes abundantly so that they were fruitful and had multiplied. Yet their growth in Egypt was viewed as a threat by the reigning Pharaoh. His fears were twofold. These growing tribes in Egypt might align themselves with Egypt’s enemies or be strong enough to escape from the land. In either case, the results would be disastrous for Egypt. To protect the interests of Egypt, the Pharaoh began oppressing the Israelites. He appointed tough slave masters over them as they built store cities for him. Yet Pharaoh’s tactics backfired: The more Israel was oppressed, the more they grew in number. This, in turn, resulted in still more severe countermeasures.

1:15-22. Students of history tell us that when a nation uses terror tactics on a segment of its society, it will not achieve the desired result. In fact, such actions lead to further frustration, causing the perpetrators to sink to even lower depths of cruelty. Witness the twentieth century’s fascist regimes that fell into such murderous evil as they attempted to destroy peoples with whom they felt they could not coexist. Pharaoh, realizing his previous attempts at controlling the exploding population growth of the Israelites had failed, now approached the Hebrew midwives with a scheme so unscrupulous it can only be called devilish. He commanded the midwives to kill all Hebrew male babies, while sparing the females.

The midwives, however, feared God and would not submit to Pharaoh’s bloodthirsty scheme. Instead, they spared the male infants and told Pharaoh that the Hebrew women did not wait for their assistance but delivered the babies on their own. Such daring actions by the Hebrew midwives did not escape the eye of God, who rewarded their faithfulness by providing them with families of their own. Pharaoh then acted out of pure desperation. He sent his own soldiers on search-and-destroy missions. Whenever they located a Hebrew male baby, they were ordered to throw him into the Nile. Would Pharaoh have his way?
2:1-10. Moses, the writer of Exodus and God’s chief instrument in bringing the people of Israel out of bondage in Egypt, now mentions something of his origins. Descended from Levi, the third child of Jacob and Leah (Gen. 29:34), Moses was the second son of Amram and Jochebed, who previously gave birth to Aaron and daughter Miriam (Num. 26:59). The baby Moses must have beamed with vigor and strength, standing out among other Hebrew babies (Heb. 11:23), and would have been a prime target for Pharaoh’s brand of extermination. Yet Moses’ mother, well aware of the ongoing surveillance commanded by Pharaoh (Exod. 1:22), hid him for approximately three months, and then, possibly out of desperation (but also faith, Heb. 11:23), placed him in a papyrus basket... among the reeds along the bank of the Nile, so he wouldn’t float away down the Nile. Jochebed also posted his sister Miriam to keep watch over him.

When Pharaoh’s daughter went down to the Nile to bathe... she saw the basket... and sent her slave girl to get it. Soon the princess concluded the baby was one of the endangered Hebrew babies, and, at the prompting of the enterprising and skillful Miriam, sent for a Hebrew nurse to care for the child. Miriam, of course, didn’t get just any nurse, but Moses’ own mother. Pharaoh’s daughter arranged to have the “nurse” feed and care for the child, after which she took him for her own, naming the adopted son Moses, which means roughly “to draw out.”


Exodus 1–2:10

From all appearances, Moses intended this block of narrative to function as a transitional introduction to the entire book of Exodus. It provides a sense of continuity to some of the main themes of his first book, with the result that the reader of Exodus senses a natural fit with the ongoing story of God’s plan of redemption, that is, that story which begins to develop so eloquently in Genesis. Many in the original audience would not have known most of the details found in these first two chapters of Exodus any more than they would have known many of the details of their spiritual and/or ethnic backgrounds as narrated in Genesis. These were, after all, people who had spent hundreds of years in pagan surroundings, most of whom probably needed reintroduction even to the very identity of Yahweh (the Lord) himself. Garrett has carefully argued the position that Moses most likely composed these materials during the years of the wilderness wanderings for the benefit of the second-generation Israelites who were growing up during that thirty-nine-year period, as well as for the benefit of those who came to join with Israel either spiritually or ethnically.
We should remember that a considerable proportion of the people who actually arrived at Mount Sinai, after fleeing Egypt to meet with the only true and living God, were not originally Israelites at all. They had seen the plagues, had come to believe that the Israelites were indeed a people to join with, and had taken advantage of the discomfiture of the Egyptians on the night of the Passover to join the Israelite ranks and seek freedom. Of course, as they traveled with the Israelites, they would begin to pick up bits and pieces of the history they were officially to adopt as their own at Sinai, but Moses’ authoritative and systematic version was what they especially required if they were to be spiritually at one with the new people God was creating for himself in the process of the exodus.

This transitional-introductory material in chaps. 1-2 is composed of six component parts: (1) First comes an opening genealogy (1:1-6) of the twelve tribes of Israel, featuring the twelve sons of Jacob and thus connecting the story of the exodus with the patriarchal narratives that comprise the bulk (chaps. 12-50) of Genesis. The fact that this opening genealogy mentions the descent of Jacob’s family into Egypt is part of its transitional character. (2) Next comes a brief section describing how the descendants of Jacob grew into a large nation and eventually came under Egyptian bondage (1:7-14). This information informs the alert reader that the promises of great growth to Abraham’s descendants—restated, as carefully noted in Genesis (e.g., 26:3-4; 46:3) to both Abraham’s son and grandson—are in active process of fulfillment. It also orients the reader to how it could come about that the people of Israel should be subject to such extreme loathing that (3) they would become, as described in the following section (1:5-22), the targets of a vicious genocidal campaign by the new pharaoh, with the goal of controlling the population of the Israelites through male infanticide. (4) At the beginning of chap. 2 (2:1-10) Moses described his birth and, more importantly for the salvation theme that dominates the entire first half of the book, the unusual circumstances that led to his being found by one of the Egyptian princesses and raised as an Egyptian yet nursed by his own mother and well aware of the plight of his own ethnic people.

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