



## Studies in the Book of Exodus

Text

Exodus 6:1-30

Topic

Although Moses complains about having what he calls “uncircumcised lips,” God makes it clear He’s going to use him to deliver His message to Pharaoh

Title

*“He’s Got Lips, God Knows How to Use Them”*

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Bruce Willis might be the big screen’s most reluctant hero:

- In *Unbreakable*, as David Dunn, he wanted to be left alone, but after he was the sole survivor of a catastrophe, while sustaining no injuries, he had to accept the fact he could very well be destined to be a superhero.
- In *Die Hard*, as John McClane, all he wanted was a nice Christmas with his family, but Hans Gruber had other plans. Gruber takes the Nakatomi Plaza hostage, which just happens to be where John McClane’s wife is having her office Christmas party. Five films later, he’s still stepping up, albeit reluctantly.

There are quite a few reluctant heroes in the Bible. Jeremiah and Gideon would all be on that list:

- Jeremiah, said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I *am* a youth” (1:6).
- Gideon complained, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house” (Judges 6:15).

Moses would be in the top five, for sure. We saw him offer excuse after excuse when Jesus was speaking to him from the burning bush. Now, in chapter six after his initial confrontation with Pharaoh, he again tries to bail:

- Exo 6:12 And Moses spoke before the LORD, saying, "The children of Israel have not heeded me. How then shall Pharaoh heed me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?"
- Exo 6:30 But Moses said before the LORD, "Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh heed me?"

Both Moses and the Israelites had been pressing upon God to stop waiting and do something. But when God began to act decisively, they did not want to be the heroes and heroines He chose.

Waiting for the Lord - it's so hard. But when He acts, do we ever withdraw, as so many of the Bible's reluctant heroes did?

I'll organize my comments on chapter six around two questions: #1 Do You Find It Hard When God Asks You To Wait?, and #2 Do You Find It Odd That You Ask God To Wait?

## #1 Do You Find It Hard When God Asks You To Wait?

(v1-8 & 14-27)

Jerry Seinfeld has a bit where he talks about waiting in the doctor's office. You spend an inordinate amount of time in the waiting room, **only to be ushered into what amounts to being a second waiting room.**

People generally do not like waiting, and can get awfully surly when the wait seems to get too long. Folks who don't like Disneyland always, as their first explanation as to why, offer "the lines are too long" argument - as if that settles the matter.

Christians can get spiritually surly waiting on God to do something in their situation. His seeming inaction is compounded by our knowing that He *can* act on our behalf at any moment - miraculously if need be.

Chapter six of Exodus gets us a step closer to Moses' series of confrontations with Pharaoh. But we also get a look at what we might call the 'timeline.' When we see it, I think we will have a better understanding of waiting. We may, in fact, not see ourselves as waiting at all.

Exo 6:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land."

Four hundred years of increasing servitude. Why the delay getting to the Promised Land?

We've pointed out that there were at least two reasons, given by God to Abraham in Genesis chapter fifteen:

- One reason for the four-century wait was to put the Israelites in a mindset to want to leave Egypt, while simultaneously convincing the Egyptians to give the Israelites enormous wealth as they exited.
- Another reason was to give the pagans living in the Promised Land opportunities to repent - which they rejected, giving credibility to God judging them and destroying them.

All that was over; it was time - right "now."

Exo 6:2 And God spoke to Moses and said to him: "I *am* the LORD.

Exo 6:3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but *by* My name LORD I was not known to them.

"God Almighty" is El Shaddai. LORD, all capitalized, is YHWH - Yahweh.

We need to pause and answer a possible contradiction. God seems to be saying that none of the patriarchs, indeed no one until Moses, had heard the name Yahweh.

The problem with that is Yahweh occurs about 162 times in Genesis. We read that men "began to call on the name of [YAWEH]" as early as Genesis 4:26. Furthermore, the place where Abraham almost sacrificed Isaac, he named "The Lord Will Provide [Yahweh-Yireh or Jehovah-Jireh]" (22:14). Moses' own mom - Jochabed - has a name that incorporated Yahweh in it.

After looking at a few of the suggested solutions, there is one that makes the most sense to my simple way of thinking, and that fits the context.

I'm quoting:

The patriarchs had only the promises, *not* the things promised. The fullness of time had come when God was to be known in the [fuller] capacity and character of His name Yahweh as He fulfilled what He had promised and did what He had decreed.

In other words, Moses and the current generation of Israelites would know God as Yahweh in a much fuller way than any previous Hebrew had.

Exo 6:4 I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers.

God was forwarding His plan to save mankind. It was formulated in eternity past, then implemented when Adam and Eve sinned. At one point, it began to involve Abraham and his descendants.

Everything along the spiritual timeline from the Garden of Eden until Moses was a forwarding of that plan. The plan takes as long as it takes. It would be silly, for example, to think that Adam and Eve could step out of Eden right into the Promised Land. A lot had to happen first.

Now here is the point I'm going to keep emphasizing: Anywhere that a believer was along the timeline wasn't really a wait. They were playing their part, fulfilling their role, in furthering God's will.

It seemed like waiting, but it was really just living and trusting God.

Exo 6:5 And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant.

Their “groaning” was something God had told Abraham about. It didn't catch God by surprise. He wasn't off creating other universes, unaware of what was happening on the earth, until they finally got His attention.

Exo 6:6 Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I *am* the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.

Exo 6:7 I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

Exo 6:8 And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I *am* the LORD.' "

No less than seven times, God said, “I will.” Something else He said as He was making this incredible series of promises stands out. He said, “Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God...”

There is a hint - more than a hint, I think - that the particular way God had designed to deliver the Israelites was necessary if they were to truly know Him as their God.

God could have delivered them at any time, in another way. For example much later in Israel's history, they will be threatened by a vastly superior Assyrian army. God sends an angel into the Assyrian camp, killing 185,000 of them overnight. Siege over.

God could have dispatched an angel or three to kill the Egyptians. But something about that solution would leave the Israelites no better off spiritually.

God's ways of answering our situations are often not what we would choose. But there is something about His solutions that are intended to leave us better off spiritually.

Moses is going to share his reluctance to be the deliverer in verses nine through thirteen. Then, quite abruptly, his comments are interrupted by a genealogy of Aaron and Moses. The chapter ends by returning to Moses' reluctance.

I'm going to go through the genealogy, taking the verses out of order, for the sake of keeping the theme flowing. Drop to verse fourteen.

Exo 6:14 These *are* the heads of their fathers' houses: The sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel, *were* Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. These are the families of Reuben.

Exo 6:15 And the sons of Simeon *were* Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman. These *are* the families of Simeon.

Exo 6:16 These *are* the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. And the years of the life of Levi *were* one hundred and thirty-seven.

Reuben, Simeon, and Levi were sons one, two, and three of Jacob. After reporting them and their sons, the genealogy follows that of Levi to the parents of Aaron and Moses.

Exo 6:17 The sons of Gershon *were* Libni and Shimi according to their families.

Exo 6:18 And the sons of Kohath *were* Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. And the years of the life of Kohath *were* one hundred and thirty-three.

Exo 6:19 The sons of Merari *were* Mahli and Mushi. These *are* the families of Levi according to their generations.

Exo 6:20 Now Amram took for himself Jochebed, his father's sister, as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses. And the years of the life of Amram *were* one hundred and thirty-seven.

Moses had a big sister, too - Miriam - but she's not named until later.

Exo 6:21 The sons of Izhar *were* Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri.

Exo 6:22 And the sons of Uzziel *were* Mishael, Elzaphan, and Zithri.

Exo 6:23 Aaron took to himself Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, sister of Nahshon, as wife; and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

Exo 6:24 And the sons of Korah *were* Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph. These are the families of the Korahites.

Exo 6:25 Eleazar, Aaron's son, took for himself one of the daughters of Putiel as wife; and she bore him Phinehas. These *are* the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites according to their families.



The Levites get more ink because they are going to be the priesthood, and much of the later chapters of Exodus will introduce the system of worship they oversee at the Tabernacle.

Exo 6:26 These *are the same* Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said, "Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies."

In other words, "This is how we've come to this momentous juncture in Israel's history."

Again, think it through. In order to arrive at Aaron and Moses, just at this exact time, there had to be their specific ancestors - living their daily lives.

As they suffered in Egypt, did it seem like they were waiting for God, Who was doing nothing? Sure. But in another sense, it wasn't waiting; it was living, and trusting God.

Exo 6:27 These *are the ones* who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt. These *are the same* Moses and Aaron.

These are the guys. Everything in Israel's history - no, everything in history, period - had been leading up to this moment.

Someone else was (and still is) at work. The devil and his followers have been around from the beginning of mankind to try to derail God's plan. The Rolling Stones know that. *In Sympathy for the Devil*, after listing various atrocities of history, they sing, "Just call me Lucifer."

- The devil tried to ruin mankind in the Garden of Eden, tempting our first parents. They fell, but God was there, immediately seeking them out, promising to come as the Seed of the woman to defeat Satan, sin, and death.
- The devil tried again, as fallen angels came to earth and married and mated with human women, corrupting the gene pool by giving birth to weird offspring called Nephilim. God countered by sending the global flood, preserving eight souls to repopulate the earth.

Every page of Genesis led up to this moment in Egypt. God had successfully provided for His plan to save mankind. It was time to deliver the Israelites, to lead them to their Promised Land, so that the promised Seed - the Savior, Jesus Christ - could be born in Bethlehem, then die on the Cross in Jerusalem to save the world.

Yes, in one sense, every generation waited. But an argument could be made that they didn't wait *for* God; they waited *with* God, as He provided for His plan.

We are each individually, and all collectively, a part of that same plan. In fact we know all about the total plan - from start to finish - in a way that previous generations of believers did not.

We have the completed Word of God, the Bible. We can read all about how everything is going to go, and how it's going to end.

I'd go so far as to say our generation knows more than any previous one could. I say that because we are seeing the fulfillment of so many last days prophecies regarding the nation of Israel.

We are definitely waiting with God, knowing ahead of time how things will play-out:

- The resurrection and rapture of the church could occur any moment.
- Sometime soon after, the seven-year Great Tribulation will befall the left-behind inhabitants of the earth.
- At the end of those seven years, Jesus will return to earth, with us, in His Second Coming.
- He will rule over a kingdom on the earth for one-thousand years.
- At the end of those thousand-years, after one final rebellion of the devil and his followers, Jesus will judge nonbelievers from all human history, and consign them to eternal conscious torment in the Lake of Fire.
- Then there will be new heavens, and a new earth, where we will live in bliss for eternity.

History is one thing. Your ‘story,’ and mine, are another. I mean, if I’m the Jewish foreman of a brick-making crew, and Pharaoh just ordered me to produce the same daily quota without providing the necessary straw, and I’m getting beaten by cruel Egyptian taskmasters... *A History Channel* special on Israel’s timeline isn’t much comfort.

Nevertheless, that is where the Israelites found themselves on the timeline.

We find ourselves in a pretty good place on the timeline - in the United States of America. We’ve got it so much better than the vast majority of believers on the planet - not just today, but ever.

Still we live subject to disease and decay and death. Terrible tragedies befall our loved ones, and us. If we focus on, let's say, some illness that we are enduring, it seems like we've been escorted into the second waiting room, only to be left there, forgotten by the Great Physician.

Not at all. He has us playing our part in the unfolding drama of redemption. We may not know what it is, not completely. But if we have ever said, "God works all things together for the good," we have to believe we are not waiting *for* Him, but *with* Him.

If you believe Jesus when He said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5), then the second waiting room you are in is intended to be a chapel. Treat it as holy - a sanctuary.

## #2 Do You Find It Odd When You Ask God To Wait?

(v9-13 & 28-30)

In his New Testament letter, James explains that the great prophet, Elijah, was "a man with a nature like ours" (5:17). These Bible guys and gals - they were all just like us.

If that's the case, then being reluctant to serve God when called upon is a trait we can sadly expect to discover in our own spiritual lives.

Exo 6:9 So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel; but they did not heed Moses, because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage.

The words used, taken literally, indicate "shortness of breath."

It describes the inward pressure caused by deep anguish that prevented proper breathing - like children sobbing and gasping for their breath.

There are going to be times in your life when God's Word seems silenced by the severity of what you are afflicted by, and called upon to endure. You'll be gasping for air - spiritually and (maybe even) literally. Take heart from Exodus: God's Word would not be silenced, and ultimately those afflicted saw the mighty hand of God.

Exo 6:10 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,  
Exo 6:11 "Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the children of Israel go out of his land."

The message was simple and to the point. We all need to edit ourselves in the sense that we sometimes say more than we need to; or we are unclear in what we do say.

People like to joke about how long-winded preachers can be. Evangelist and seminary student Jeff Tatarchuck argues that pastors should keep their sermons below the 18-minute mark. He notes that the greatest sermon of all time, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, can be read aloud in 12 minutes, 30 seconds.

Charles Spurgeon, called by some "The Prince of Preachers," once said, "A man with a great deal of well-prepared matter will probably not exceed forty minutes; when he has less to say he will go on for fifty minutes, and when he has absolutely nothing, he will need an hour to say it in."

(In case you're wondering, our studies in Exodus are averaging 37 minutes; Wednesday night, about 27 minutes).

Exo 6:12 And Moses spoke before the LORD, saying, "The children of Israel have not heeded me. How then shall Pharaoh heed me, for I *am* of uncircumcised lips?"

Physical circumcision was the sign an Israelite was in a covenant relationship with Yahweh. We saw God almost kill Moses' firstborn son, Gershom, because Moses had disobeyed the covenant by never circumcising him. Wife Zipporah stepped-up and performed the ritual, saving her son.

The cutting away of the flesh also illustrated seeking spiritual things, rather than giving in to sins of the flesh.

"Uncircumcised" was a term used by the Israelites to denote spiritual failure. Jeremiah speaks of both uncircumcised ears and uncircumcised hearts.

At the burning bush, Moses had tried to excuse himself by claiming he was "slow of speech." We said that this was not a speech disability, but probably a reference to the reality that after forty years in Midian, away from Egypt, his Egyptian was faltering.

If you realized your lips or your ears or your heart were uncircumcised, the fix is to repent, and let God cut away the flesh, spiritually speaking. By exclaiming his lips were uncircumcised, I think Moses was saying was that his words ultimately failed because God had not circumcised his mouth.

I'm always amazed at the ways believers blame God for their own reluctance to serve Him - and more so for their sin.

Exo 6:13 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, and gave them a command for the children of Israel and for Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

God's Word didn't change to accommodate Moses' reluctance. God's Word doesn't change. In those things where it is clear, black and white, then to disagree with God is sin. To blame Him for the sin is worse.

Skip to verse twenty-eight.

Exo 6:28 And it came to pass, on the day the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt,

Exo 6:29 that the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "I *am* the LORD. Speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you."

"You Had One Job" is an expression used to call attention to perceived blunders made by individuals on the job. On the web, the phrase is heavily associated with FAIL images.

Moses had one job. It wasn't easy, but it was simple. It was to repeat to Pharaoh what God said to him - through Aaron.

Exo 6:30 But Moses said before the LORD, "Behold, I *am* of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh heed me?"

The author of Exodus, who was Moses, repeats himself to bring us back to the chronology of events after having given the genealogy.

Forty years earlier, Moses had been in a big hurry to deliver the Israelites.

Now he was reluctant to do so, making every excuse he could. In effect, Moses was asking God to wait until He found someone more suitable.

I can't decide for you when you are being reluctant like Moses. I know we all can be, because we all have the same nature.

I will say that anytime we are prompted to serve the Lord, but beg-off because we don't think ourselves suitable, we are asking Him to wait by finding someone else.

None of us are 'suitable,' because God isn't looking for, and doesn't need, our natural talents and abilities. Let's use education as an example. Let me give a disclaimer: I'm not against getting a higher education. You might even think I'm for it, seeing as I graduated the UC system, and encouraged Geno to get a degree.

However when we tend to trust in education, making it mandatory or thinking it necessary to serve God, then we greatly err.

One of my favorite all-time descriptions of what it means to be a Christian comes from a confrontation Jesus' first followers had with the over-educated leaders of the Jews:

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were **uneducated and untrained** men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

“Uneducated” can be translated “ignorant.” It should be something of a goal to be an ignorant and untrained man or woman who has been with Jesus.



At least we should quit putting such high importance on formal education and training. More often than not, it gets in the way - either by our thinking we have arrived, or (mostly) by our thinking that we are inadequate for the task God has given us.

Today God might ask you, “Why are you waiting?” If He has set something before you, some task, then quit your reluctance and go for it, not by your might or in your power, but by Him.

If you’re not a Christian... “Why are you waiting?”