



Over the past few weeks in our Exodus series, we've discussed various aspects of God's call upon our lives. Last week, we discussed "God's Work in Your Life on the Way to Your Calling" and looked at the purification process Moses had to go through on his way to Egypt – God was preparing him for his calling, much like He does in our lives. The story that we're covering today is challenging. It's a story of pain and suffering. It's not a celebratory passage. You might even say it's a sad and confusing passage if you're in Moses' shoes. As we conclude today's discussion, you'll be encouraged that you're not alone if you're in a season of not understanding what God is doing in your life. That's why today's study is titled "When You Don't Understand What God is Doing."

Key Passage: Exodus 5

Discussion Questions:

1. How do trust and waiting compare to our typically fast-paced life and culture?

In our microwave culture, we want everything immediately. Does anybody like to wait in long lines? Traffic? Who enjoys waiting for a return phone call or response email?

2. What are some examples of situations where waiting for God's timing has been challenging in your life?

Does anybody like to wait for God to answer? Open a door? Identify the next step?

3. Why didn't Pharaoh want to let the people of Israel go worship? What was his revenge for Moses and Aaron making their request? What is his reasoning behind the revenge?

Pharaoh feels like Moses and Aaron are distracting the people of Israel from their daily task of building bricks for Egypt. "You're distracting all of the Jews from their daily work by talking about going out to the wilderness for a feast and for sacrificing!" So, Pharaoh raised the stakes and put new requirements on the people. Given the new conditions, the people are not able to meet their quota, so the Egyptians start to beat the Jewish foremen. Next, we see these foremen going to Pharaoh and asking why they were mistreated. Pharaoh responds that they're not working hard enough; they're idle since they think they have time to go into the wilderness and sacrifice to God.

4. How do you think the Hebrew foremen's reaction to Moses and Aaron's leadership reflects our typical response to challenging situations? Considering how the people responded to Moses and Aaron, what does this show us about their faith at the end of chapter 4?

Have you ever had a meeting you thought would go one way when you walked in and came out with the opposite? It's easy to imagine this is how Moses and Aaron must have felt about their encounter

with the Hebrew foremen. Those who are supposed to be on their side are now turning against them. Meanwhile, these Hebrew foremen tell Moses and Aaron: "May the Lord judge you because you've made us a stench in the sight of the Egyptians, and they're going to kill us."

5. Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you didn't understand what God was doing? In what ways can Moses' experience of doubt and questioning God's actions resonate with our own experiences?

We are often so familiar with the story, knowing that it ends well, that we miss the moment's gravity! Moses has stepped out amid his own fear and uncertainty, only to be rewarded with seemingly making a situation much worse. Pull your mind away from the story's familiarity and put yourself in Moses' shoes here. Can you imagine the heaviness of the guilt that he must have felt?

Does anybody think Moses finds himself in a place where he doesn't understand what God is doing? We often think a calling from God brings a pain-free experience with it. Not true! Sometimes, God calls us to do hard things. Moses goes so far as to say, "Why have you done evil to these people?" "Why have you allowed this?" "Why did you send me?" "Why have you not done what you said you would do?"

6. Can you relate to the struggle of not fully understanding why certain difficulties or challenges occur? How would you explain the difference between what God causes and what He permits?

One of the hardest things to get a grasp on in your Christian life is to look at the hard things in your life and realize that while God is not the author of evil, there are things He allows to sift through His hand. Theologian R.T. Kendall says, "The difference between what God has caused and what He has permitted is holy ground." In other words, you're never going to figure this out. This is holy ground meant only for God to know.

7. What are the potential benefits of experiencing hardship in our lives, as mentioned in the sermon?

We all desire a pain-free existence, yet we rarely ever grow in that environment. On the other side of our trials, we often get glimpses here and there of how God is using this in our lives and the lives of others to bear fruit.

8. How can we cultivate trust in God's character during times of uncertainty and difficulty?

When it comes to Exodus, we know the end from the beginning more than Moses did. Based on what we know about where the story goes, what should Moses have done?

When we don't understand what God is doing, we trust and wait. We cling to what we know about the character of God, His trustworthiness, and His faithfulness. Sometimes, waiting is more challenging than trusting. When we feel like God has not done what He said He would do, we either have misunderstood Him or not seen His fulfillment.

9. What's one personal takeaway from today's study you can focus on this week?