



[Leader note: Begin by telling a personal story of a time you were moving but didn't know you were.]

I tend to fall asleep in cars. Anybody else like me? As long as I'm not driving, if we're on a road trip, it is easy for me to fall asleep. I'll wake up and we've gone miles. I was moving and I had no idea. There are actually lots of times where we are moving, and we don't notice.

Did you know that right now you are moving? In fact, you are moving incredibly fast. You are traveling at 67,000 miles per hour. Can you feel that speed? That's the speed that the Earth orbits the sun. On top of that the Earth is rotating. At the equator, that speed is about 1,000 miles per hour. But you don't feel it. You don't think about it. Why don't you feel that? Well, it's a scientific term called "I-have-no-idea-go-ask-a-physicist." You are moving right now but you don't recognize it. There are times that life is moving but we just don't see it. We don't recognize it. But that doesn't mean it's not moving. Life is moving around us, and we don't even recognize.

Often times, this describes our recognition of God. God is always moving and working. But for lots of different reasons we don't always recognize it. Just because we don't recognize it doesn't mean He isn't moving. Today, we're beginning a new series called "*Moving*" looking at how God moved through His people in the book of Exodus, whether they always saw it or not. I hope you'll stick with us over these three weeks as we see how God moved in and through the people of Israel. And I hope through this process you'll discover that God is moving in and through you, in and through our church, and in and through our youth group, whether we always recognize it or not.

So today, we'll look at chapter one of the book of Exodus. We are not going to be able to cover the whole book of Exodus, but I want to challenge you to read it over the next 40 days. I've given you a reading plan today to read through the book of Exodus together. Read through Exodus 1-7 this week – one chapter each day. If we'll do this together, in 40 days, we'll have all read through the book of Exodus. As we kick off our series today, we're going to see the role that fear plays in moving with God. So, let's dive into chapter one. We'll start with **Exodus 1:1-5 (NIV)**.

These are the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt with Jacob, each with his family: Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher. The descendants of Jacob numbered seventy in all; Joseph was already in Egypt.

This refers back to what had happened in Genesis 37-50. We don't have time to go over it, but it's a great story you should read. Let me sum it up for you. A Hebrew guy named Joseph, a foreigner in the land of Egypt ended up as second in command over all of Egypt, and he brought his whole family (all 11 brothers) to join him there.

Can you imagine having 11 brothers and sisters, trying to fit around the dinner table or wait for the bathroom? Yikes. So now, the family had relocated to Egypt and there were about 70 of them in total. God had already taken them on a big move to get to where they were. And they were so thankful for it. There was a famine across the region and they had no food where they had lived, but God brought them to Egypt where they would be taken care of. This move was a huge blessing to them.

In **Exodus 1:6-7 (NIV)** we read that Joseph, and his brothers lived their lives out in Egypt:

Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, but the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them.

Eventually, Joseph's generation all died and a new generation followed. They settled down and started having kids and apparently, they didn't stop having kids. They had lots of kids. We don't get an actual number at this point, but later in Exodus 12:37 it tells us that there were 600,000 Israelite men and that only counted the healthy adult men who could fight. So that didn't include all the men and it didn't include women and children. So, potentially over 2 million people. [Note: Look up a similar amount of people in reference to your local situation] The St. Louis Regional Chamber says that in the St. Louis metropolitan area there are 2.8 million people. So it was similar to all of St. Louis. Whatever the actual number was, it was a lot.

So, things were going fairly well for the Israelites. God had moved them to a good land. They had a good home. They were growing in number. It

seemed like God was doing some good things for them. But then we get to **Exodus 1:8-14 (NIV)**, and we read this:

Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. “Look,” he said to his people, “the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.”

So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with harsh labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labor the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly.

A new king of Egypt came to power who didn't know about Joseph. He didn't know the blessing that Joseph had been to the former Pharaoh and all Israel. His reaction to these people was fear. And fear is powerful. He was afraid of the Israelites. Even though the Israelites had not caused trouble, he was afraid of the potential of what they might do. What he was ultimately afraid of was losing his power to them. So, he reacted in fear towards them. The result of his fear was that he enslaved the Israelites and forced them to be builders. He worked the people so hard that they built whole cities for him. His fear caused him to treat them ruthlessly.

A first point we see here is that to move with God we... **Don't act in fear towards people**. We cannot let fear be the determining factor in how we deal with people. The Israelites were a group of people who needed help and the previous Pharaoh stepped up and helped. But now, the new Pharaoh didn't know them and was afraid of them. His fear was based on his ignorance of the people and their story. We cannot interact with people based on a fear because we don't know or understand them.

[Leader Note: Tell your own story here of a time that you treated a group out of ignorance or that someone treated you out of ignorance.]

I remember the first year I went to Ukraine on a mission trip, the people there on the first day were a little standoffish with us. Apparently, previous

groups of Americans had come and not treated them with love and respect. So they had, understandably, initially acted in fear towards us based, not on actual knowledge of us specifically, but on how others who were kind of like us, treated them. Thankfully it didn't take very long for them to change their minds and become very open and welcoming towards us. But to do that they had to not act in fear towards us and, instead, get to know us.

Don't treat people based on fear of what you have heard of them or what you have heard of the groups they are in. God stands against racism, sexism, ageism, and discrimination in all forms. He wants you to love people and treat them in love, not fear, because He loves them. Don't be afraid of the neighbor who is different from you. Engage them with love. Now, when you do that, does it leave you open to the possibility of being hurt? Yes. But that's part of being obedient to the call to go and proclaim the gospel.

We see this with the disciples of Jesus in the book of Acts. They were constantly going into areas and situations that they knew they could get in trouble or get hurt, but they still went and proclaimed the gospel. You have to be willing to engage people, even if it leaves you vulnerable, in order to proclaim the gospel to them. If you shut yourself off because of fear, yes you are more protected, but you also lose the ability to develop relationships to share the loving message of the gospel with them. Don't act in fear towards people like Pharaoh.

So, the Israelites enslaved. But did you catch that even during their mistreatment God was still with them? Verse 12 said the more they were oppressed by the Egyptians, the more they multiplied and spread. God was moving and He was with them, even though they were going through difficulty. But this led Pharaoh to even more extreme action, again, because of His fear.

Let's read **Exodus 1:15-16 (NIV)**:

The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, "When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live."

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