

“What I love about Jodie Niznik’s *Choose* is its fidelity to Scripture while guiding the studier into the narrative. Placing myself in the situations Moses found himself in helps me better grasp what it means to be a faithful follower today. Niznik’s highly practical invitations toward spiritual disciplines further root me in the powerful message that I am loved, God has a plan for my life, and obedience brings joy. This will be a perfect Bible study addition to any ministry longing to deepen women’s connection to God.”

MARY DEMUTH, author of over forty books,
including *Into the Light*

“What a rich study on the life of Moses! Jodie Niznik offers solid teaching and hands-on application that have the potential to transform us. Filled with outstanding questions and exercises, this study encourages a deep level of engagement. Readers will be prompted to learn from Moses’s example, for good or, in some cases, as a cautionary tale in their own walk with God.”

NANCY BEACH, leadership coach with the Slingshot Group
and author of *Gifted to Lead*

“Jodie Niznik’s writing transcends mere information and targets actual transformation by transparently sharing her own struggles while wisely pointing out how Moses faced real-life issues such as dealing with discouragement, preventing pride’s pitfalls, and moving past betrayal. With sensitivity and an ongoing desire to encourage her readers, Jodie introduces each lesson with a spiritual practice to help them in their relationship with the Lord. (My favorites are the first and last practices, rest and celebration!) Let Jodie take you to the next level in your walk with Christ by seriously engaging in this excellent study of Moses’s life and ministry.”

DR. E. ANDREW MCQUITTY, pastor at large at Irving Bible
Church and author of *The Way to Brave*

“Moses gets the best education in the world and then promptly spends forty years tending sheep on the back side of some desert. That wilderness vocation looks like a colossal waste of purpose—until God shows up in a burning bush. Moses’s story is as relevant as ever. And Jodie Niznik is a terrific guide for helping readers see how his story relates to their lives. Through this ten-week inductive Bible study, coupled with spiritual disciplines, Niznik walks readers through what the great prophet’s experience can teach us about our own purpose.”

DR. SANDRA GLAHN, professor at Dallas Theological Seminary and author of more than twenty books

“*Choose* offers a highly accessible, deep dive into one of the greatest stories of all time—humanity’s move from slavery to freedom. But this is more than just a story. It’s an invitation to us all to break free from what binds us and walk in the fullness of Christ.”

MARGARET FEINBERG, author of *Fight Back with Joy*
and *More Power to You*

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Choose: A Study of Moses for a Life That Matters

*Crossroads: A Study of Esther and Jonah for
Boldly Responding to Your Call*

— A —
REAL PEOPLE,
REAL FAITH
BIBLE STUDY

CHOOSE

*A Study of Moses
for a Life That Matters*

JODIE NIZNIK



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CONTENTS



Why Moses and Why Now? 11

What to Expect in This Study 13

1. God Is in Control 15
2. Burning Bush Moments 35
3. The Comfort of Confirmation 56
4. Dealing with Discouragement 72
5. From Crisis of Faith to Faithful Obedience 87
6. Preventing Pride 105
7. Remembering Well 122
8. Mentoring Redefined 139
9. Beaten Down by Betrayal 158
10. Leaving a Lasting Legacy 175

Acknowledgments 193

Notes 195

About the Author 199

WHY MOSES AND WHY NOW?



A few years ago, I went through an exhausting season. Every morning I would drag myself out of bed with the goal to just make it through until bedtime. I found myself overloaded and stressed as I was pushed beyond my limits. I was finishing seminary, I had started a new full-time job as a pastor, we were in the process of moving, which meant a new school for my middle school daughters . . . and then the icing on the cake—my husband fell off a ladder and shattered his ankle. Everything seemed to crash in at once. My soul felt dry, my sleep patterns were erratic, and my relationships were taxed. To say I was stressed is an understatement.

Then one day a friend placed a book in my lap. “You need to read this,” she said.

I sighed. I didn’t have time to sleep, let alone read. I thanked her and placed it on my nightstand, where it sat and stared at me. Finally, on a restless night, I picked it up and started reading. The author introduced me to Moses in a way I hadn’t quite seen him before. And it was through this book and some intentional spiritual practices that I started to find rest for my soul again.

Ever since then, I’ve felt a special kinship to Moses and knew that at some point I wanted to return to his story to really learn from him—his mistakes and successes. I was finally able to do that through preparing this study. Moses’s walk with the Lord has become an example to me, beckoning me to follow God in a new way.

As you begin this study of Moses, I pray the same happens for you. I pray the Lord might use Moses’s life to become a turning

point for you and whatever weariness you are carrying in your soul. And finally, I pray that like Moses you will choose to follow wherever God leads, no matter the costs.

Moses was given one life to live, and while he made some mistakes along the way, he ultimately chose to live it well in surrender to God. You, too, have just one life to live. How will you choose to live it?

—Jodie

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THIS STUDY



Practice Sections

Each week our lesson will start with a short practice section. The word *practice* is simple and to me expresses the idea that we are just trying something out in our relationship with the Lord. We are practicing. This section will also be a place for us to reflect on the truths we are learning and bring them into our lives in a new way. These practices won't take huge amounts of time, but they may require some planning. Therefore, we will start each week's lesson with the practice section, read it through, and then make a plan to try the suggested activities.

You may discover something you really love in these little sections—something that brings new life into your relationship with the Lord. You may also discover that some of these exercises will take effort. Some may be hard for you to do and others may be easy, even fun! But all of them will help you stretch and grow. Growth almost always brings the spiritual fruit of a changed life. For me, that makes any effort totally worth it. I hope you agree. I'm actually guessing you do. Otherwise, you wouldn't be starting this study.

Pacing Your Study

Each week of this study includes a practice for the week, an introduction to prepare you for the material, and three study sessions. You are welcome to tackle as much of the week's material as you would like on any given day. However, I suggest giving yourself five days to complete the week's work, and I have marked the sections accordingly. If you break it into these chunks, the study

shouldn't take you more than thirty minutes to do each day. However, if you are a researcher or extensive reflective thinker, you may want to set aside more time for each day's study.

In general, you will find the days broken down as follows:

Day one will be reading about and planning for the practice activity.

Day two will be preparing for the weekly lesson by reading the introduction and weekly Scripture.

Days three through five will be Scripture reading and answering the questions in this study guide.

If you start running behind (we all have those weeks), you may have to pick and choose which questions you want to answer. My advice is to make the Scripture reading your first priority. Then if you have time, scan through the questions to see which ones you want to answer.

As is usually the case, the higher the investment, the greater the return. When we collaborate with Jesus by inviting him into our lives and spending time with him, we experience life transformation. As your life is transformed, you will find it looking more and more like the life God designed you to live. So make every effort to arrange your days so that you can regularly spend time with Jesus.



WEEK 1

GOD IS IN CONTROL



Day 1

Practice—Resting in God

Each week before we start our lesson, I will introduce you to a practice intended to help you take another step in your relationship with the Lord. These brief exercises help you take the head knowledge you are learning from God's Word and move it into heart knowledge.

I know it can be really tempting to skip these if you feel pressed for time, but can I encourage you not to? Sometimes these short activities are exactly what your soul needs. Often they take very little time and just a bit of intentionality.

I think the best way to convince you that these practices are worth your time is to start with my very favorite one—rest. Yes, rest. I'm basically inviting you to take a nap. Aren't you glad you picked up this study?

Think about this: God created us to need rest (Exodus 33:14; Matthew 11:29). He designed humanity to function best when we get adequate sleep. This is not a design flaw; it's a way to help us learn to release control and rely on God to care for us.

Sleep is proven to be essential to good health. The National Sleep Foundation says that while there is no magic number, the

average adult needs between seven and nine hours of sleep every night.¹ Unfortunately, they have also found that 49 percent of American adults have sleep-related problems, and one in six suffers from chronic insomnia. And even if we can fall asleep and make it through the night, many of us still press the boundaries of adequate sleep by staying up too late or getting up too early.

So how are you doing with sleep? Are you getting enough? And if not, why not?

This week, I want to challenge you to take some action, or more accurately some nonaction, and get some rest. To do this, plan one day to sleep until you wake up. Allow your body to rest until it is done. I realize this will probably take some planning. If you have small children at home, you may need to make arrangements with a spouse or a friend to help you. If you wake in the middle of the night, try not to get frustrated that you've ruined your sleep activity. Instead, I recommend you slowly and meditatively recite a verse that helps you surrender to and trust in the Lord. Lately I've been reciting, "The LORD is my shepherd, I have all that I need" (Psalm 23:1 NLT). It reminds me that God sees me and will provide for all my needs . . . even sleep.

Of course, there are always legitimate seasons when we can't get enough rest—such as being a new mom or experiencing a family crisis. If you find yourself in one of these seasons, prayerfully consider who you might be able to ask to give you a few days of relief so you can recharge with some good rest. And if that isn't possible, try to do a few nights where you intentionally choose to go to bed as early as possible and sleep as late as you can. The key is, put a plan in place and try it. If that plan doesn't work, try another one.

As you rest, I hope you also discover a much deeper spiritual practice—trust. Trust isn't just something *we* need to learn, as we will see it is exactly what the Israelites needed to learn too. They found themselves bound in backbreaking slavery and needed to trust that God had not forgotten them even though the situation felt bleak. No matter what's happening in your life right now, resting can be a physical cue to help you remember that God has not lost sight of you either. It is through rest that we learn to trust

in and surrender to God and the limits he has designed us with. Rest also helps us remember that the world doesn't depend on us, it depends on God. We can rest because God never rests. And if you discover you really can't find the time for adequate rest, ask him to help you discern what needs to change.

Just as he had for Moses, God has an amazing plan for your life, a plan that fits within your God-given limitations. Use all the tools he's provided for you, like rest, and you will be ready for the task.

Take a few minutes to prayerfully make a plan for how you will rest this week. Write it down, noting any action steps you need to take and when you will take them. (For example, "I will talk to my family today about sleeping until I wake up Saturday morning and what we all need to do to help that happen.")



"God created us in His image. He is a God who works and then rests. When we rest we honor the way God made us. Rest can be a spiritual act—a truly human act of submission to and dependence on God who watches over all things as we rest."

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun²



Day 2

Preparation

Read Exodus 1:1–2:25.

As you read this passage, write down anything that stands out to you along with any questions you may have.

Just because you've picked up a study on Moses, I don't want to assume you know who he is. So let's take a moment to get to know a few things about him. Many scholars agree that Moses was born sometime near 1400 BC. The Bible confirms that he lived for 120 years, during the period that the Hebrews, who were God's people, were enslaved by the Egyptians. The Egyptians, as

you will discover, were unrelenting taskmasters. They had built an entire economy and lavish lifestyle on the backs of the nearly two million Hebrew slaves. All of this was overseen by the evil Egyptian king (called the pharaoh).

The Hebrews, who had finally reached their breaking point, cried out to God for deliverance. God heard their cries and sent Moses to rescue them. Rescuing the people wasn't an easy task, though. The pharaoh didn't want his entire workforce to walk away, so he resisted Moses's repeated requests to free the Hebrew people. This started a deadly and destructive back-and-forth battle. In the end, the pharaoh failed and God's people found freedom.

One of the things this story shows us is that nothing can thwart God's ultimate plan. If he says he will do something, then he will do it. He is stronger and more powerful than any pharaoh will ever be.

While we do not find ourselves ruled by a tyrant pharaoh as in Moses's day, there are still many things that try to enslave us by holding us back from God's best. People, circumstances, and even our own thoughts can begin to act like personal mini-pharaohs when they distract us from God's good plans for our lives. And often the biggest pharaoh we struggle with is ourselves.

I frequently struggle with my thoughts. In mere seconds I can go from boldly believing God is calling me to do something to rationalizing my way out of it. I start to tell myself lies like: I probably heard him wrong; I don't have time; I'm not good enough; I'll surely fail; or I just don't know where to start. And I often think all of these things at the same time. I know I'm not alone; you do this too. The lies we often allow ourselves to think can rule over us and hold us in bondage, keeping us away from God's best. We may not be struggling with physical slavery as the Hebrews were, but we still need to battle against the pharaohs that threaten us today.

The good news is, God is always ready to tell us the truth about these pharaohs. The truth is, our pharaohs are no match for God. God is good and sovereign, and you can rest in his control. God is waiting and ready for us to say yes to his plans. And just like Moses, he has a good plan for your life.

What pharaoh is standing in your way?

May this lesson give you courage that God is in control, and just like he handled the pharaoh of Moses's day, he can handle the pharaohs that try to stand in your way today.

PRACTICE REMINDER

If you haven't done so already, practice rest this week by planning one day to sleep until you wake up.



Day 3

Israelites Enslaved in Egypt

Read Exodus 1:1–21.

The story of Moses begins in the book of Exodus, the second book of the Bible. But before we can understand what's happening in Exodus, we need to grab some history from Genesis, the first book of the Bible. Genesis is a book that tells the story of creation, humans falling into sin, and God electing Israel as his chosen people. It is also worth noting up front that God's chosen people were referred to by a few names other than just Israel. They were also called Hebrews and Jews. Each term had significance and came about at a different time in history but refers to the same group of people—God's chosen people.

The story of God's people is a tumultuous one. A few hundred years before Moses, God covenanted with Abraham and his descendants to never leave or forsake them, yet they continually turned away from God. And while God held to his covenant with them, there were still consequences for their disobedience. God warned them that trouble would eventually come. He said, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants

will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there” (Genesis 15:13).



Is *pharaoh* a name or a title? Pharaoh is a title. The Bible commonly uses it to denote a king of Egypt. A synonym for pharaoh could be “his honor” or “his majesty.”³



A few generations later, as the book of Genesis closed, these words came to pass. The Israelites moved to the foreign land of Egypt where they were “strangers in a country not their own.” Exodus 1:1–7 described these first four hundred years of Israel living in Egypt as a fruitful time where they experienced an Israelite population explosion. After that time, however, they

became “enslaved and mistreated there.” The entire nation of Israel was now enslaved to Egypt. This is where Moses entered the story.

1. Read Exodus 1:6–11.

What happened to Joseph and his brothers? (As a little background, Joseph is a significant Israelite who facilitated the nation moving to Egypt in a time of dire famine. This move saved the entire nation from destruction. You can read his full story in Genesis 37–50.) Based on Genesis 41:41–43, why do you think this is significant?

What happened to the Israelites?

Is there anything else that stands out to you in this passage?

2. Hebrew slave labor had become an important part of the Egyptian economy. What could have been the implications to the Egyptians and the pharaoh himself if the Israelites had left?

3. According to verses 9–10, one of the king’s biggest concerns was the growing number of Israelites. What do you think the pharaoh was hoping would happen once he enslaved the people? What happened instead (1:12)? How did the Egyptians respond (1:12–14)?

4. The king decided to try a different tactic. According to verses 15–16, what did he ask the midwives to do? What did the midwives do instead, and why did they do this (1:17)?

The midwives were placed in an impossible situation as they were asked to do the unthinkable. They knew that if the pharaoh was willing to kill innocent newborns, then he wouldn't think twice about killing them. They had to make a choice, and no matter what choice was made, lives were on the line. Their choice to fear God over Pharaoh took a lot of courage. This is a clear and extreme example of being asked to do something by a human authority that goes against the will of God.



I'm inspired by the courage of the midwives. They risked their lives by choosing to obey God and disobey the pharaoh. The stakes were high either way. They remind me that obedience to God is always worth it. This life is temporary. Keeping an eternal perspective helps me find courage to follow God no matter the possible costs. Jodie

.....

7. Have you (or someone you know) ever been asked to do something by an authority figure that you believe was wrong and therefore went against God's will? Describe the situation. What did you (or the other person) do?

If you were faced with the situation again, what, if anything, would you do differently?

8. What ultimately happened to the midwives (1:20–21)?

How does this encourage you to rest in God's control even when circumstances seem to tell you otherwise?

Ultimately things worked out well for the midwives. Their lives were spared and they were blessed with their own families. However, we aren't promised a happy ending when we make the hard choice to fear and obey God instead of people. Scripture and recent history tell us that there are many who have endured incredibly difficult circumstances and even lost their lives as a result of choosing to follow God. Jesus, who followed God perfectly, is a great example of this truth. His path led to a torturous death at the hands of his enemies. We aren't promised that when we make the right choice things will always work out as we might wish.

9. Read Jesus's words in John 16:33. What did he say about troubles? Where can we find peace and why? How does this encourage you in troubles you are currently facing?



“The important principle emerges here that God will honour those who defend the principles of righteousness, showing respect for his creation and his rule over life. The midwives are more anxious to please God than to please Pharaoh, and God rewards them.”

Iain D. Campbell⁵



PRACTICE REMINDER

If you haven't done so already, practice rest this week by planning one day to sleep until you wake up.



Day 4

Moses Is Born

Read Exodus 1:22–2:10; Acts 7:18–22.

Up to this point, the pharaoh tried to control the Israelite population through backbreaking labor and oppression and the attempted killing of all newborn baby boys. These two tactics did not work and so he tried a third way. He ordered every Hebrew boy be thrown into the Nile River. It is in the midst of this order that Moses's mother conceives and gives birth.

10. Read Exodus 2:1–9.

What did Moses's mother notice about him?




Why do you think she could no longer hide him after he was three months old?

The pharaoh's daughter finds Moses at the river and asks Moses's sister, who was watching everything unfold, to find someone to care for and nurse him. Why do you think the pharaoh's daughter does this? What else do we learn about Moses's upbringing from Acts 7:22? Why do you think this could be significant?

Is there anything else that stands out to you about Exodus 2:1–9?

Throughout our study, I will offer the opportunity for us to use our imaginations in a sanctified way. These “imagine” questions are intended to help us enter into the story and remember that the people we are studying were real people with real emotions, hopes, and fears. In my own spiritual journey, the Lord has used these kinds of activities to draw my attention to ideas, feelings, or circumstances that have both encouraged and challenged me. However, I also want to offer a word of caution. We never want to impose our own ideas on the text. We can't know what someone is thinking or feeling unless the text tells us. We also need to remember these biblical characters lived in a very different culture and age than we do. So as you imagine what it might have been like for someone, just remember we can never truly know. We might be able to make some good assumptions, but until we meet them in heaven and ask them what they were really thinking and feeling, we need to hold it loosely.

11. Take a moment to try to imagine what it would be like if you were Moses’s mother. Write what you might have thought and felt as you made each of the choices illustrated below.

		
Having a Child	Placing Moses in a Basket	Giving Moses Away

12. What do you learn about how Moses’s mother handled the situation from Hebrews 11:23?

Moses’s mother had no idea how things would turn out when she placed him in the river. She acted in faith and did what she thought was best. Moses’s life was ultimately spared through her actions, but it was still a bittersweet outcome as she had to give Moses over to be raised by someone else.

13. What situation(s) in your life has you worried because you are unsure of the ultimate outcome? Describe the situation and why it concerns you.

14. Read the following verses. Underline what we should do with our anxiety and concerns. Circle the reason why or the way we should do this.

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.
(1 Peter 5:7)

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. . . . Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. (Psalm 23:1, 4)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6–7)

Based on the Philippians verses, what will result when we give these concerns over to God and rest in his control over life?

Based on the model of praying in Philippians 4:6–7, write a short prayer about the situation you identified in question 13. Start by thanking God for what is good and then present your request to him. Ask him to provide the peace he promises he will.

I don't know where you find yourself today, I am wrestling with peace. And this reminds me of the uncertainty in my world that evolved with COVID-19. When everyone was ordered to stay at home, my husband was an essential employee, so he was at work. My daughters lived in different states with roommates who were handling this virus with varying degrees of seriousness. My illusion of control was shattered, as it was for most.

As I read these verses with fresh eyes today, I am reminded that the peace God is offering isn't a reassurance that all will be well as the world qualifies it. No, the peace God is providing me today is the reminder that he is my good shepherd and I truly do have all I need in him. And all I need is much less than I thought it was.

Maybe you are wrestling with peace today too. If so, know that I'm praying that "the peace of God, which transcends all understanding" will settle deep into your heart right now.

15. God chose to protect Moses through the choices and actions of different people. Who were these people and what do they have in common (1:17; 2:2, 5–7)?

How does this encourage you? When circumstances have felt overwhelming, how have you seen God's protection and care in the choices and actions of the people God has put in your life?

PRACTICE REMINDER

If you haven't done so already, practice rest this week by planning one day to sleep until you wake up.



Day 5

Moses at Forty

Read Exodus 2:11–25; Acts 7:23–29.

Moses was raised as the son of the pharaoh's daughter—which made him like a grandson to the pharaoh. The text doesn't tell us who really knew about Moses's true identity, but it does indicate that Moses knew he was really a Hebrew. When he was forty years old, and presumably still living in the pharaoh's household, he witnessed an Israelite being beaten by an Egyptian. Seeing that no one was around, he killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. The next day he witnessed two Israelites fighting against each other and he decided to intervene again.

16. According to Acts 7:25, what was Moses's motive in intervening? Based on how the Israelites react to Moses (Exodus 2:14; Acts 7:27–28), what do you think they thought of Moses? If they knew he was a Hebrew, why do you think they didn't want his help?

17. Do you think Moses's method of intervening was misguided? Why or why not?

Think back to a time in your life when you had a good motive but had a poor method. What happened? Why do you think your method was wrong? How might have remembering that ultimate deliverance lies with God have allowed you to approach the issue more effectively?

18. How does Pharaoh respond when he hears about what Moses has done (Exodus 2:15)?

How many times has Pharaoh tried to kill Moses up to this point (Exodus 1:16, 22; 2:15)? The text doesn't tell us if Pharaoh knew if Moses was a Hebrew or not, but at least in this last attempted killing, we can assume the pharaoh does know he was raised as his daughter's son. Considering this, why do you think he responded so harshly?

19. According to Job 14:5, Psalm 139:16, and Proverbs 19:21, why didn't the pharaoh succeed in killing Moses? How does this truth encourage or comfort you?



“Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.” (Proverbs 19:21)



20. While we are not always promised to be protected, we often are. In your life, where have you seen God's protection and preservation? Tell about a specific time.
21. When bad things happen in our lives, what does Romans 8:28 say God will do? (Notice: Romans doesn't say the thing that has happened is good.) Where have you experienced this truth in your life? How does this promise free you to rest more fully in God's sovereign control of your life?

It's important to remember that bad things can happen in our lives for many reasons. Sometimes it's the consequences of our own actions (like getting in an accident because we ran a red light), sometimes it's just because we got caught in the consequences of someone else's wrong actions (like getting hit by someone who ran a red light), and sometimes it's really no fault of our own but just because we live in a broken world marred by the effects of sin (like getting sick). The important thing to remember is that God never causes these bad things to happen. He does allow them at times, but he never causes them. And when these hard things do intersect our lives, remember that our good Father promises to be with us every step of the way. He will never leave us or forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6).

We leave Moses in Midian, a dry and desolate desert land. There he met and married Zipporah and they had two sons. He spent the next forty years in the desert of Midian as a shepherd. Forty years seems like a long time to us, and it is. We don't know much of what happened during those years, but we can be sure the time was not wasted. God was most certainly preparing Moses for his calling to rescue his people. And God was also preparing his people to be ready to follow Moses.

No matter where you find yourself today, you can rest in the truth that, like Moses, you have been chosen by God. He is able to use everything in your life to prepare you for your chosen journey. Stay focused on him and continue to follow where he leads.



“For 40 years (Acts 7:30) Moses undertook the toilsome life of a shepherd in the Sinai area, thus gaining valuable knowledge of the topography of the Sinai Peninsula which later was helpful as he led the Israelites in that wilderness land.”

John D. Hannah⁶



PRACTICE REFLECTION

1. What was this rest activity like for you? What did you enjoy about it? What was hard about it?
2. What did you notice about the day after you rested adequately (your reactions, productivity, alertness, etc.)?
3. Is this something you desire to keep doing? What adjustments would need to be made in your life to accomplish this?