

# RESPONDING TO GOD'S CALL AND EXPERIENCING HIS PRESENCE

## EXODUS 34:01–09

### *Introduction: Starting All Over Again*

One of man's greatest needs is to know this one truth: he can start all over again; he can make a new beginning; he can have a brand new life. No matter how terrible the sin or shame, how horrible the failure or devastation, how tragic the suffering or pain, how helpless or hopeless the situation — no matter what the problem or trial — man can start all over again. He can have a new beginning for one simple reason: God loves him and cares for him. God wants to take care of him and look after him, delivering him through the trials that confront him. This is the subject of this great passage, a subject that offers the greatest hope to us all: we can start all over again. This is: *The Renewal of the Covenant Between God and Man: The Steps to Renewal*, Exodus 34:1-35.

- I. Step 1 — responding to God's call to come back into His presence: God called Moses to return to His presence (vv. 1-4)
- II. Step 2 — seeking and experiencing God's presence afresh (vv. 5-9).
- III. Step 3 — making a renewed covenant with God, a renewed commitment to obey God (vv. 10-26).
- IV. Step 4 — knowing the importance of the special commandments of God: the Ten Commandments themselves (vv. 27- 28).
- V. Step 5 — going forth to proclaim God's Word (vv. 29-35).

### **I. *Exodus 34:01–04 Responding to God's Call to Come Back to Him***

When starting over, the first step is to respond to God's call, to come back into His presence. God called Moses to return to His Presence. Note that the invitation to come was extended to Moses by God. There is a special significance to this invitation, one that is easily overlooked. The invitation was to Moses and to him alone. Remember, Moses was the mediator between God and Israel. It was through Moses that, God had revealed His law to His people, and through Moses that He revealed His plans for the Tabernacle. And now it was through Moses that God was renewing His covenant with His people. This is a clear picture of how Jesus Christ is our Mediator. Jesus Christ is the One who renews God's covenant with us. It is Jesus Christ who enters God's presence for us, who makes us acceptable to God.

**John 14:6** *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

**Acts 4:12** *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*

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**1 Tim 2:5** *For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

**Heb 8:6** *But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.*

**Heb 9:15** *For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.*

**Heb 9:24** *For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.*

**1 John 2:1** *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence.*

God called Moses to come back into His presence for a very specific reason: to receive the second copy of God's law, the Ten Commandments (Exo 20:1-19; 31:18; 32:15-16, 19). Remember, Moses had cast the first copy of tablets to the ground in anger when he was descending the mountain and saw the people committing their terrible sin (Exo 32:19). But Moses and the people had cried out to God for forgiveness and they had repented of their sin. Furthermore, Moses had spent days in intercession, begging God to restore the people fully and completely, just as strongly as they were before. Moses had pleaded for the full manifestation of God's presence among the people. God had heard the prayers and intercession of Moses and the people. God had forgiven their sin and accepted their repentance. But one thing was still lacking: the law of God, the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments were the very basis of the covenant between God and man. In order to start over, the law had to be rewritten and given to the people. Now note what happened.

1. God told Moses to prepare to receive the second copy of God's law, of His Ten Commandments (v. 1). God told Moses to chisel out two stone or slate tablets. They were thin and small, for Moses was able to carry them by hand.
2. God told Moses to climb the mountain in the morning to meet with God (v. 2).
3. God told Moses to come alone (v. 3). No person, not even Joshua, was to reenter God's presence with Moses. Not even an animal was to be anywhere near, not even grazing in front of the mountain.
4. Note that Moses responded to and obeyed God's call. He did everything God said. Moses did not selectively obey God, doing only those things that were convenient or easy to do. Moses obeyed God...
  - obeyed when he prepared himself to receive God's law, His Word, again
  - obeyed when he met God early in the morning on Mount Sinai
  - obeyed when he met God alone

**Thought 1.** The very first step in starting over, in seeking a new beginning with God, is clearly seen in this passage. A person must respond to God's call to return to His presence. A person must get into God's presence and seek the LORD.

**Mat 7:7** "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

**John 16:24** "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."

**2 Chr 7:14** If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

**Psa 105:04** Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.

**Jer 29:13** You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

**Thought 2.** Note that Moses met God early in the morning (v. 2, 4). Any person who wants to be useful to God must be willing to start the day early. The day becomes much too short if the mornings are wasted away with laziness or slumber. The believer who truly seeks God arises early, spending a quiet devotional time with God, and then gets busy taking care of his duties for the day.

=> Abraham rose up early and worked for God.

**Gen 22:3** Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about.

**Gen. 28:18** Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.

=> Moses rose up early and worked for God.

**Exo 8:20** Then the LORD said to Moses, "Get up early in the morning and confront Pharaoh as he goes to the river and say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me.'"

**Exo 9:13** Then the LORD said to Moses, "Get up early in the morning, confront Pharaoh and say to him, 'This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me'"

**Exo 24:4** Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel.

**Exo 34:4** So Moses chiselled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning, as the LORD had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands.

=> Joshua rose up early and worked for God.

***Jos 3:1** Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over.*

***Jos 6:12** Joshua got up early the next morning and the priests took up the ark of the LORD.*

***Jos 8:10** Early the next morning Joshua mustered his army, and he and the leaders of Israel marched before them to Ai.*

=> Samuel's parents rose up early and worked for God.

***1 Sam 1:19** Early the next morning they arose and worshipped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her.*

=> Samuel rose up early and worked for God.

***1 Sam 15:12** Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, "Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honour and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal."*

=> David rose up early and worked for God.

***1 Sam 17:20** Early in the morning David left the flock in the care of a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry.*

=> David and his men rose up early and worked for God.

***1 Sam 29:10-11** "Now get up early, along with your master's servants who have come with you, and leave in the morning as soon as it is light." So David and his men got up early in the morning to go back to the land of the Philistines, and the Philistines went up to Jezreel.*

=> Job rose up early and worked for God.

***Job 1:5** When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would make arrangements for them to be purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each one of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.*

=> Jesus Christ rose up early and worked for God.

***Mark 1:35** Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.*

***John 8:2** At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them.*

***Luke 24:1** On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.*

=> The apostles rose up early and worked for God.

*Acts 5:21* At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people. When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin — the full assembly of the elders of Israel — and sent to the jail for the apostles.

## II. *Exodus 34:05–09 Seeking and Experiencing God's Presence Afresh*

When starting over, the second step is to seek and experience God's presence afresh. When Moses reached the top of Mount Sinai, the cloud of God descended and covered the mountain. Scripture says that God's presence was in the cloud and that God gave Moses one of the deepest spiritual experiences ever granted a person.

1. God revealed Himself and proclaimed His name, *the LORD* (v. 5-7). Remember, in ancient history the name of a person stood for all that a person is and does. All that God is and all that God does — His character, nature, person — are wrapped up in God's name, *the LORD*. Note how God describes His name, how He defines His name, what He says His name stands for. This is what God proclaimed to Moses; this is the deep spiritual experience God gave to His dear servant.

a. God is *the LORD, the LORD* (v. 5). God passed in front of Moses proclaiming Himself to be "the Lord, the Lord" (JEHOVAH, YAHWEH). The word has at least three significant meanings:

=> "LORD" means "I AM THAT I AM," the very essence of Being, the energy, force and source of Being. (See *Jehovah, Yahweh*, Exo 3:14-15.)

=> "LORD" means the God of salvation, deliverance and redemption. (See note, Gen 2:4; *God, LORD, Lord*, Exo 4:10-11; note, Exo 6:1-5.)

=> "LORD" means the God of revelation, the God who reveals Himself and the truth to man. (See *God, LORD, Lord*, Exo 4:10-11.)

God was proclaiming all this to Moses and He declares the same message to us.

God proclaims His name to us, for His name has never changed. God is the LORD (JEHOVAH — YAHWEH):

=> The great "I AM THAT I AM"

=> The great God of salvation, deliverance and redemption

=> The great God of revelation who reveals Himself and the truth to us

b. God is merciful (compassionate) and gracious (v. 5). The name of God, the LORD, means...

- the very nature of God is that of mercy, compassion and grace
- the very nature of God reaches out in mercy and in compassion and grace

The very name of God tells us that He has compassion for us when we need help — any kind of help — and that He wants to have mercy upon us and pour out the riches of His grace upon us. God proclaimed this to Moses and He declares the same message to us. His name, *the LORD*, tells us that God is merciful (compassionate) and gracious.

- c. God is long-suffering, slow to anger (v. 5). The very name, *the LORD*, means that God is long-suffering, that He suffers a long time before taking action against sin and evil, suffers a long time before executing justice and judgment upon sinful people. God is long-suffering, not wanting any person to perish.
- d. God abounds in goodness. The very name and character of the LORD God point to and are wrapped in goodness and faithfulness. When thoughts of God fill our minds, they usually focus upon His goodness and faithfulness — which have never failed, never run out, never expired.
- e. God shows mercy and love to thousands by forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin (v. 7). The name of God, the LORD, means that God is merciful and loving; therefore, He forgives all kinds of wrong. God forgives...
  - iniquities
  - sin, no matter what the sin is
  - rebellion against Him and His commandments
  - transgressions
  - all wickedness and evil
  - corruption

No matter what a person has done or how terrible the evil, God shows mercy and love by withholding His justice and judgment, giving a person time to repent and seek Him. And God forgives thousands, forgives because His name is the LORD. God is the God of mercy and love.

- f. God executes righteousness and justice: He punishes the guilty and the children of the guilty to the third and fourth generations (v. 7). God's name, the LORD, means that God is righteous and just, that He does execute justice and judgment upon the wicked, the rebellious and the sinful of the world. (See note, pt. 2, Exo 20:5-6.)

The above six character traits and attributes are a description of God's name, a description of what God's name — the LORD — means. God revealed Himself and proclaimed His glorious name to Moses. When we see or hear God's name — the LORD — we can know...

- that God is the LORD, the LORD
- that God is merciful and gracious
- that God is long-suffering, slow to anger
- that God shows mercy and love to thousands by forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin
- that God executes justice, that He punishes the guilty and the children of the guilty for generations

This is the nature of God. This is the very name of God, the LORD. The revelation of God's name was the deep spiritual experience given to Moses.

2. Now, note what Moses did after God revealed His name and His nature: Moses immediately fell to the ground, prostrating himself before the Lord in worship and prayer (v. 8-9). He asked God for three very specific things, the very same requests he had already been making of God. Moses was doing just what the LORD Jesus Christ was to reveal when He came to earth: that we should ask, seek and knock when we face desperate need, and God will hear us.
  - => Moses prayed for God's guidance, that the Lord Himself would lead him and God's people to the promised land.
  - => Moses prayed for God's forgiveness. He could not get away from the fact that he and the people were short, ever so short, of God's glory, that they were stiff-necked — sinful and depraved — always standing in need of God's forgiveness.
  - => Moses prayed for God to accept His people as God's very special possession and inheritance. Moses wanted God to attach Himself so closely to His people that He would never cast them off, holding them ever so dear to His heart. He wanted God to make them eternally secure in Himself, to claim them as His very own people, His very own possession and inheritance.

**Thought 1.** When starting over — when seeking a new beginning, when wanting a brand new start in life — we must seek and experience God's presence afresh. We must seek the LORD, seek all that He is and does, seek Him in all His fullness.

- (1) When starting over, we must learn and understand that God is the LORD, the only living and true God, the great Creator and Sustainer of the universe (v. 5).

**Deu 6:4-5** *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

**Neh 9:6** *You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.*

**Isa 43:10-11** *"You are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no saviour.*

- (2) When starting over, we must learn and understand that God is merciful and gracious (v. 6).

**Heb 4:15-16** *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

**Micah 7:18** *Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.*

(3) When starting over, we must learn and understand that God is long-suffering, slow to anger (v. 6).

**2 Pet 3:9** *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

(4) When starting over, we must learn and understand that God abounds in goodness and truth (v. 6).

(a) God overflows with goodness.

**Psa 34:8** *Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.*

**Nahum 1:7** *The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him.*

(b) God overflows with truth.

**John 8:-32** *“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

**2 Sam 7:28** *Sovereign Lord, you are God! Your covenant is trustworthy, and you have promised these good things to your servant.*

(5) When starting over, we must learn and understand that God shows mercy and love to thousands by forgiving their wickedness, rebellion and sin (v. 7).

**Eph 1:7** *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

**1 John 1:9** *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

(6) When starting over, we must learn and understand that God executes righteousness and justice, that He punishes the guilty and the children of the guilty for generations (v. 7).

**Psa 62:12** *And that you, O Lord, are loving. Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done.*

**2 Th 1:7-8** *And give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction.*

**Heb 9:27** *Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,*

**2 Pet 2:9** *If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. ■*