



# God Reveals God's Name

EXODUS 3:7-15

God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

Exodus 3:14

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## Quick prep

In Exodus 3:7-15, God commissions Moses to deliver God's people—the Israelites (or Hebrews)—from their suffering as slaves in Egypt. This occurs when Moses unexpectedly encounters God on Mount Horeb, where God calls to him from a burning bush. When God tells Moses that God will send him to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to secure the release of the Israelites, Moses asks for God's name so that he can share it with God's people. God responds, “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14). This could also be translated from Hebrew as “I will be who I will be” or “I will be who I am.” The personal name of God, YHWH, is related to this Hebrew phrase and can be rendered in English as *Yahweh*—although some Jews (and Christians) avoid saying this name out of reverence for God. It is instead rendered in many English Bibles as “the LORD,” such as in God's subsequent self-identification in Exodus 3:15-16 as “the LORD, the God of your ancestors.” While remaining mysterious, the divine name reveals that the God of the Israelites' ancestors will faithfully continue to be *their* God. Because giving one's name fosters relationship, God revealing God's name affirms God's special relationship with God's people—a commitment that will be demonstrated by God delivering the people from captivity so that they can freely love and serve God and one another.

- ✦ If possible, read Exodus 2:1–4:17 prior to this session so that you are familiar with the fuller context of the focus passage.
- ✦ Study Bibles like *Lutheran Study Bible, Second Edition* contain a wealth of resources you can draw from throughout these Bible Conversations. In preparation for each session, you can read the introduction to the biblical book being studied and the notes on the focus passages.
- ✦ Whether you're gathering for in-person, online, or hybrid conversation, make sure all group members have a print or digital copy of the participant guide. Enlarged print versions of the participant guide are also available at [augzburgfortress.org](http://augzburgfortress.org).

## SUPPLIES

- ♦ Name tags
- ♦ Pens and pencils
- ♦ Whiteboard or large sheet of paper and marker
- ♦ Bibles
- ♦ Copies of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (optional)
- ♦ Instrumental music (optional)

## Gather (15 to 30 minutes)

### CHECK IN

Welcome participants as they arrive. Ask in-person participants to write and wear a name tag, and ask online participants to display their preferred name. Then, explain the introductions activity. Each person will share their first name with an adjective that describes them and that also begins with the first letter of their name: for example, “joyful Julie” and “musical Manuel.”

Start by giving your own introduction; then invite participants to introduce themselves. If time allows, ask for volunteers to identify as many participants as possible by the name and adjective they shared.

### OPENING PRAYER

**Loving God, you know each one of us and call us by name. Open our minds and hearts to encounter you through your word. Guide our conversations in this group and our service to the world you love. In Jesus’ name. Amen.**

### COMMUNITY-BUILDING

As you begin this first session, review the group covenant. Explain that the covenant is important for building trust and encouraging all participants to share and grow throughout the study. Then, ask participants to take turns reading the covenant line by line. Afterward, give participants three to five minutes to discuss with one or two other people why they think this covenant is important and which parts of it will especially help them feel comfortable participating in this study.

Call the group back together and invite participants to share their reflections. Remind participants that here and throughout the study, sharing is both optional and sacred. Encourage them to listen to others without judgment. After a participant shares, thank them for doing so.

- ✦ Greet participants and introduce yourself to them as they arrive to create a welcoming atmosphere.
- ✦ With a hybrid group, alternate between calling on in-person and online participants to share their introductions so that the group feels more integrated.
- ✦ Encourage participants to have fun with the introductions activity and not to worry if they cannot yet remember everyone’s name.

- ✦ For online groups, create breakout groups of two to three participants for discussion. Do the same for online participants in hybrid groups.
- ✦ It is okay if no one volunteers to share their insights with the full group now, since it might take time for participants to feel comfortable doing so. Feel free to share what you think is most important about the covenant if there is a gap in the conversation. You can also review parts of the Series Introduction with the group.

To close this activity, remind the group that personal information is to remain confidential and that this is an important way of honoring each person. Thank the group for their willingness to commit to the covenant.

## Dwell (20 to 40 minutes)

### DWELLING IN THE WORD

Ask for three volunteers to read the text aloud, slowly. One person will read the narrator's parts, one person will read God's speech, and another person will read Moses' speech. Ask the other participants to listen for what the scripture text reveals about God.

#### Exodus 3:7-15

**Narrator:** <sup>7</sup> Then the LORD said,

**God:** "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, <sup>8</sup> and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>9</sup> The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. <sup>10</sup> Now go, I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

**Narrator:** <sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God,

**Moses:** "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

**Narrator:** <sup>12</sup> He said,

**God:** "I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

**Narrator:** <sup>13</sup> But Moses said to God,

**Moses:** "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"

**Narrator:** <sup>14</sup> God said to Moses,

**God:** "I AM WHO I AM."

**Narrator:** He said further,

**God:** "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

**Narrator:** <sup>15</sup> God also said to Moses,

**God:** “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’:

This is my name forever,  
and this my title for all generations.”

🌿 For a fully in-person group, you might use a stone or other small item as a “talking piece.” Only the person holding the piece is allowed to talk, while others listen. Hold the talking piece while you ask the first question, then pass it to the person you call on to speak next, and so on. There is no obligation for participants to share if they are not prepared or comfortable to do so.

🌿 If someone monopolizes the conversation, kindly thank them for sharing. You can then either call on someone else, invite any others to share, or move to the next question.

## CONVERSATION

1. Ask the first question and make a list of the group’s responses on your whiteboard or large sheet of paper. Inform any online participants that they can share their responses out loud or in the chat function. Add any online responses to your whiteboard or large sheet of paper and type the list from the in-person group into the online chat. Including a visual list of responses engages multiple senses and can help participants stay engaged. If time allows, you can return to this list at the end of the conversation and ask participants which characteristics of God resonate with them the most right now.
2. If participants struggle to respond to the second prompt in question 2, or to extend the conversation, you can ask them to read one (or both) of the following biblical texts and ask them to compare them with the session’s focus text: Jeremiah 1:1-10; Luke 1:26-38.
3. Some participants might feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences in a smaller group. You might ask participants to share their responses to some questions in pairs or groups of three before inviting them to share with the full group.
4. If there is remaining time, you might ask the group if anyone is using a translation of the Bible other than the NRSVue. If so, you can ask that person to read their translation and then ask the group to compare it with the NRSVue, noting any differences.

## Engage (10 to 20 minutes)

### WORD AND SERVICE

Invite participants to consider and share one thing they will do during the coming week to be more attentive to God’s presence and prompting.

Encourage them to invite one new person to the next session.

In this first session, also point out the Session Recap, Suggestions for Going Deeper, and Looking Ahead features in the participant guide.

## WORSHIP AND PRAYER

Ask participants to consider any prayer concerns they might have, especially upon reflecting on the session's scripture text. Remind them that they should obtain permission before sharing prayer concerns involving other people and that confidentiality also applies to prayer. Discussing this in the first session will prepare participants to share prayer concerns with the group in subsequent sessions.

Lead a brief worship time by asking participants to assume a comfortable position, close their eyes, and take some deep breaths. Consider playing some instrumental music in the background or simply hold silence. Inform participants that you will take a few minutes for everyone to silently pray for their prayer concerns, and that in subsequent sessions, they will have the opportunity to share petitions with the group.

Then close by reading the following prayer together:

**Holy God, as you have accompanied your people through times of captivity, wilderness, and exile, shelter and sustain all those who flee persecution, oppression, warfare, violence, hunger, and poverty. Open our hearts and homes, our gates and doors, so that they find safety, peace, and welcome—a place to live in freedom and without fear; through Jesus Christ, our refuge and our hope. Amen. (ACS, p. 51)**

If time allows, invite the group to sing “Here I Am, Lord” (ELW 574).

## LOOKING AHEAD

Invite a participant to read aloud the Looking Ahead section in the participant guide. Ask participants to bring a Bible (print or on an electronic device) to each session. Make any other announcements about the time, place, or other matters for the next session.

- ✦ Let participants know that it is fine for them to simply rest or meditate in silence if they finish praying before others.
- ✦ Silent prayer time can feel long. Feel free to close this time after a few minutes, especially if you sense that most participants have finished praying.

