

MOSES

A Man of Selfless Dedication

STUDY FIFTEEN

Sinai: Where Moses Met God

Exodus 19

Our number one priority is the time we spend meeting with God.
—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WHAT would it be like to meet with God as Moses did? We can't see God's face, because, as John wrote, "No one has ever seen God" (1 John 4:12). But, according to the psalmist, we can marvel at His power and majesty in creation.

*The heavens proclaim the glory of God.
The skies display his craftsmanship.
Day after day they continue to speak;
night after night they make him known. (Psalm 19:1–2)*

God revealing general truths about Himself in creation is *general revelation*. *Special revelation* is God declaring specific truths about Himself, as He did through Christ and in the written Word. We meet God in the Scriptures when His Spirit speaks to our hearts as we read God's words and commune with Him in prayer.

Before the written Word, God revealed His nature to His people through thunderous displays of wind and fire, such as the time He met Moses at Mount Sinai. What would it have been like to see God's presence that day? In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll join the Israelites and witness God's earth-shattering majesty on the mountain. It was an experience they never forgot, and neither will we.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Meeting the Lord through His Word begins with prayer. Invite Him to reveal His heart to you as you spend time with Him.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

At the burning bush, the Lord told Moses that He had come to rescue His people and lead them “out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land. . . . a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8). But before tasting the sweetness of their new homeland, the people had to first meet their Lord at His mountain. So, Moses led the people deeper into the wilderness to “the base of Mount Sinai” where they set up camp (19:2).

Early tradition places Mount Sinai at Jebel Musa, a mountain that rises nearly 8,000 feet in elevation at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula. View pictures of the rugged terrain and also Saint Catherine’s monastery located at the foot of *Jebel Musa* at bibleplaces.com. The monastery houses some of the earliest manuscripts of the Bible, copied and preserved by monks more than a thousand years ago in honor of God giving His Word to Moses.

The Israelites spent nearly a year at the foot of Mount Sinai, learning God’s law and worshipping Him. Looking at the pictures, what impresses you about the topography?

As you study the events at Mount Sinai, imagine yourself in this sacred place surrounded by majestic mountain peaks reaching up to heaven like hands of praise. Prepare yourself to witness the mighty power of God.

I don’t think anything can compare to the mountains to describe the majesty of the Creator. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Observation: Meeting God at the Mountain

Use your skills of *observation* as you carefully read the verses that describe the Israelites meeting God at the mountain.¹ Pause and ponder God's magnificent display of power. How do we relate to such an awesome God? The text contains important principles we can apply, but first simply record what you see in Scripture.

Getting Ready to Meet with God—Exodus 19:1–15

In *Exodus 19:1–6*, the Lord laid out to Moses the terms of His covenant with His people. The basis of the relationship was their redemption from slavery in Egypt. What metaphor described God's grace toward them in *19:3–4*? What does this image communicate about God's heart?

What did God offer His people in *19:5–6*? What did He require from them in return?

Moses served as mediator of the covenant, relaying messages from the Lord to the people and taking their responses back to the Lord. By agreeing to “do everything the LORD has commanded” (*Exodus 19:8*), the people effectively signed their names to God's covenant. The key word in this section is *obey*.

The key word in *19:9* is *hear*. How did the Lord set apart Moses as His mouthpiece? For what purpose?

God was laying the groundwork for communication. God's people must be ready to hear. Willing to obey. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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What key word do you see in *Exodus 19:10–11*? Why do you think this step was important for the people to meet God?

Finally, to emphasize *respect* toward the Lord, the Lord told Moses to set “a boundary all around the mountain” (19:12). What warning did Moses issue in *19:13–15*?

Obey, hear, consecrate, and respect. We’ll look at these elements as guidelines for our relationship with the Lord in the *interpretation* phase. For now, continue observing Exodus 19.

Meeting with God—Exodus 19:16–25

How did the Lord reveal Himself to His people in *Exodus 19:16–25*? What instructions did the Lord give the priests, who would later mediate between the people and God?

Imagine yourself at the mountain of God when He comes down. Feel the heat of the fire on your face. Breathe the smoke billowing from the peak. Tremble as the mountain shakes. What aspects of His nature was the Lord communicating?

With a desire to make God relevant, we can make shallow the holiness of God. A shallow view of God leads to a shallow life. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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The Purpose of Mount Sinai

What was the initial purpose the Lord revealed Himself to His people on His holy mountain, according to [Exodus 20:18–20](#)? Note the phrase, “so that,” in verse 20.

Another purpose was to ratify His covenant with Israel, which included laws to obey. When Moses ascended the mountain for forty days, what did the Lord give him, according to [34:28–29](#)? You can read the Ten Commandments in [20:1–17](#).

In addition to laws to obey, the Lord gave His people instructions for worship. Detailed plans for building the tabernacle and its sacred items are found in chapters [25–31](#). What was God’s reason for His people to build a sanctuary, according to [25:8](#)?

Obeying the law and worshiping in the tabernacle represent two streams of expression in the Hebrews’ relationship with God. Let’s examine closer how these streams flowed through the covenant God was establishing at Mount Sinai, called the Mosaic covenant.



Interpretation: The Mosaic Covenant

Up to this point, the book of Exodus chronicles God’s rescue of His people from bondage in Egypt and their journey to Mount Sinai. According to Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s chart on [Exodus](#) at [insight.org](#), the main themes of Exodus 1–18 are “bondage,” “deliverance,” and “journey.”

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Chapter 19 represents a hinge. For the rest of the book, the focus is on the law and the tabernacle. After Moses received God's law and instructions for the tabernacle at Mount Sinai, he ratified the covenant with blood in [Exodus 24:4–6](#), and then he read “the Book of the Covenant” aloud to the people (Exodus 24:7). They swore their allegiance to God as their king, promising to “do everything the LORD has commanded” (24:7).

As Christians, we relate to God through Christ, who established the new covenant. We “no longer live under the requirements of the law” but “under the freedom of God's grace” (Romans 6:14). And yet, some of the same principles of relating with God from our passage remain the same: *obey, hear, consecrate, and respect.*

How do the following verses in the New Testament echo these concepts? Write down a principle beside each verse that explains them.

[Matthew 7:24–26](#): _____

[2 Timothy 2:21–22](#): _____

[Hebrews 12:28–29](#): _____

[Revelation 3:20](#): _____

God gave His Word so that His people might know His mind and obey. He gave them the design of the tabernacle so that they might build it and He might come and dwell among them. He didn't want to remain on a mountain. He wanted to be accessible and available. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Jesus, Our Mediator

Moses was the mediator of the old covenant with Israel, but Jesus Christ is our mediator. According to [1 Timothy 2:5–6](#), what can Jesus do for us that Moses could not do?

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The law and the sacrifices were “only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come” when Christ offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice (Hebrews 10:1). Now, through Christ, we have open access to the same God who shook the mountain.



Application: Meeting with God Today

Exodus 19 implies some basic methods for meeting with God. First, *to meet regularly with God, we need a place*. It's helpful to create a special spot for your time with God. It should be private, quiet, and conducive to study and prayer.

Second, *to approach God, we need time*. Israel spent nearly a year at Mount Sinai preparing spiritually to be God's light to the world. Allow time to meditate on Scripture, listen for God's truths, and rest in His presence.

Third, *to hear from God, we need His Word*. The centerpiece of your walk with God is your Bible, through which God speaks, teaches, encourages, and guides. Using these *Searching the Scriptures* Bible studies is a great way to feed on God's Word. In addition, you can memorize Scripture and rehearse it reflectively.

Fourth, *to remember what God says, we need a journal*. This should be a record of your spiritual walk with God, not a diary of daily activities. Write your prayers, lessons from Scripture, and meaningful verses.

Would you like to implement these principles in addition to what you are already doing in your time with the Lord in His Word? Which ones are most helpful?

Remember the principles Israel modeled when they met with God. They approached God with a willingness to obey, the sensitivity to hear, the desire to be pure, and an attitude of respect He deserves. Put in your own words the importance of *obeying God, hearing God, consecrating yourself to God, and respecting God*. How do they work together as features of your walk with Him?

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Let these principles light your way as you meet the Lord in His Word and journey with Him to heaven, our promised land.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, in Your Word, I find life and peace. No other book leads me like Your Book, and I need wisdom. I also need to sense Your presence as You speak to me through Scripture. Guide me with Your truth. Give me hope through Your promises. Grant me peace as I follow You. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2024–2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1975, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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