

# Know the Author

By Eric Mitchell

## Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

### Assignment One

Read David's song in 2 Samuel 22:5-7 and then read Jonah's prayer in Jonah 2:2-9. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: How are David's and Jonah's language and imagery similar? How could their different roles (king vs. prophet) have impacted their writing? How could their different locations (Jerusalem vs. belly of a great fish) have impacted their writing? How could their different audiences (David's song to the people *about* God vs. Jonah's prayer *to* God) have impacted their writing?

### Assignment Two

Read Exodus 2:1-25; 7:1-7; 16:20; 32:19; 33:11; 34:35; Leviticus 10:16; Numbers 12:3-8; and 20:6-13. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: Can you describe Moses' upbringing, education, language and culture? Was he a wise and just character? Was he always obedient? In what literary formats (genres) did he mainly write (laws, narrative stories, poetry, wisdom sayings)?

### Assignment Three

Read the comments related to Exodus 3:1 - 4:13 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: (1) Who is doing the calling? (2) What has instigated God's actions? (3) What is God's message to Israel? (3) Why might Israel have been skeptical of Moses as God's messenger? (4) How would the Israelites, who were Egyptian slaves at the time, have understood this message?

### Scripture to Memorize

*"Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak."*

Exodus 4:12

### Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand that the meaning of Scripture resides with the author.

**Eric Alan Mitchell** is associate professor of Old Testament and Archaeology at Southwestern Seminary, and he directs the Tel Gezer Archaeological Survey in Israel. Eric has served two churches as youth minister. He authored *A Literary Examination of the Function of Satire in the Mišpat Hammelek of I Samuel*, and coauthored *Old Testament Survey 2nd edition*. He is associate editor for the new *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* and is a translator and editor for the new *Modern English Version Bible*. He has also edited the Dead Sea Scroll fragment *FrgDSSDeut4* (Deuteronomy 12:11–14).

Eric has traveled to Israel seventeen times as well as to Jordan, Turkey, and Egypt. He currently teaches a young adult Sunday school class at Travis Avenue Baptist Church. He and his wife Nancy have been happily married for twenty-seven years and have four children. He enjoys lifting weights, woodworking, and shooting guns. [www.ericalanmitchell.com](http://www.ericalanmitchell.com).

## It's in the Book

30 minutes

### Real-Life Scenario

Jon's auto manufacturing firm is involved in a lawsuit over a contract with a parts manufacturer to provide parts for their cars. The manufacturer broke the contract and instead sold the parts to a car firm overseas at a better price. The trial judge found that a clear, simple reading of the contract was in favor of the interpretation held by Jon's firm. Therefore, the judge ruled in favor of Jon's firm. Authors, speakers, writers and lawyers string words together in commonly understood patterns to communicate clear meanings.

When you are trying to correctly understand a passage of Scripture, do you research the author? That step is valuable.

### Introduction

For each text, God inspired a human author to write the Scriptures. Knowing the author, his time, audience, context, language and culture help us determine what God is communicating.

### Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on David's song (2 Samuel 22:5-7) compared to Jonah's prayer (Jonah 2:2-9).

**Read** Exodus 3:1-22 out loud.

### Studying the Passage

**Verse 1. Horeb.** Moses was tending the flock here.

**Verse 2. bush was burning.** Moses came to see this unusual sight.

**Verse 4. the LORD . . . called to him. . . , "Moses, Moses!"** God called Moses to a special task. God called many men and women to prophesy, speak and write His message in the Bible. The 39 Old Testament books were written over 1,500 years. These authors lived in different times and places, though some were contemporaries. For example, Ezekiel and Daniel in Babylon were contemporaries of Jeremiah in Jerusalem.

**Verse 14. God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."** God revealed Himself to Moses as the covenant God of His people and promised deliverance from oppression and escape to the promised land. God commissioned Moses to deliver Israel and shared His name (I AM) with Moses as the first sign of confirmation for Israel that Moses was God's true messenger.

### Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on background information about Moses.

### Studying the Passage

**Verse 16. gather the elders of Israel together and say to them.** God commanded Moses to speak to Israel. The authors of Scripture were all inspired by God's Holy Spirit to speak and write down His words. However, Moses was different from most others. In the tent of meeting, he spoke with God "face to face" (Exodus 33:11).

This daily incarnational quiet time was with the Lord (literally in Hebrew, *Yahweh*, another form of God's covenant name "I AM"). Many Bible scholars believe Moses met with the preincarnate Christ - Jesus before He was born as a baby (John 8:58; John 12:41; and Isaiah 6). As God's messenger, Moses spoke with and later wrote down God's words and message. Ultimately, God is the author of Scripture. However, He conveyed His message through humans who had a context, language and culture that we can understand and which we must use to interpret God's message.

**Read** Exodus 4:1-12 out loud.

### **Studying the Passage**

**Verse 1. Then Moses answered.** Moses talked with God at the burning bush encounter. God had just told Moses to be the spokesman for the Jewish slaves in Egypt. **They will not believe me.** Moses was concerned that Israel would not believe his message since they did not yet know him as God's spokesman.

**Verses 2–3. staff . . . serpent.** The first miracle God gave Moses was for his shepherd staff to become a snake.

**Verse 4. catch it by the tail.** Moses needed faith to grab the snake that way.

**Verse 5. that they may believe.** God gave Moses three signs (staff to a serpent, hand with leprosy, and water to blood) to convince Israel that Moses was speaking God's words.

**Verses 6–7. leprous like snow . . . restored.** The next miracle was to turn Moses' hand leprous (with a terrible skin disease) and back.

**Verse 12. I will be with your mouth.** God spoke through Moses. Ultimately, God inspired the words in the authors' minds as they wrote the Scriptures. While we should look to the human author for how the message was intended to be communicated, we must also look to the character of God as the ultimate author of His salvation message to mankind.

Scripture describes God as good, true, holy, righteous, just, faithful, eternal, creator, sovereign, omnipresent, all-knowing, all-powerful, wise, love, merciful, unchanging, just, etc. We may see a situation, action or doctrine in Scripture that seems to our finite and fallen minds to be hard or harsh (the existence of evil, capital punishment, God's wrath against sin, etc.). In that instance we need to trust that God has the qualities noted above and that *"for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose."* (Romans 8:28).

### **Assignment Three Feedback**

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now report on answers to the questions about God's call to Moses.

**Read** Exodus 17:14 out loud.

### **Studying the Passage**

**Verse 14. the LORD said to Moses, "Write this."** God told Moses several times to write things down, and he did so (Exodus 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Deuteronomy 31:9, 22-26; Joshua 8:32; 24:26; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; Mark 7:10; 12:19; Luke 5:14; and John 7:19-23). Jesus explicitly affirmed Moses as an author of Scripture in John 5:45-47.

In the Scriptures we find God's speech, God's miracles and actions, created beings' speech and created beings' actions. Then, at some later point the authors write these down. The original author (and ultimately God) communicates a specific message within his language, culture and time to either an audience contemporary with him or to an audience in his future. In either case, to understand the meaning of the message the author intends, we must understand such elements as the author's language, culture and audience.

### **On Your Own**

In the space below, write answers to the questions from Exodus chapters 3-4, based on Moses' perspective as both participant and author of the passage.

Did the fiery bush appear real to Moses (3:3)?

Why did Moses hide his face (3:6)?

Why did Moses doubt his ability to deliver Israel (3:11)?

Why did Moses doubt Israel would believe God had sent him (3:13)?

Why did Moses question that Israel would listen to him (4:1)?

Why did Moses beg God to send someone else (4:10)?

### **Discussion Questions**

What was Moses' initial perspective when he saw the burning bush? How did he respond when he realized he was standing before God? How did he respond to being commissioned to speak to and deliver Israel? How do questions such as these help you interpret Scripture?

## **Heart and Hands**

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart (the real you) for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something in your life for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

## **Since Last Week**

5 minutes

## **Grace-Filled Accountability**

5 minutes

## **Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service**

5 minutes

## **Prayer**

7 minutes

### At Home: Nail It Down

If you found a slip of paper on which someone had scrawled the sentence, "I am an American," the meaning might seem obvious at first glance. However, consider finding that short sentence in three different locations. What if the slip of paper was found:

1. One hundred years ago in the immigration center at Ellis Island, New York
2. During World War II at a Japanese-American internment camp in the U.S.
3. During the war with Iraq after 9/11 in an underground Iraqi military prison

In each instance the meaning is clear, but the context tells us much more about the author's situation and his or her use of that statement. In a written text, meaning can be found in only one of three possible places:

1. With the author and his intention
2. Within the text
3. Within the mind of the reader

However, meaning does not spring forth of its own accord from the text of the Bible—because texts do not spontaneously occur and meaning cannot reside within the audience. If it did, then readers could find any meaning they wanted within the text and disregard the author's intended message. So we are left with the first option—with the author and his intention.

Biblical texts were shaped and encoded by their authors to communicate their intended message. God inspired the authors so that the words written were what God wanted written.

It is important in your study of the Bible to try to understand the author (if known) and/or the context (historical setting, audience, culture, etc.) to best understand all the author sought to communicate.

#### Follow-up Question

*What is wrong with this statement: I can tell you what every verse in the Bible means because every verse means what it means to me?*

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.