

INTRODUCTION

We've hit the high points in the book of Genesis and now we are starting the book of Exodus as we begin talking about Moses. Moses is one of the most interesting characters in all the Word of God. I think one of the reasons we can all relate to Moses is because Moses was called to God and gifted by God, yet he was very reluctant to serve God. That is the case for most of us. Although we are going to be talking about God calling Moses, we are also talking about God calling you and God calling me to some kind of special ministry.

Exodus 3:1-6. "Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire, it did not burn up. So Moses thought, 'I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.' When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, 'Moses! Moses!' and Moses said, 'Here I am.' 'Do not come any closer,' God said. 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.' Then he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God."

I. GOD APPEARS TO MOSES

The first thing I want us to talk about is how God appears to Moses. God literally appears to Moses using what we call a *theophany*. The word *theophany* means a visible manifestation of the invisible God. Now God was not afire, but God was *in* the fire and he was using the fire. In the Old Testament, fire is one of the most popular theophanies God employs. In fact, he says, "I am like a refiner's fire." God is a consuming fire and Jesus said in Luke 12:49, "I have come to bring fire on the earth." and the word Jesus uses there is the Greek word *ballo*, which means, "I came to *throw* fire on the earth" as if he was saying, "I came to cast into this dirty, rotten planet the very presence, the fiery presence of God." So, fire is one of the theophanies God employs. Moses is walking along and he sees this bush and it's burning. The amazing thing about this to Moses is that it doesn't burn up! I'm sure Moses had seen bushes burning before, maybe lightning struck an old, dry bush or something, but the amazing thing about this was that it kept on burning kept on burning kept on burning. God appeared to Moses through the burning bush.

This is the only time in the Bible God ever used a burning bush to talk to somebody. Sometimes people want to say, "Well, God must not be calling me, because God has never used a burning bush with me. Well it doesn't take a burning bush for God to get your attention. He used it with Moses but he may use something entirely different for you. So don't demand some kind of supernatural sign like a burning bush. Every time I teach "Experiencing God," I always start the first session by holding up the cover of the book. If you have the book, "Experiencing God," look at the cover, because it's obviously a picture of Moses. Just take a moment and peer into that face that's so weathered. What you are going to see is that Moses is of looking at that bush and you can tell by the way the shading on the side of his face is that he has sort of turned aside and is trying to decide, "Do I need to go over there and investigate that or do I need to keep on going on my merry way?" A lot of times we have to face that same decision. "Am I going to go

over and am I going to do what God is calling me to do or am I going to go on my way and do what I want to do the rest of my life?" If Moses had turned away from the burning bush and said, "Forget it! I'm not going to investigate it." he would have died in obscurity. Because he was willing to go and at least listen to what God was saying, he's one of the great heroes of the faith. There may be some of you who are at that very crossroad in your Christian life—you're just on the verge. "I know God is doing something He's wanting to talk to me but I've got all these other things pulling at me my job my friends my future my promotion in life. Which one am I going to choose?" Just remember God is eternal and everything else in life is sadly temporary.

So Moses goes over and God speaks to him out of the bush and says, "Moses, take off your sandals. This is holy ground." I want you to know that there was nothing holy about the area around the mountain of Horeb. Wherever God is, *that* is holy ground. Today God is here. This is holy ground. Taking off the sandals was a picture of approaching God in a spirit of humility. The lesson we learn here is you never strut into the presence of the holy, almighty God. You always approach God with humility and with broken-ness. That was something Moses wasn't too used to in his life and we'll see that a little bit later but he approaches him and God says, "Moses, I have a job for you!"

II. GOD APPOINTS MOSES

The second thing I want us to look at tonight is God appoints Moses for a specific job. Notice all the things God says about himself. Anytime God uses the first personal pronoun, I, it represents a self-revelation of God and you need to learn something about God. Notice the things God says about himself.

Exodus 3:7-10. "The Lord said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So, now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.'"

God appoints Moses to be his representative, but you need to see it's God who is going to do all the work. God is the one who's concerned.

Look again at just the times God makes these personal statements. He says, "I have seen the misery of my people" Have you ever been miserable? Have you ever been hurting and struggling and broken-hearted and you want to cry out, "Does anybody care? Does anybody see me in my pain?" You can be assured God sees you in your pain and your misery. You are never alone. God is the kind of God who is aware of our suffering. I'll take it a step further than that. Not only is God aware of our suffering, he *cares* about our suffering. Look what he says in verse 7. "I am concerned about their suffering." Anybody can be aware somebody is suffering, but if they are not concerned about it, their awareness is useless. God says, "Not only do I know you are suffering, I care that you are suffering." The sad fact is sometimes people don't care about your

pain. Other people don't care about your suffering but you can never say that about our heavenly father. He knows and he cares. This is the third statement God says. He says, "I know your pain! I care!" and then number three he says, "I'm going to come down and I am going to take care of you. I am going to come down and I am going to rescue these people." That's the thing Moses missed somehow, because from the very start God said, "Moses, I'm going to do all the work. All I need you to do is be my vessel. I'm going to rescue them. So, Moses N-O-W go!" NOW is a keyword. There had to be the intersection of two very important factors for NOW to take place. God was waiting for the right time for the prayers and the cries of the people in bondage in Egypt to arise to a certain point. He was also waiting for Moses to come to a certain point in his life. When those two points crossed, God said, "NOW, Moses, go!" God not only tells you what to do, God tells you when to do it, because timing is more important to God than time.

III. GOD ANSWERS MOSES' OBJECTIONS

That really leads us to the third thing I want to say. Not only does God appear; God appoints Moses and number three, He answers Moses' objections. This is why so many people can relate to Moses, because Moses is not like Isaiah. When God appeared to Isaiah and said, "Whom will I send and who will go for me" Isaiah is like a little kid in first grade who knows the answer to the question saying, "Here am I! Here am I! Send me! Send me! I am ready! Let's go!" Moses wasn't like that. The truth of the matter is there may not be a lot of people who are as anxious as Isaiah to serve the Lord. If the truth be known, most people are more like Moses. When God says, "I have a job for you and now is the time Go!" Most of us like Moses begin to make excuses. I came across a good definition of an excuse. An excuse is the skin of the truth stuffed with a lie. All Moses does from this point on is to start making excuses. I want us to look at five of his excuses and then I want us to look at God's reply to Moses' excuses.

1. Moses' Excuse: I am unworthy

God's Response: Don't worry, I'll be with you

Number one Moses said, "But, Lord, I am unworthy!" And in verse 11 Moses asks, "Who am I?" he is saying "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" I want you to see God's reply. When Moses said "I am unworthy. Who am I? I am not worthy to go." God said, "Don't worry. I'll be with you." Look at verse 12. "And God said 'I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt,' not IF "When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you are going to worship God on this very mountain." Now the life of Moses is a Biblical enigma; he is so strange. The life of Moses can be divided into three forty-year periods? We know Moses was 120 when he died. Most of you know from the first couple of chapters of Exodus the story of baby Moses and how Pharaoh made it illegal for any Hebrew boy babies to survive and he said, "We need to kill all the boy babies as soon as they are born" and he gave orders to the midwives, "If it's a little baby boy born to the Hebrews, kill that boy immediately! Let the little girls live!" You remember how God moved through some of the Hebrew midwives and they did not follow Pharaoh and the mother of Moses put him in a straw basket on the river. He was floating down the river and Pharaoh's daughter was out washing and swimming and having a good time and she sees this little bassinet in the water floating by. I think God has created a woman's heart such that whenever you see an infant you always say the very same thing in every language:

"Ooohhhhh!" That's exactly right. In Hebrew it's the same thing. In Egyptian it's the same thing. Pharaoh's daughter said, "Ooohhhhh! Can I take him home? Please? Let me take him home." So, she takes him home. In fact the name, Moses, in some translations means "out of the water." He was taken "out of the water."

So, for the first forty years of his life, Moses was raised in the palace of Pharaoh. He had the greatest education, all the luxuries, all the teaching and training any person in the civilized world had at that time. As he was growing up, his biological mother was the one who was hired to take care of him. She took care of her own child and was paid to do it by the Pharaoh. So, as Moses was growing up, his real mother told him who he really was. When he came to be about forty years old the Bible says Moses had to make a decision. Tough decision wouldn't you think? Do I go with the money? Do I stick with Pharaoh? Do I stick with the Egyptian culture? Riches, fame the good life! Or do I choose to go with my people, the Hebrews? In the roll call of faith in Hebrews 11 it says, "Moses made the choice and he chose to suffer instead of choosing the good life. So you know what happened, don't you? He turned forty and he was so cocky and so arrogant. He was so overqualified for the job he probably walked out one morning and said, "God, you sure are lucky that you have me! Here I am I'm choosing to be on your side, God so, God you are so fortunate to have me! I'm going to bail you out, God because here are your people in bondage!" One day and he saw an Egyptian who was mistreating some Hebrews and Moses said, "You stop that!" The Egyptian said, "Who are you to think that you can speak to me?" Moses said, "I'll show you who I am!" and BAM! he killed him right then! Moses killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand.

That's one way to solve a problem. You kill an Egyptian each day and I suppose over 5 or 6 million years you would get rid of all of them. That was Moses' way in the strength of his own flesh to take care of the problem. But the shifting sands of the desert are just that and where he hid that corpse; the next day there was a hand sticking out. They exhumed the *corpus delecti* and determined it was Moses who killed him. The next day Moses' picture was on every post office in Egypt. "Wanted for Murder!" so at age forty Moses became a fugitive! He ran to the desert of Midian and he started a new life. He was on the back side of the desert forty more years. The chronology is in Acts 7. Stephen is preaching this message before the Sanhedrin and gives the chronology. You may not know this but from age 40 to age 80 Moses was in obscurity on the back side of the desert tending a bunch of dumb sheep. He went from the high life to the desert tending sheep. I don't know much and I'm 45 years old now, but for most, age 40 to 60 or on ought to be some of the most productive years of your life. Not for Moses. Ages 40 to age 80 was nothingness.

I wonder if there is anybody here who did not know when Moses was called by God at the burning bush, he was 80 years old! Sometimes we think Moses must have been in the prime of his life. He was a young, strapping, strong servant of God. NO. He was 80. So when he asked that question, "Who am I?" God knew who he was. I would like to say Moses spent 40 years getting a B.S. degree—and that stands for "Be somebody!" Then he spent the next 40 years getting a B.N. degree, which is "Be nobody!" Sometimes we get too big for God to use us. When Moses was 40, he was too big for God to use him. God had to whittle him down to size. He had to send him to the back side of the desert for a little bit of training. After he tended a bunch of dumb sheep for 40 years, he was ready to lead a bunch of dumb Israelites for the next 40 years.

That's right! From age 80 to age 120 is when he leads the Children of Israel toward the Promised Land! Isn't that amazing? So when Moses asked God, "Who am I?" God more than anybody else knew who he was. Here's the application to that. God is calling everybody in this room for some kind of ministry. Sometimes your first question is, "Well, God, who am I?" I'm here to tell you God knows your background. God knows where you come from. God knows your failures. I may not know everything about you but when God calls you to do something, don't have the arrogance to say, "God, who am I?" because God knows who you are. Never say to God "I am unworthy!"

2. Moses' Excuse: I am unsure! God's Response: I AM, I AM!

Here is excuse number two: Number two Moses said, "I am unsure! I am uncertain! Maybe I don't know who I am but let's talk about you, God. Who are you?" Look at Exodus 3:13. "Moses said to God, 'Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?' This is God's response when Moses said, "I am unsure." God said, "I am who I am! This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" We're going to get into this in several weeks when we talk about the plagues of Egypt. Egypt had a tremendous number of gods and each one of them had their own name. It was very important to know the name of the god you are dealing with so Moses said, "Okay, we have answered the question, 'Who am I?' but 'Who are you?' I don't know who you are." God said, "I'll give you my name and here it is!" God said, "I AM who I AM!" Have you ever read that and said, "I don't understand that! What's that talking about?" Well the word in Hebrew is the most basic verb of being! Let me translate it a little bit differently. It would be God saying, "I'm the God who exists! I'm the REAL God! I AM the God who really exists!" In the Hebrew language it carries across all kinds of tense with it. In English it would be like God was saying, "I have always been, I am being right now and I will always be!" That's what he was saying. God says, "You can't even give me a name! I transcend being itself!" That's what God was saying.

When God said, "I AM," every time the Lord Jesus used that phrase, "I am" Jesus was identifying himself with the God of the Old Testament. In the New Testament in John 4:26, Jesus said, "I am the Messiah." In John 6:35 he said, "I am the Bread of Life." In John 8:23 he said, "I am from above!" In John 8:58 he said, "I am the Eternal One." In John 9:5 Jesus said, "I am the Light of the World." In John 10:7 Jesus said, "I am the Door through which every sheep must enter!" In John 10:36 Jesus said, "I am the Son of God." In John 11:25 Jesus said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." In John 13:13 Jesus said, "I am your Lord and Master." In John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the Way. I am the Truth. I am the Life." and in Revelation 1:8, Jesus said, "I am Alpha and Omega." In Revelation 1:17 Jesus said, "I am the First and the Last." Jesus was talking to a bunch of self-righteous Pharisees and in John 18:6 they were bragging about Abraham and Jesus said, "Before Abraham was I AM!" He said, "I existed before Abraham!" All Jesus was doing was identifying himself with God. The first excuse was "I am unworthy!" God says, "I'll be with you." The second excuse was "I don't know who you are. I am unsure!" God says, "I AM, I AM."

3. Moses' Excuse: I am unprepared!

God's Response: What's in your hand?

Here's the third excuse: "I am unprepared!" "I am unprepared. I don't have the right equipment!" "I'm unequipped!" "I'm unfurnished!" "I am unprepared to do what you are telling me to do!" I want you to see what God said. "All right. What's in your hand?" If you take a few moments and you analyze this, the first two things Moses says are questions and God gives statements. Now Moses starts making statements and God starts asking questions. Moses said, "You know I can't do this I'm not prepared to do it!" Look at chapter 4, verse 1. He says, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and they say, 'The Lord did not appear to you!'" We call that "worst case scenario," the very worst that could happen. That's what Moses said. "What if I go and then they say, 'God didn't send you.'"

I want you to see what the Lord said. Look at chapter 4, verse 2. "The Lord said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' 'A staff' he replied." God says in verse 17 "Take this staff." To start with it was just any old staff, but God says, "All right. It's *this* specific staff!" Now look down at verse 20. "So Moses took his wife and his sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt." Now watch this. "And he took the staff of God in his hand." Do you see how it changed? God said, "What's in your hand?" He said, "Well, it's just a stick." After 40 years of tending sheep, Moses had a stick that really fit his hand. "My stick. I like this stick. It just fits right. It's worn down to where it fits my hand." God says, "I want you to take it and throw it down." You surrender those things that are most precious to you. What is in your hand tonight? For some of you it's a relationship. For some of you it's a job. For some of you it's financial security. For some of you it's maintaining a certain attitude about things you are not willing to let go of. Do you know what God says about everything you hold in your hand? He says, "Lay it down before me!" and then it became a snake. A snake is symbolic of *sssin*, *ssselfishness*. Saying the word you can even hear the hiss of a snake! In everything that we hold on to that we don't surrender to God is the satanic nature of a snake! If we don't lay it down and surrender it to God, it'll one day bite us to death. When you take what God has given you and you lay it down before him he takes that satanic nature out of it and then when he says, "Pick it up again," you pick it up, but that satanic nature is no longer there. That's when *a* staff becomes *this* staff and it becomes the "Staff of God." That represents the power of the Holy Spirit released in your life, when you surrender those things you hold dear. Are you willing to lay down anything before God and say, "Here, God. I lay it down before you. I don't understand it." Then if he says, "Pick it back up" pick it back up! If he doesn't say, "Pick it back up" can you turn and walk away from it? There may be some things he says, "Lay down before me and you turn and walk away from it," and he never says, "Pick it back up." The most important thing is that you are obedient. Moses said, "I am unprepared." God said, "Don't worry, I have a staff. What's in your hand? I'll put my power in it!"

4. Moses' Excuse: I am unable!

God's Response: Who made your mouth?

Here's excuse number four: Moses said, "I am unable!" Look at chapter 4:10. "Moses said to the Lord, 'Oh, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.'" He said, "I am unable to speak!" God asked him a question. God said, "Who made your mouth? Look at verse 14. 'Who gave man his mouth?"

Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say." Is that your excuse? "I am unable to talk." Notice how God bombards Moses with question after question after question. He says, "You're going to ask me questions well I have a few questions for you. Who made your mouth? Who makes people deaf? Who makes people dumb? Who puts words in your mouth?" He says, "I'll do that! So, don't say you are unable to do it, that you don't have the ability or the talents for that." I want you to know that when God calls you to do something, he's going to equip you to do it. I like what the psalmist says. The psalmist says, "Open your mouth," God says, "and I will fill it." How many of you have ever started to witness to somebody and you are scared to death? You don't know what you are going to say and you just start talking about Jesus. Before long words start coming to you and you start saying things and it's kind of like you are sitting back to the side saying, 'Wow! Am I saying that? I don't know that much stuff about the Lord and about Jesus!' God is filling your mouth with the words to say.

5. Moses' Excuse: I am unwilling!

God's Response: What about your brother?

Moses finally gets honest. Look at those first four. "I'm unworthy." "I'm unsure." "I'm unprepared." "I'm unable." Finally, Moses gets honest. He says, "The truth of the matter is I'm unwilling! I just don't want to do it! I have been comfortable for forty years being a shepherd." Look at verse 13. This is where Moses said, "I am unwilling!" He says, "Oh, Lord. Just send somebody else to do it!" Did you know that that person "somebody else" is the most popular person in Green Acres Baptist Church? Do you know who is going to teach that Sunday School Class that needs a teacher? "Somebody else." Do you know who is going to go down and work at the Good Samaritan Outreach Center when we don't have enough workers? "Somebody else." Do you know who's going give that money when we need a little extra money for something? That great member, "somebody else" is going to do it. That's what Moses said. He said, "Lord, send somebody else! I'm just unwilling to do it!" I want you to see God's response. God is not happy about this! "Then the Lord's anger burned against Moses." God says, "What about your brother, Aaron, the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you and his heart will be glad when he sees you." So when Moses said, "I am unwilling!" God says, "What about your brother?" What that means is God says, "Listen. When I call you to do something, I'm going to give you some allies. I'm going to give you some helpers. You're not going to have to do it all alone. There are plenty of helpers out there."

CONCLUSION

What is it that God is calling you to? The wrong way to serve God is just to say, "You know I just think I'm going to serve God. I'm going to figure out something that God needs done and I'm just going to do it!" That's the wrong way! The way to serve God is you seek the face of God you take off your shoes you approach a holy God and you listen to hear what God is telling you to do! Those ministries and services that are most honored and blessed by God are those he calls you to, not those you just feel you ought to do those that God calls you to do.

It's sad how many people are trying to serve the Lord and they don't really have a sense of call. When I was seventeen, I was working in the summer at Shako Springs Baptist Assembly in

Talladega, Alabama as a lifeguard. I was sitting in a service one Tuesday night and the preacher was up there talking. I was sitting about halfway back and this preacher made this statement. "God called me to preach when I was 17 years old and I've been doing that ever since." That was in 1970. When he said those words, God said to me, "David, that's what I want you to do." It was so clear to me that I wondered if somebody behind me had actually leaned forward and spoken those words to me. I even jerked around to see who was behind me. It scared these two teenagers to death! "Why are you looking at us?" Did you know since that night I have known without a shadow of a doubt that God called me to preach? In the times when I get discouraged and I get weary, the one thing that keeps bringing me back is that sense of a divine "call." That's not just for preachers. I'm serious! Every follower of Jesus Christ God wants to call you to some kind of ministry. It may not be a vocational ministry meaning it becomes your life service like for me, but everybody follows Jesus Christ he has a "call" for you. So listen and respond and don't make excuses!

OUTLINE

I. GOD APPEARS TO MOSES

II. GOD APPOINTS MOSES

III. GOD ANSWERS MOSES' OBJECTIONS

MOSES' EXCUSE

I am unworthy!

I am unsure!

I am unprepared!

I am unable!

I am unwilling!

GOD'S RESPONSE

Don't worry, I'll be with you

I am, I am!

What's in your hand?

Who made your mouth?

What about your brother?



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes