



The Calling and the Promise

Key Passage

God replied to Moses, “I am who i am.[d] Say this to the people of Israel: I am has sent me to you.” God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: Yahweh, 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 eternal name, my name to remember for all generations. “Now go and call together all the elders of Israel. Tell them, ‘Yahweh, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—has appeared to me. He told me, “I have been watching closely, and I see how the Egyptians are treating you. I have promised to rescue you from your oppression in Egypt. I will lead you to a land flowing with milk and honey . . . Ex 3:14-17a

Getting on the Same Page

For many of us when we think of Moses the first image that comes to mind is magnificent. We see the great patriarch holding up his hands as the Red Sea is subdued into two quivering walls of water flanking a dry path to freedom. Moses was a great leader. A great man of God. But his was a long journey that began even before his pivotal encounter with God at a burning bush when he was 80 years old.

That encounter changed his life—and the lives of generations to follow—forever. Moses answered God’s call from the bush with the words “Here I am” but then quickly added five excuses for not immediately doing as God called for him to do.

Moses' life is remarkably divided into three forties: The first forty he spent as a prince in Pharaoh's court; the second a shepherd in Midian; the third a leader of a nation. It's interesting to consider the length of time between callings on Moses' life? Moses was born to be the deliverer of Israel, but spent the first 80 years of his life in preparation.

When God called Moses to the third portion of his life, he did it through a burning bush in the desert by the Mount of Horeb. Moses was out tending to the flock of his Father in law, Jethro. The name Horeb actually means desert or desolation, which makes it a strange place to be taking your flocks for anything...Mount Horeb was either another name for Mount Sinai, or it was another mountain in the same range. Estimates place this mountain top as being between 6500 and 7400 feet in altitude. Some other interesting things happened on Mt Horeb; the Ten Commandments were given (Deut 4-5); God made a covenant with the children of Israel (Deut 7:12-26); and this is also the place that the Angel of the Lord spoke to Elijah (1 Kings 19:11-18). As we look at what God says as He speaks to Moses, it is obvious that God hears the cries of the people.

Discussion Questions

Getting Started

- Talk about a time when you felt like you really should do something, but instead came up with excuses to avoid it. What happened? What could have happened if you actually did it instead?
- What are your "go to" excuses when you don't want to do something you are asked to do? (don't have time, family responsibilities, not ready to take that on, not interested, etc.)
- What are your favorite stories in the book of Exodus?

Study

Read through Exodus 3:1 - 4:17 Together

Discuss each of Moses' five excuses and God's responses. Which of Moses' excuses most resonate with you?

- I'm not good enough (Ex 3:11)
- I don't have it all figured out (Ex 3:13)
- People won't believe me. (Ex 4:1)
- I don't have the required skills. (Ex 4:10)
- I'm not qualified. (Ex 4:13)

Read through Exodus 5:1-10 Together

- By what authority does Moses ask Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to go to worship their God? By what authority does Pharaoh make his decrees? What does Pharaoh's response to Moses' request reveal about Pharaoh's character?
- Moses' appeal to Pharaoh produces a disastrous result: the intensification of Israel's hardship and affliction. What did God tell Moses in 3:19 that should have prepared him for Pharaoh's answer? In light of question 1 above, what might be God's purpose for this?
- In Exodus 5:15-23, the Israelites began to grumble after Pharaoh not only forbid them to leave, but also made their forced labor even harder. As we will see later in our series, such grumbling becomes a major theme of the entire book of Exodus and a characteristic of the people of Israel thereafter. If we are honest with ourselves, we too are prone to grumble in difficult situations. In what ways can our confidence in the Lord be revitalized through meditating on a passage such as this?

REFLECT

- What purpose does the burning bush "scene" in the life of Moses serve? How does it look back to what has already occurred and prepare us for what is to come?
- How should Moses have responded to God's statements in Exodus 3:10? How would you have responded? What does his actual response reveal?
- Summarize God's words to Moses in chapter 3 in one sentence. What is the main point He expresses to Moses?
- What attribute of God did you see in this week's passage that particularly struck you? How should it change the way you pray, think, speak or act this week?

APPLY

- Have you ever thought or said, "If God would just tell me explicitly what to do, I would do it"? How does the story of Moses and the burning bush challenge that statement? Why do we still hesitate to obey, even when the will of God is clear?
- What might God have called you to pursue and/or take on that you have made excuses to avoid?
- Which of the five excuses that Moses gave in response to God's call most resonated with you?
- Identify a time when you were obedient in response to something you knew God wanted you to do and it didn't go well.
- God's first call on our lives is always into relationship. How have you responded to that call?

