

WHEN GOD CALLS

Welcome to Week 1 of the “**Promised Land**” as we begin Section 2 of our Through the Bible Series. We are leaving the Book of Genesis and now turning our attention towards the Book of Exodus. It is here that we are going to transition from following individuals and their families to following the Nation of Israel and their journey to the PROMISED LAND as we see the PROMISES God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob begin to take shape.

Just to refresh our memory there were 4 distinct aspects to the PROMISE that God gave to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

- 1) He promises to make them a great nation (a promise that not only comes with a great number of people but also with land that they will inhabit)
- 2) He promises to make their name great and to bless them with God's favor
- 3) He promises them that they will be a blessing to others and that God will protect them by blessing those who bless them and cursing those who curse them
- 4) He promises to bless all nations and peoples of the world through them (which ultimately is accomplished through Jesus)

We have seen these promises follow Abraham, Isaac and Jacob individually and now we are going to see these same promises begin to follow the Nation of Israel. If you remember from last week we concluded our time with Jacob and his 12 sons in the land of Egypt where God had led them in order to provide for them during a time of severe famine. As we learned last week God used Joseph being sold by his brothers into slavery as a vehicle by which God would make provision for them during this famine. As we are also going to see today, Egypt was more than just provision for Israel during a time of great difficulty; it was also preparation for them to grow in number and wealth so that they could have the resources they needed in order to possess the land promised to them by God in Canaan.

Exodus 1:1-7 (NIV) 1 These are the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt with Jacob, each with his family: **2** Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; **3** Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; **4** Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher. **5** The descendants of Jacob numbered seventy in all; Joseph was already in Egypt. **6** Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, **7** but the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them.

It is kind of hard to possess a land with only 70 to 75 people which was the size of Jacob's family as they came into the Land of Egypt! You will not be able to occupy a territory or hold on to it when invading armies try to come and take your land. So what does God do? He gives them favor with the Egyptians, giving them a safe place to be fruitful and multiply until they have enough to be able to take the land God had promised them!! But as we all know, sometimes the blessings of God can be dangerous because it can cause others to become envious or feel threatened by our success. And the same thing happens to Israel while in Egypt. After 400 years in Egypt it is time for Israel to return home to the land God has promised them.

Exodus 1:8-14 (NIV) 8 Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. **9** “Look,” he said to his people, “the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. **10** Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.” (FEAR never leads to good or righteous decisions)

11 So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. **12** But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread: (This was also true of the church in the NT and throughout history. The more the people of God are oppressed or persecuted the more God expands His reach and influence through their suffering.) **so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites 13 and worked them ruthlessly. 14** They made their lives bitter with harsh labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labor the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly.

But the people only increased all the more! After an attempt to get the Hebrew midwives to kill all the first born sons of Israel had failed, Pharaoh then commanded all his people to take every new born son and cast them into the river. During this crazy time in Egypt a Hebrew child who would come to be named Moses was born. After many attempts were made to hide the child from others who might want to kill him, his mother placed him in a basket and put him in the river so that he would be found by Pharaoh’s household in hopes that his life would be spared. As was the hope, a daughter of Pharaoh found him and had compassion on the child taking him in and raising him as her own son.

Moses grew up knowing he was a Hebrew, but he lived in Pharaoh’s household as an Egyptian. After seeing the suffering of his people, and after taking action one day by killing an Egyptian who was beating one of the Hebrew slaves, Moses flees into the wilderness for fear of being caught and punished for what he had done.

As we pick up this incredible story of how God called Moses to deliver his people from bondage in Egypt I want us to see that **God still calls us today and when He does how it is we can prepare ourselves to respond with obedience.** We are going to be in **Exodus 3** today so if you would like to turn there I am going to **PRAY** for us as we prepare to jump in this morning.

Just to set the context of Chapter 3. Moses, fleeing from his trouble in Egypt, settles in the land of Midian where he takes for himself a wife from the priest of Midian named Jethro. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham and Keturah who Abraham took as a wife following Sarah’s death in Genesis Ch 25. While in the land of Midian, Moses has an encounter with God. As we take a look at how God called Moses to deliver Israel from their bondage in Egypt I want us to see three truths regarding God’s calling on our lives.

Truth #1 - Our circumstances can lead to a divine calling

Wherever you happen to be regarding your current circumstances is an opportunity for a divine encounter with God. God is in the business of utilizing our current circumstances or situations to do something extraordinary in and through our lives. **First, we need to see that God uses our circumstances to put us in the place to hear His divine call!** And this is exactly what God does here with Moses.

Exodus 3:1-6 (NIV) **1** 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 wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. **2** 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. **3** So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up." **4** 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." **5** "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." **6** 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.

There were a series of events that had to take place to bring Moses to the point where he is ready for this encounter with God. 1) The people of Israel needed to be made uncomfortable in Egypt otherwise they probably would have never wanted to leave or be seeking the Lord's help for deliverance. We love our comfort zones do we not? Sometimes a disruption of that comfort zone puts us in a posture to seek after God. And that is definitely the situation with Israel at this point. 2) The deliverer, with whom God is going to use to help lead Israel out of Egypt, needed a little leadership training and education for what was ahead and what better education could one receive than in Pharaoh's house which is where Moses grew up. However, it was this same opportunity that also created some tensions for him between the Egyptians and his own people as he was able to see up close and personal what was being done to his people 3) Moses himself needed to be isolated away from the noise of Egyptian culture so that God could get his attention. That doesn't happen if Moses does not flee Egypt. Do you feel like you are in a wilderness? If you are, it may be that you are exactly where God wants you to be so that He can speak to you without distractions of the world. It's amazing how much of the world influences our life and its noise can really be a distraction from our ability to recognize God or to even hear His voice.

Second, we need to see that God uses our circumstances to shape us for His divine call!

Without a doubt we are shaped by our life experiences and circumstances. But we need to understand that these experiences are the very things God wants to use in our lives to prepare us for the calling he has for us. As we said last week, **God is a redeemer and He wants to redeem what is broken.** Who better to minister in those broken places than those who have walked in those circumstances themselves. Moses is a Hebrew and he has a heart for his people and the suffering they are enduring. He has seen it and he has been impacted by it. He grew up in Pharaoh's house and is familiar with the Egyptian way of thinking. He is known by them and thus will be given an audience and be heard when he comes before them. He will have a little more leeway than someone else would be given because he is considered family.

Because of his own wilderness journey he knows something about the wilderness and that will prepare him as he leads God's people out of Egypt into the Promised Land. God's divine calling flows out of our circumstances because these circumstances are preparation for how God wants to use us. We saw this with Joseph last week. We see this with David as a shepherd protecting his father's sheep. The same skills he learned fighting off wild beasts are the same skills he used to fight the giant Goliath not to mention the faith that he fashioned and shaped along the way. **Where are you now and how is God using your current circumstances to prepare you for what He has for you?** Have you experienced addiction? How does God want to use you to help others who struggle with addiction? Btw, we have a couple of opportunities here at Vertical Church where if you are someone who has been delivered from the life of addiction you can allow God to use your experience to help others. We are getting ready to start a Celebrate Recovery small group meeting at our Bladen Location in Elizabethtown and we are in the process of partnering with an organization called "Stop The Pain". If you are interested in volunteering with either one of these opportunities please make sure to stop by NEXT and let your location pastor know. Maybe you are someone who has experienced divorce or spousal betrayal. How does God want to use that to help others who are going through the same thing? Have you been impacted by grief or the tragic loss of a loved one? How does God want to use that to bring hope to others? Have you been a child who was neglected or abused? How does God want to use what you have been through to help rescue others? **Our circumstances, whatever they may be, can lead to a divine calling where we allow God to use us to help rescue others who are bound in their circumstances.** And this is exactly what God does with Moses.

Truth #2 - Our afflictions are seen by a God who cares

Exodus 3:7-10 (NIV) 7 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. 8 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. 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

Sometimes it **FEELS** like God is not paying attention or that He doesn't care when we are dealing with certain situations or circumstances! We need to remember that He not only **SEES** our struggle, He **HEARS** our cries for help and He **CARES** about our suffering!

God is GOOD! He never wanted us to have to deal with the ramifications of sin! We brought that on ourselves by not trusting Him. But He does care about our condition! And He is at work redeeming what sin has impacted! Sometimes we may not understand all that He is doing but He is at work redeeming that which is broken and causing suffering in our lives and in the world.

Sometimes we just have to take God's word for it! Notice the beginning of verse 7, "**THE LORD SAID**"! What did the LORD say? **I see! I hear! I care! and I am coming down to do something about it!** After all He is a God of His word and He is faithful to do what He says!!

2 Thessalonians 3:3 (NIV) But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.

Hebrews 10:23 (NIV) Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.

Sometimes we just have to take God's word for it! But sometimes we just need to stop and look around at how God is working in our misery through the hands and feet of others! We look at the world and all the suffering and it is tempting to draw the conclusion that God doesn't seem to care. **But what about all the ways God is working to minister in the midst of our suffering?** Imagine where we would be without the work of relief organizations all or most of which were founded or who are being led by people who allowed God to use their abilities to serve others in their suffering. What about the work of the church around the world and in our community where God is working to alleviate suffering. Through relief work in impoverished countries providing food and water. Building orphanages to get children off the street. Ministries designed to help those with addiction issues. Ministries working to help those caught up in human trafficking. How about the fact that God wants to use us to end suffering in our world! In fact, God wants to use Moses to alleviate the suffering of Israel (vs. 10) **So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.**" And guess what? God also wants to use us! How does God want to use us?

Isaiah 1:17 (NIV) Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.

Isaiah 61:1 (NIV) The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, Of course this passage is talking specifically about what the RESCUER (Jesus) is going to do when He comes. These are the exact words Jesus spoke to the people when He revealed Himself to them. But as those who are called to follow Jesus, we are called to be His hands and feet where we allow God to use our lives to accomplish the same things as we help lead others to Jesus. In fact Jesus commissions us to do just that in Matthew 28:19-20.

Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV) **18** Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Truth #1 - Our circumstances can lead to a divine calling, **Truth #2** - Our afflictions are seen by a God who cares and

Truth #3 - Our fear is calmed by the Creator of the Universe

Exodus 3:11 (NIV) 11 But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” Whenever God calls us, the temptation is to allow FEAR to convince us that we are not a good candidate for the job. Moses feels like he is not the man for the job for several reasons:

- 1) He is probably a little concerned about the Egyptian he killed and how Pharaoh is going to respond to him when he sees him.
- 2) He is little worried that the people of Israel will not listen to him or believe him when he tells them that God sent Him. (**Exodus 4:1**)
- 3) He is not very eloquent of speech therefore he feels like God could do better by finding someone else. (In fact he has a speech impediment - **Exodus 4:10**)

Are we guilty of this? When God is calling us, do we make excuses as to why we can't do what God is asking us by pointing out every weakness or issue we have that would limit us from being able to accomplish it? Do we let fear paralyze us? Do we fear standing in the light of God because of the darkness it exposes in us? Is it because we don't want the spotlight that comes with publicly declaring God because of the skeletons we are hiding ourselves? Moses is doing everything he can to convince God why it is that he is not a good candidate for this job! But I want you to see that God is not concerned with our insufficiencies! He is not limited by our weaknesses! In fact, He is not worried in the least and neither should we be. In fact, notice what God does in response to Moses.

Three ways God calms Moses' fear:

He promises to be WITH HIM **Exodus 3:12 (NIV)12** And God said, “I will be with you. Sometimes I think we need to be reminded that whatever God calls us to He is going to walk with us in it. These are some of the last words Jesus spoke to His disciples just before returning back to heaven. “...And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” - **Matthew 28:20**. God promises to STRENGTHEN us. PROVIDE us with everything we will need for the task. He will PROTECT us while we do it! And He will LEAD us along the way! What else is there to be worried about? You have all of the resources of God at your disposal. Why are we so fearful? God not only promises Moses that He will be with Him through this mission but,...

He promises him he will be **SUCCESSFUL** **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, you will worship God on this mountain. There is a sense of certainty here! The mission will not fail! **How many of us would be more willing to do something if we knew that it would not fail?** God is basically telling Moses that “WHEN you have brought the people out”, not, “IF you bring the people out”, but WHEN! Which means it is a sure thing! It is a done deal! Not only I am WITH you, but you will be successful and when you do we are going worship together on the mountain!! But the question is... do you trust the Lord?

Exodus 3:13-15 (NIV) **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?" **14** God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'" **15** God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.'

"This is my name forever,
the name you shall call me
from generation to generation.

He promises to be WITH HIM. He promises him he will be SUCCESSFUL. And then, He develops a personal relationship with Moses by telling him His NAME! There is power in His NAME! The word "God" can be a very generic term. **In fact, God (Elohim in Heb.) is more of a title than a name.** We need to understand that the God who is speaking to Moses and the God who speaks to you and I is not a generic God. **Deuteronomy 10:17 (NIV)**

"For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes." - He is a very specific God who is personal and who wants you to know Him by NAME.

He is "I AM" (A God without beginning or ending)

He is YAHWEH (The covenant keeping God who is personal and who knows you by name and reveals Himself to us that we may know Him by NAME)

He is the One who gave the PROMISE to ABRAHAM, ISAAC, and JACOB (He is faithful and true to His word!)

It should give us great comfort to know that the God who is the all powerful creator of heaven and earth, who is not limited by time or space, who gave the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is also the same God who is calling us and wants us to know Him in a personal way!

He not only wants us to KNOW His NAME but He also wants us to EXPERIENCE Him and His POWER.

Exodus 4:1-9 (NIV) Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The Lord did not appear to you'?" **2** Then the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" "A staff," he replied. **3** The Lord said, "Throw it on the ground." Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. **4** Then the Lord said to him, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail." So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand. **5** "This," said the Lord, "is so that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has appeared to you." **6** Then the Lord said, "Put your hand inside your cloak." So Moses put his hand into his cloak, and when he took it out, the skin was leprous[a]—it had become as white as snow. **7**

“Now put it back into your cloak,” he said. So Moses put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored, like the rest of his flesh. **8** Then the Lord said, “If they do not believe you or pay attention to the first sign, they may believe the second. **9** But if they do not believe these two signs or listen to you, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the river will become blood on the ground.”

God is showing Moses that he will not be the one accomplishing the deliverance of God's people but it will be the LORD who does the delivering through His power. Moses will not be doing the convincing of Pharaoh to let the people go, but God will! All God wants Moses to do is make himself available so that God can display His power through him. And the same is true of us!

If this is true, then what is there to fear? It is after much wrestling with God and with his own human reasoning and excuses that Moses finally comes to the place where he is willing to surrender to the LORD and the calling on his life. As a result, Moses makes preparation to go to Egypt and he submits himself to God's calling on his life.

God still speaks into our lives today and when He does He expects us to obey! Do you recognize His voice? If you do, will you respond with obedience?

Worship Comes Back Up

Invitation:

- 1) First of all, do you recognize His call to salvation? Invite those who haven't yet received Christ to repent and believe in Him today in order to enter into a personal relationship with Him.
- 2) How does God want to use you? What has God delivered you from and how does He want to use you to help others find deliverance?
- 3) Have you lost hope because of your current circumstances or situation? Do you believe that **He sees your situation? He hears your cry for help? He cares about your pain?** and **He is going to do something about it?**
- 4) What excuses have you made for why you can't serve God? Will you stop making those excuses and allow Him to use you and your current situation to display His glorious power?