



First Baptist Church Selmer

FIRM FOUNDATION • MOSES • EXODUS 3:1-6, 11-22 • 9/24/2023

MAIN POINT

When God calls us to serve Him, He does not just send us in our strength. He goes with us, empowers us, and brings about the completion of His plan.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

God called Moses to lead the work of freeing His people from their enslavement in Egypt. Moses had been in self-imposed exile for 40 years, hiding in Midian, to escape the wrath of Pharaoh for killing an Egyptian overseer. In light of the monumental scope of the task, Moses had significant apprehension about assuming the role God was calling him to. The passage for this week is a look at what happens when God is the focus when He calls someone to serve Him.

What other examples in Scripture did God call someone who seemed like an unlikely candidate?

Describe a time when you were shocked to learn the background of a person whose walk with Christ you respect.

What does God's calling of unlikely candidates tell you about who He can and will use to accomplish His purposes?

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EXODUS 3:1-6.

1 "Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. 3 And Moses said, 'I will turn aside to see the great sight, why the bush is not burned.' 4 When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' 5 Then he said, 'Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' 6 And he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God." (ESV)

At the close of Exodus 2, God saw and took notice of the misery of the Israelites. While God was preparing to do something about the Israelites' circumstances, Moses was just going through the motions of his daily routine, until God appeared to Moses in the bush that was not consumed by fire. God began to unfold for Moses His plan. He not only knew but deeply felt the misery of His people. God announced He was coming down to rescue them. He would evacuate them to a land of blessing. That sounded wonderful to Moses until God told him he was the one to lead the effort.

Passages like these emphasize the awe and holiness of God. What experiences have led you to sense the magnitude of God's holiness? How did you respond in that moment?

Why is answering God's call to lead so difficult?

Why is the first step to answering God's call always seem to be the hardest?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EXODUS 3:11-15.

11 "But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?' 12 He said, 'But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.' 13 Then Moses said to God, 'If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' What shall I say to them?' 14 God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.' 15 God also said to Moses, 'Say this to the people of Israel: 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, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.'" (ESV)

The exhilaration of learning that God was finally coming to deliver His people must have had the opposite effect when Moses learned that he was the instrument through which God would bring about the deliverance. When Moses posed his initial protest to God, God provided Moses with a promise and a fulfillment sign. God gave Moses His covenant name, "Yahweh." The force of His name, based on the Hebrew verb for "to be," shows us that God is the Creator and Sustainer of everything that exists. His sovereignty over all things and all history is without rival or question.

When was the last time something about your past caused you hesitancy in saying "yes" to an opportunity God had placed before you? How did you respond?

How important is trusting God when you consider daunting tasks? Why do you think so?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EXODUS 3:16-22.

16 "Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, 17 and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.' 18 And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.' 19 But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. 20 So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go. 21 And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, 22 but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians.'" (ESV)

With greater detail, God unfolded how His plan would proceed. Part of the greater detail was how the individuals Moses spoke with would respond to his message. God revealed that the elders of Israel would accept him and the message, which must have been an immense relief to Moses considering how he left the people of Israel four decades earlier. Pharaoh would not receive the message, but God revealed that ultimately the victory was His.

Even with this explanation, God didn't reveal everything that would happen as Moses led the people. Describe a time when you had to trust God in a crucial situation without knowing all the details.

Did you know how every step would work out, or did God gradually and consistently show faithfulness?

God also told Moses that Pharaoh would reject the request. Why is it important to understand that following God's lead does not always lead to easy or enjoyable experiences?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How does God's desire for you to know Him shape your willingness to serve Him?

How have you sensed that God might be drawing you to serve Him in ministry to others?

When you think of God calling you to serve Him, how do you respond? Do you feel like He couldn't use you because of past mistakes?

PRAYER

Pray that God will open the hearts of those in your group to the idea of serving Him. Pray that their intimacy with God will embolden them to trust God to empower their service, even when the calling is difficult.

COMMENTARY

| EXODUS 3:1-6, 11-22

3:1. Moses was born into the tribe of Levi in Egypt. When his parents could no longer hide him, his mother placed him in a watertight basket and floated the basket down the Nile River. One of Pharaoh's daughters found the baby and adopted him.

Later, when Moses was grown, he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. Moses killed the Egyptian. The next day Moses tried to settle an argument between two Hebrews, and one

of them revealed he had witnessed Moses' crime. Moses escaped to Midian where he met Jethro (also called Reuel), a priest. Moses married Jethro's daughter and became a shepherd for his father-in-law (2:1-22).

Midian lay east of the Gulf of Aqaba in the northwestern corner of Arabia. One season as Moses traveled toward Egypt to find pastures for the sheep, he arrived at Horeb, another name for Mount Sinai, located in the south-central part of the Sinai peninsula. At Horeb, God would call Moses to shepherd His people.

3:2. As Moses tended his flock, he noticed a flame of fire burning within a bush, but the branches and leaves were not turning to ash. The burning bush was no natural phenomenon but rather signaled the presence of the Angel of the Lord. God's appearance in the fire in the burning bush anticipated His later appearance in the fire on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:18). The word translated "bush" also sounds similar to the name Sinai, another tie between Mount Sinai and God's revelation.

3:3. God used Moses' natural curiosity to draw him into His presence. Once God and Moses began their conversation, the bush no longer was the focus. The Bible does not reveal whether the bush burned up or the fire suddenly went out. The bush served only to draw Moses' attention so he could encounter God and receive God's call.

3:4. When Moses turned aside to examine the burning bush, God called out to him. In the ancient world, calling a person's name twice expressed particular affection and friendship. God wanted Moses to realize the love He had for His people and for Moses personally. Moses answered God in typical fashion, stating his willingness to hear (see Gen. 22:1; 46:2).

3:5. As God would later command the people not to approach Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:12), He instructed Moses to come no closer to the bush. God told Moses to remove his sandals, a common practice when entering the presence of royalty. Moses needed to keep a respectful distance and remove his sandals because he stood on holy ground.

3:6. God introduced Himself to Moses in two ways. First, God stated He was the God of Moses' father. God had a personal connection with Moses' family and Moses. Second, God stated He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the forefathers of all the Israelites. God had made promises to Abraham that He fully intended to keep. Having multiplied His people in Egypt, God would fulfill His other promises of giving them a land, blessing them, and punishing those who oppressed them. Moses needed to recognize God's holiness—His difference from and superiority over His creation. Yet Moses also needed to know

God's commitment and faithfulness to him and to God's people. God's holiness demanded exclusive worship and commitment in thought and deed. God's faithfulness indicated His love and encouraged people to trust Him.

3:11-12. Moses' question— Who am I?—reminds us of the question one of the Hebrews asked Moses in 2:14: "Who are you?" The answer to these questions has nothing to do with Moses' upbringing or abilities. The Lord's promise to Moses, I will certainly be with you, depends for its value on who the Lord is; it matters that He is present because He is willing and able to act. This promise gave Moses grounds for authority that was missing earlier (2:11-15) and continues the important theme of God's personal involvement in the lives of His people (Gen 28:15; 31:3; 46:4; 48:21; Ex 33:14-16; Num 14:43; Jos 1:9; Zech 8:23; Mt 28:20; Jn 14:16; Heb 13:5). To worship God with all the Israelites at the mountain where God and Moses were speaking would be a sign for Moses because he would be able to look back and know that this worship was possible only because of what the Lord had done (Ex 18:1-12; 24:1-11).

3:13-15. God's statement is worded with a finality that sometimes appears at the end of a conversation, typically to put an end to debate without volunteering information, like Pilate's statement, "What I have written, I have written" (Jn 19:22; also Gen 43:14; Ex 16:23; 33:19; 2Sam 15:20; Est 4:16; Jer 15:1-2). The statements containing I AM (v. 14) use the same Hebrew verb that God's promise, "I will certainly be with you," does in verse 12 (and also 4:12,15).

The wordplay with the verb makes it especially prominent and recalls the promise, as if to remind Moses, "The one who promises to be with you is the one who sends you." Since Hebrew verbs gather much of their temporal meaning from their contexts, the same form can indicate present or future or both at once, depending on the situation. Here the promises in 3:12; 4:12,15 are oriented to the future; so though "will" is appropriate in English, it does not exclude God's presence with Moses at the time they were speaking. Nor does the English present tense "am" in 3:14 exclude the future.

3:16. The name Yahweh is connected etymologically with the Hebrew verb "to be" that appears so prominently in verses 12,14. Yahweh was no stranger. He was the God of their fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Four hundred years in Egypt had not annulled the promises made to them and their offspring (2:24). He now sent Moses to their descendants, the Israelites. If the Israelites wanted to know who He was, they needed to look at what He had done. When the present translation uses the word Lord (with large

and small capital letters), it is representing the Hebrew name that can also be transliterated "Yahweh."

3:18. A three-day trip... so that we may sacrifice was a reasonable request, since other slave groups in Egypt received permission for similar journeys to worship their gods. Something about Israelite sacrifices was abhorrent to the Egyptians (8:26); a three-day trip into the wilderness would get them well out of sight.

3:19. Moses cited legitimate concerns regarding his mission. Moses saw himself as a simple shepherd. Furthermore, Moses feared the Israelites would be skeptical and would want to know God's name. Moses may have questioned whether God really could bring His people out of Egyptian slavery and into the promised land. God answered each of Moses' objections by promising His presence, revealing His name, emphasizing His tie to the Israelites' forefathers, and assuring that He would fulfill every promise He had made.

3:20. Though Pharaoh would yield to no human power, he would have to yield to God. God would perform extraordinary deeds in Egypt that would cause Pharaoh to free the Israelites. The use of the Hebrew word translated strike indicates God's miracles would cause destruction in Egypt. God did not announce how many plagues He would send or how severe they would be, only that His deeds would cause pain to the Egyptians. God would defeat Pharaoh and the Egyptians in their homeland, demonstrate His power and sovereignty, and force Pharaoh to let the Israelites go free. After God acted, Pharaoh would be so eager to free the Israelites that he would drive them out of Egypt.