

“Moses at the Burning Bush”
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Exodus 3:1-15, Matthew 16:21-28

The call of God is unique for every individual. For Gideon it was the fleece and that differs widely from Ezekiel and his lofty vision of the throne of God. Isaiah with the burning coal placed on his lips differs from Paul on the Damascus Road and his experience.

But of all the calls of God in the Bible it's Moses and the burning Bush that's the most famous. The burning Bush experience of Moses is unique, but it stands out as synonymous with the call of God.

People will often refer to their “Burning Bush experience” in their own calling to God's ministry. Moses had this dramatic and gripping call. How could there be any question in the mind of Moses that God is calling him, so now go (Exodus 3:10).

You would expect Moses to give the response like Isaiah, “Here I am, send me”, but look at verse 11. Moses says, “Who am I to go to pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

Moses makes excuse after excuse not to follow this call. This continues throughout this chapter. Why does he do this?

Moses is eighty years old. Two-thirds of his one-hundred-and-twenty-year life is behind him. His mother no doubt instilled in him that the hand of God was upon him since birth. His name meant drawn out of water. There was something miraculous ahead.

Even though Moses was raised by Pharaoh's daughter, he never forgot he was a Hebrew. He believed God had a purpose in his life.

At the age of 40 his Hebrew identity ran strong within him. While an Egyptian was unmercifully mistreating a Hebrew slave his temper raged, his Hebrew identity compelled him. He killed the Egyptian. Then the next day when he saw two Hebrew slaves fighting and one of them asked, “will you kill me too?” With those words, Moses caved in. His murder was publicly known.

Moses fled out of Egypt for his life. He lived in exile for 40 years. He had acted outside of God's will by committing murder. He was out of step with God's timing.

For 40 years he was becoming somebody in pharaoh's court. For 40 years he was being nobody living in exile. Imagine the response of a man supposedly called to the pastorate ministry at a young age and he fail miserably, and the church is wrecked. He leaves the ministry forever. Then just before retirement age, not even holding a place of leadership, God calls him to be the pastor. Surprise? Yes!

The burning Bush was dramatic. God's instructions were clear. But think of the circumstances. Moses was 80 years old. Forty years had passed since Moses had really believed he was special. Failure has a profound effect on anyone. It gives them fear to try again and the pain of failure is so severe. They retreat into defeatism.

They say not me Lord. I'm a failure. My day has passed. You must get someone else. My strongest days have long since passed me by. But does our work for God depend on our strength or does it depend on our determination?

God says, "I will be with you." (Exodus 3:12). There is an essential ingredient for success. That is God's presence. God works through his people. God didn't call Moses at 40 in the prime of his life; he called Moses at 80. It was not the strength of Moses that deliver God's people, it was the power of God. God had to instill that lesson into Moses. God demonstrated his power.

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.'" (Exodus 3:14). He is God. He is all powerful. God is creator. God is sustainer, deliverer, and we cannot limit God. In Exodus chapter 4 verse 3 the staff will become a snake. The LORD said, "throw it on the ground." Moses threw it on the ground, and it became a snake, and he ran from it.

God demonstrates his power by saying to Moses, "put your hand inside your cloak." So, Moses put his hand into his cloak, and when he took it out, the skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow. "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. (Exodus 4:6-7)

Then the LORD said, "If they do not believe you or pay attention to the first sign, they may believe the second. 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.” (Exodus 4:8-9)

Would Moses dare make an excuse. With God's presence. God's power. Yes. Moses said to the Lord, “Pardon your servant, 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... please send someone else.” (Exodus 4:10-13) The bottom line, let someone else do it. Do not disturb me now. Let someone else be the activist. Let the other person have the stress of leadership. Let me stay in the Pew. I have grown comfortable. I do not want to violate my comfort zone.

God will use Aaron to be the one to speak. The excuses melt away one by one. The bottom-line, Moses you will serve your God, or you won't.

Obedying God will violate his comfort zone but the excitement of being used by God to do miracles for the purpose of God will be worth the discomfort.

Moses' call by God is unique. What is not unique are our repeated excuses not to follow God's call. Somewhere along the line, we have come to believe that if God offers us a call, then it will be to become a missionary in the deepest part of Africa. In reality, it will be to serve right here in Northeast Ohio. Our service will be here in this church and community. So, how will I answer if they ask me to serve in the church? What do I do if I don't want the role that God has for me? What if the congregation doesn't want to follow where I lead? Will God continue or leave me alone if I continue to say no? If I don't serve God, does that mean that God will abandon me? These are the questions that we ask. These are the questions that keep us up at night when we are trying to find our place in the world.

Moses makes too many excuses, “Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else” (Exodus 4:13). Please let someone else do it. Moses put his neck on the line once. And he felt like a failure. But what if we are that someone else? What if we are here and called so that we can be Aaron and support others. What if we are the Moses and God is sending to us all the help we need. We just need to take a leap of faith. We need to trust that God has our back and that everything will work out. That is the challenge of Moses. That is the challenge for everyone who follows the call of God. Amen.