

As we study the remarkable experience of Moses' call by God, let's understand that every one of us are "called" to serve God in a world that has trouble



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relinquishing control of life and trusting the God who seems so far away and beyond knowing.

I wonder what Moses thought about through those years of lostness in Midian? Did he wish he had acted more

circumspectly, managed his anger, sought the wisdom of the Hebrew leaders, and put together a plan for the liberation of his people? The Moses we observe in this lesson is an older man, married with children, a shepherd in the wilderness instead of a member of the royal family, a man who has tried to close the door on the past. Could he understand that God is not constrained by time, controlled by circumstances, or limited by human imagination?

Is there a point in time when God is finished with a you? If you answer "yes," you don't understand the meaning of God's grace. My personal call to ministry unfolded over several years, beginning before I had committed my life to Christ and concluding with a forgotten dream that became shockingly true in a military chapel service. God has a way of touching the human heart that goes beyond our expectations to surprising possibilities. When God says "take off your sandals because this is holy ground," the ordinary gives way to God!

Horeb, "the mountain of God," might have given Moses a hint, but he is not thinking of possibilities. When God speaks out of a burning bush that was not consumed by the flames, God does not say "Hey, you!" He calls Moses by name.

We think life would be a lot easier if God showed up in person every now and then to issue specific instructions. But our tendency would be to ask for God's ID and a documented plan of action! Come to think of it, the Bible is the documented plan of action and Jesus is the fulfillment of that plan. Yet our human habit is to ask for more. So, get in line, Moses, and make up your mind about God's love and how that love should shape and direct your life.

In the Bible, fire is usually an image of punishment or cleansing, but it is also an image of power and change in the purposes of God:

- Moses meets God in a burning bush.
- An angel touches the lips of the prophet Isaiah with a burning coal from the altar of heaven (Isaiah 6:1-7)
- Three Hebrew young men live through the fiery furnace of a pagan king and proved the power of God (Daniel 3:13-30)
- John the baptizer describes Jesus as the one who "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11)

As Moses stands before a bush aflame with God's presence, the past is being consumed and a new future promised. Not only must Moses accept God's call, he must allow God to burn away his fears and regrets and light the way to the future.

Moses is not short on reasons to back away. He claims a speech impediment. The captive Hebrews will not believe his message (3:13). Moses is short on answers – after all, he has been out of the loop for a long time. But the greatest faith often appears when we don't have all the answers and we have to trust God. The wisdom writer counsels: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5).

God offers a concise tutorial on how this can work: 1) "I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt (3:10); 2) "Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not, I the Lord? Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak." (4:12)

Throughout both the Old and New Testaments the thrilling and heroic stories are all examples of what God can do with a willing heart. Even the influential Apostle Paul of the New Testament often describes his abilities and speech: "I was with you (the Corinthian believers) in weakness and fear and in much trembling ... my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest in the wisdom of men, but on the power

of God." (1 Corinthians 2:3-5). God will give Moses support through Aaron, but it is only in the presence and power of God that Israel will survive the wilderness wandering to the "promised land of milk and honey."

The call of God is not qualified by strength of character, education, social standing, or any other human measure. To serve God means to love and trust God with your life, to understand you are never on your own, and to simply be willing. I never could get my head around Charlton Heston as Moses in the Hollywood telling of "Exodus." He was too much the rugged American. Instead, I have found hope and strength a thousand times over in the challenges of ministry because of God's faithfulness. I know what it's like to be uncertain, inadequate, challenged ... and blessed when I simply said yes to God and allowed the Holy Spirit to lead.

It is easiest to believe that everything has already been recorded in the rule book of heaven like some kind of football strategy. What is more amazing is the idea that God, who can handle all the variations and surprises of life, invites us to be on his team, to suffer loss and to celebrate victories, to live beyond circumstances, and to find God faithful in every twist of life.

We are all inadequate. We do not know all the answers. But God has a plan, just as he did for Moses when he was a helpless baby among the rushes of the Nile River, in Pharaoh's palace, in the wilderness of Midian, and in the day Joshua took the reins of leadership. God calls us at church, in school, on the job, and in the blessings and tragedies of life.

And, God gives us the freedom to answer, but the blessings come only when we say yes! I told God when I finally said yes to his call that I would need a lot of help. As with Moses, God has never failed me. The Christian life is not a game of easy choices and success, but the assurance of God's grace in every moment. God knows you. He calls you by name. The secret to God's blessings is to listen for his voice every day and follow as God leads. God's leading is not always as obvious as a burning bush. As with Moses, some days you will do better than others, but God will be with you faithfully.