

Zoom Bible Study

led by Mary Lowman

Growing Closer to God

The life of Moses

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Exodus 3:1 – 10

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. ²There 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. ³So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."

⁴When 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." ⁶Then 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.

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

Who is this angel of the Lord that appears to Moses in the burning bush? Many believe it is a pre-incarnate Christ. At least it is a personal messenger of God sent to call Moses to his great task.

Why did God appear to Moses in such an unusual – miraculous – way?

What is the symbolism of the bush and the fire?

Why did God set up boundaries and tell Moses to take off his sandals?

Do you think Moses had been on that ground before? Had it been holy ground before? Why was this ground now holy?

Can you remember some time in your walk with the Lord when some ordinary ground became holy ground?



Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

John 1:18: *No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.*

What is an anthropomorphism?

What anthropomorphisms do we see in verses 4 – 8?

Verse 10 is God's official commissioning of Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt:

"So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

Exodus 3:11 – 15

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

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."

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.

Moses' first objection to God's call: Who am I?

Moses has an identity crisis. He was timid and unsure of himself and shrank back from this divine commission.

How does God respond to this objection? Does he build Moses up and bolster his self-esteem?

When God calls you and me to some task, we are always inadequate for it. If God has said, "I will be with you," that's all you need to know.

Moses' second objection to God's call: What shall I tell them?

Fear of people is always a hurdle for us, isn't it?

From Pastor Lutzer's book: "We've all experienced the same fear, haven't we? We have kept our mouths shut about our faith because we fear people will ask, 'How do you know?' Our response should be to point to the credentials of Christ and affirm that we do not speak on our own behalf. We speak on behalf of someone who claims to be God and has the credentials to prove it."

What was God's answer? **"I am who I am."**

Exodus 3:16 – 22

¹⁶ "Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. ¹⁷ And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—a land flowing with milk and honey.'

¹⁸ "The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God.' ¹⁹ But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. ²⁰ So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go.

²¹ “And I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed. ²² Every woman is to ask her neighbor and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians.”

God promises that they will find favor with the Egyptian people, that Pharaoh will be defeated, that they will not leave empty-handed, indeed the riches of the Egyptians will be theirs.

Exodus 4:1 – 9

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—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.”

Moses’ third objection to God’s call: What if they do not believe me or listen to me?

Now Moses is playing the “what if” game. God has just told him that they would listen to him, but he is finding that hard to believe. Why would that be hard for Moses to believe?

What areas in your own life do you find it difficult to believe God because of the past? Remember: it’s not all about you; it’s all about God.

Graciously God gives Moses three signs to be used as credentials with the people of Israel. Was this necessary? Why didn’t Moses just believe God?

1. His staff

What did that staff represent? God takes it from him, takes the snake out of it, and gives it back to him to use as God’s instrument.

2. Leprosy covered his hand

The word leprosy covered a number of assorted diseases much as our word cancer currently does. God instantaneously cured it.

3. Water becomes blood

The water from the Nile was filled with the blood of innocent Hebrew children. Would the point of this sign be wasted on any Hebrew or Egyptian?

Exodus 4:10 - 17

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.”

¹¹ The LORD said to him, “Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the LORD? ¹² Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.”

¹³ But Moses said, “Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else.”

¹⁴Then the LORD's anger burned against Moses and he said, "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and he will be glad to see you. ¹⁵You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. ¹⁶He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him. ¹⁷But take this staff in your hand so you can perform the signs with it."

Moses' fourth objection to God's call: I can't talk good.

He was worried about what people would think. Then Moses just begs out: "O Lord, please send someone else to do it."

Moses was willing now to stay in this lowly job of shepherding. After all, you couldn't experience much failure there, could you? It shows the condition of Moses' heart – lack of faith, lack of commitment, lack of obedience.

Exodus 4:18 – 31

Then Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, "Let me return to my own people in Egypt to see if any of them are still alive." Jethro said, "Go, and I wish you well."

¹⁹Now the LORD had said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all those who wanted to kill you are dead." ²⁰So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand.

²¹The LORD said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. ²²Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, ²³and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.'"

²⁴At a lodging place on the way, the LORD met Moses and was about to kill him. ²⁵But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it. "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me," she said. ²⁶So the LORD let him alone. (At that time she said "bridegroom of blood," referring to circumcision.)

²⁷The LORD said to Aaron, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses." So he met Moses at the mountain of God and kissed him. ²⁸Then Moses told Aaron everything the LORD had sent him to say, and also about all the signs he had commanded him to perform.

²⁹Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites, ³⁰and Aaron told them everything the LORD had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people, ³¹and they believed. And when they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.

Moses had married Zipporah, a Midianite; Midianites were the offspring of Abraham and Keturah.

Genesis 25:1: *Abraham had taken another wife, whose name was Keturah.*

The Midianites were monotheistic, but they didn't follow the covenant of the Lord and they did not circumcise their sons. God has to rectify this situation before Moses can serve him. Recognizing the problem, Zipporah performs the rite of circumcision upon their son to save Moses' life, and the Lord let Moses go and the grip of death was lifted. Now Moses is free to do what God has sent him to do.

What are the most common excuses you use when you don't want to do what God wants you to do?

Ask yourself how these excuses reflect unfavorably on God and why he is not amused with your tendency to wiggle out of obedience. What blessings do we miss when we use excuses to escape our duty?