

## **Moses' Story**

Israelites were slaves in Egypt for over four hundred years as prophesied by God to Abraham (Genesis 15:13-14). Moses, a Hebrew, was raised in Pharaoh's household for forty years (Exodus 1-2) until, in an attempt to be a self-made deliverer of the Israelites, he murdered an Egyptian. Instead of this becoming a catalyst to freeing the Israelites, he had to run to save his own life. Fleeing into the wilderness, as a failed would-be hero, he ends up marrying into a shepherding family and lives for another forty years as a lowly shepherd. At the age of eighty, God confronts Moses with a call to serve him in a spectacular way.

### **Exodus 3:1-10 (NIV)**

*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 desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight--why the bush does not burn up."*

*<sup>4</sup> 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."*

*<sup>5</sup> "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." <sup>6</sup> 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.*

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

### **What was the good news in this story?**

The good news was that God saw the suffering of his people and he cared about them. For his own reasons, God allowed the Israelites to experience bondage for many years, but he also prepared a wonderful plan for their deliverance and future as a nation.

In Genesis 15:12-16 God provided Abraham with insight as to the future bondage of his descendants and the reason why he delayed their return into Canaan.

### **What, from Moses' perspective, is the bad news?**

The bad news from Moses' perspective is that God wants him to play a leadership role in freeing his people. Moses doesn't quite feel up to the challenge.

Have you had one of these “good news-bad news” experiences where you sensed God telling you to do something good, but you did not want to follow through. Why? What fears did it evoke in you?

## **MOSES’ OBJECTIONS**

### **Objection #1**

*Exodus 3:11 (NIV)*

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

#### **What is Moses’ concern?**

Moses views himself as a failure. He tried once before to rescue the Israelites, but that turned badly against him. Even the Israelites held him in contempt. Moses had to flee to the wilderness where he has now spent forty years as an “insignificant” shepherd. He is now eighty years old without any significant contribution to life. Who is he that he should go to the most powerful man on earth and demand that the Israelites be set free? Moses is struggling with a low sense of self-esteem.

**Have you ever held back from doing something God called you to do because you questioned your own abilities?**

**What do you think God would want to say to such thinking?**

*Exodus 3:12 (NIV)*

*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."*

**God’s Answer:** I will be with you

#### **What is God’s answer really saying?**

“Moses, it’s not about who you are; it’s about who I am, and I will be with you!”

Moses was focussed on his own abilities and they did not rank very high in his estimation. God, however, is telling Moses that he is the one who will accomplish all this through Moses and that he has the future already written. The Israelites would come and worship at this very mountain.

**If we truly reflect on what God has said here, how does it take some of the pressure off us?**

If God has something he wants to accomplish, he will accomplish it. It is not up to us to tell God what he can and cannot accomplish through us. We simply need to be faithful and obey. The pressure is then off us because we don’t need to “accomplish” anything, God takes care of the outcome.

**Did God need Moses?**

God didn't need Moses to set the Israelites free. God is inviting Moses to partner with him out of a love for Moses and the Israelites. God has been grooming Moses with various life experiences over eighty years that will prove indispensable for his leading the Israelites from Egypt and through the wilderness. Moses is not just an insignificant shepherd; he is God's representative and has a high calling on his life.

**Objection #2****Exodus 3:13 (NIV)**

*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?"*

**What is Moses' concern?**

The Israelites have had no formal encounter with God other than stories passed down from their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They have no scriptures, no place of worship, no public gathering for worship, no religious laws, no teachers, no priests, not anything but stories. They are immersed in a culture where there is a belief in many gods and these perspectives have been influencing them for over four hundred and thirty years.

For Moses just to show up and say "God sent me", their first reaction would be, "Which god?"

**Is the question of "What god?" a tension relevant for us today?**

The whole tension of who Jesus is is the question of "what god?" Some people will be fine referring to "God" but get very upset when you start talking about "Jesus". Others will define God completely differently than the Bible does. Many will simply see God as some force of the universe, as opposed to a personal being.

**Exodus 3:14-15 (NIV)**

*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 by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.*

**God's Answer: I AM - All sufficient**

**The Name: I AM**

What does God mean by the name “I AM”?

What does the name “I AM” convey to you?

God is saying that he is the self-existing one. Whereas everything else was created by him, he alone has always existed. He alone is God, he is ALL-SUFFICIENT for every need.

He then backs it up by identifying himself as the same God that appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Because he is God, he will be everything the Israelites need him to be in every situation.

**SIDE NOTE:**

**The Hebrew writing for the name of God in this passage is YHWH.**

Because the Hebrews feared using the name of God inappropriately they determined they should never pronounce it at all. Instead they would use the name **Adonai** (Lord or Master) whenever YHWH occurred. As a result, no one really knows how to pronounce God's name.

In an attempt to come to an understanding of the pronunciation some have added vowels to YHWH to create:

**YaH-WeH** or

**Ye-Ho-VaH** (Jehovah – the W in YHWH is often expressed by a V)

Many Bibles simply translate the name YHWH as “**LoRD**” using small capital letters.

**Why might the name “I AM” be a comfort to Israel?**

By using this name, he is informing the Israelites that he will be everything they need him to be. If everything that exists has its origin in him, then there is nothing he cannot do, and nothing he cannot provide. There is no enemy too great and no need beyond his ability to meet. This gets expressed through scripture by the various names added to YHWH.

**A few of the names of God**

**Yahweh Jireh:** I AM will provide  
Genesis 22:14

**Yahweh Shalom:** I AM is Peace  
Judges 6:24

**Yahweh Sabaoth:** I AM of the Hosts (Lord of the Army)  
1 Samuel 17:45

**Yahweh Ro'i:** I AM is my Shepherd  
Psalm 23:1

Yahweh Tsidkenu: I AM is our Righteousness  
Jeremiah 23:6

Yahweh Shammah: I AM is there  
Ezekiel 48:35

**Which name of God speaks the most strongly to you? Why?**

**Which name of God might give you confidence to do what he calls you to do?**

### **Objection #3**

#### **Exodus 4:1 (NIV)**

*Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The Lord did not appear to you'?"*

#### **What is Moses' concern?**

Moses is concerned that he will not be able to convince the others to believe him or follow him.

**Have you had times when you feared whether or not you would be able to convince others to follow God?**

#### **How would God want to respond to that concern?**

It's not your job to convince a person; that is God's area of responsibility. It is merely your job to present the message he wants to present.

The Prophet Jeremiah spent his adult life conveying God's message to the Israelites without them ever becoming convinced and responding positively. It was not Jeremiah's job to convince the Israelites, only to tell them what God wanted to say.

It is not my job to convince people to follow God. It is my job to represent God's love and message to them leaving the results with God.

#### **How might this take some pressure off us?**

**Exodus 4:2-9 (NIV)**

Then the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" "A staff," he replied.

<sup>3</sup> The Lord said, "Throw it on the ground." Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> "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."

<sup>6</sup> Then the Lord said, "Put your hand inside your cloak." So Moses put his hand into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was leprous, like snow.

<sup>7</sup> "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.

<sup>8</sup> Then the Lord said, "If they do not believe you or pay attention to the first miraculous sign, they may believe the second. <sup>9</sup> 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's Answer:** I will bring about the results I want

**Have there been times when you've seen God work in ways you could have never anticipated to bring about the results he wanted?**

**Have you seen people become convinced by God in ways that you could never have influenced them?**

**Objection #4****Exodus 4:10 (NIV)**

Moses said to the Lord, "O 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."

**Does anyone here struggle with the idea of public speaking? Can anyone relate to Moses?**

**Have there been times when your fear of not being able to communicate clearly has kept you from speaking God's message to others?**

**What would God want to say to you at those times?**

It's not about you! It's not about you looking good, sounding good, or impressing others. It is not about people respecting you.

It is solely about you being faithful to God and speaking words that God wants people to hear.

This could be in witnessing to others, teaching, confronting problems, praying for others, etc.  
It's NOT about YOU. It's all about GOD and whatever he wants to accomplish.

**Exodus 4:11-12 (NIV)**

*The Lord said to him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord?"<sup>12</sup> Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."*

**God's Answer:** I will give you everything you need

**How does God respond to Moses?**

If God wants you to say something, he will give you what you need to communicate in the way he wants people to hear it. Your limitations do not limit God! Only your pride and fears will limit what God wants to accomplish through you.

**Objection #5****Exodus 4:13 (NIV)**

*But Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it."*

**Have you ever told God clearly that you didn't want to do what he was calling you to do?**

**How do you think God feels at those points in time?**

**Exodus 4:14-17 (NIV)**

*Then 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 his heart will be glad when he sees you."<sup>15</sup> You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do.<sup>16</sup> He 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.<sup>17</sup> But take this staff in your hand so you can perform miraculous signs with it."*

**God's Answer:** Obey

**Why does God relent and send Aaron?**

God had already determined in advance that Aaron would play an important role. The problem was that Moses did not trust God to provide whatever he might need in order to be successful. Despite Moses' lack of faith, God still meets him where he is at and provides what he needs in the midst of his fears.

**Have there been times when you chose to obey, even though you felt afraid or insecure?  
What happened?**

When God calls us to action, what are the truths we need to remember?

- 1) God is with you
- 2) God is all-sufficient
- 3) God will accomplish the results he wants
- 4) God will give you everything you need
- 5) When God calls us to action what is the one thing we need to do? Obey

**MOSES' FINAL DECISION:**

***Exodus 4:18 (NIV)***

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