

The Burning Bush

Message 1 of 8 in the series: "Exodus"

A. Exodus is a story about God rescuing his people from slavery in Egypt.

"...a new king came to power in Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph or what he had done. He said to his people, 'Look, the people of Israel now outnumber us and are stronger than we are. We must make a plan to keep them from growing even more. If we don't, and if war breaks out, they will join our enemies and fight against us. Then they will escape from the country.' So the Egyptians made the Israelites their slaves. They appointed brutal slave drivers over them, hoping to wear them down with crushing labor... But the more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more the Israelites multiplied and spread, and the more alarmed the Egyptians became. So the Egyptians worked the people of Israel without mercy... the Israelites continued to groan under their burden of slavery. They cried out for help, and their cry rose up to God. **God heard their groaning, and he remembered his covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He looked down on the people of Israel and knew it was time to act.**" Exodus 1:8-11a, 12-13, & 2:23b-25 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! God sees us, hears our prayers, and He knows what we are going through. "Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the Lord, who had spoken to her. She said, '**You are the God who sees me.**' ...So that well was named Beer-lahai-roi (which means 'well of the Living One who sees me')." Genesis 16:13a & 14a (NLT)

IMPORTANT! God's timing is perfect. "At the right time, I, the Lord, will make it happen." Isaiah 60:22b (NLT)

B. Exodus is a story about God raising up a mighty leader named Moses to lead His people out of slavery and guide them to the Promised Land.

1. God rescued Moses from being killed as a baby and gave him a world-class education in Pharaoh's palace. "At that time Moses was born—a beautiful child in God's eyes. His parents cared for him at home for three months. When they had to abandon him, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and raised him as her own son. **Moses was taught all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was powerful in both speech and action.**" Acts 7:20-22 (NLT)
2. After he became a man, Moses wrongly assumed that he could rescue God's people from slavery in his own wisdom and strength. "One day when Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his relatives, the people of Israel. He saw an Egyptian mistreating an Israelite. So Moses came to the man's defense and avenged him, killing the Egyptian. **Moses assumed his fellow Israelites would realize that God had sent him to rescue them, but they didn't.** The next day he visited them again and saw two men of Israel fighting. He tried to be a peacemaker. 'Men,' he said, 'you are brothers. Why are you fighting each other?' But the man in the wrong pushed Moses aside. '**Who made you a ruler and judge over us?**' he asked. 'Are you going to kill me as you killed that Egyptian yesterday?' When Moses heard that, he fled the country and lived as a foreigner in the land of Midian." Acts 7:23-29a (NLT)

IMPORTANT! We must NEVER presume we can accomplish God's work in our own wisdom and strength. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; **apart from me you can do nothing.**" John 15:5 (NIV)

3. When Moses was eighty years old, God called him into ministry from a burning bush. "One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up. 'This is amazing,' Moses said to himself. 'Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it.' When the LORD saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, '**Moses! Moses!**' 'Here I am!' Moses replied. 'Do not come any closer,' the Lord warned. 'Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' '...Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. Now go, for **I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt.**" Exodus 3:1-6a & 9-10 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! We are never too old (or too young) for God to call us into His service. "But the godly will flourish like palm trees and grow strong like the cedars of Lebanon... **Even in old age they will still produce fruit;** they will remain vital and green." Psalm 92:12 & 14 (NLT) (see also 1 Timothy 4:12)

4. Ironically, when God finally called him, Moses made a string of excuses for why he couldn't go.
- a. "But Moses protested to God, '**Who am I** to appear before Pharaoh? **Who am I** to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?' God answered, '**I will be with you.** And this is your sign that I am the one who has sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God at this very mountain.'" Exodus 3:11-12 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! When we are carrying out God's work, it doesn't matter who we are. It matters who He is. "If God is for us, **who can be against us?**" Romans 8:31b (NIV)

- b. "But Moses protested, 'If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, "The God of your ancestors has sent me to you," they will ask me, "What is his name?" Then what should I tell them?' God replied to Moses, '**I AM WHO I AM.** Say this to the people of Israel: **I AM** has sent me to you.' God also said to Moses, 'Say this to the people of Israel: **Yahweh**, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you. This is my eternal name, my name to remember for all generations.'" Exodus 3:13-15 (NLT)

Note: I AM = YHWH (ancient Hebrew) = Yahweh (English). God revealed Himself to Moses as the all-powerful, all-knowing, eternal, uncreated God who is the creator of everything else. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, **the Beginning and the End.**" Revelation 22:13 (NLT)

- c. "But Moses protested again, 'What if they won't believe me or listen to me? What if they say, "The Lord never appeared to you"?' Then the Lord asked him, 'What is that in your hand?' 'A shepherd's staff,' Moses replied. 'Throw it down on the ground,' the Lord told him. **So Moses threw down the staff, and it turned into a snake!** Moses jumped back. Then the Lord told him, 'Reach out and grab its tail.' So Moses reached out and grabbed it, and it turned back into a shepherd's staff in his hand. 'Perform this sign,' the Lord told him. 'Then they will believe that the Lord, the God of their ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—really has appeared to you.' Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Now put your hand inside your cloak.' **So Moses put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out again, his hand was white as snow with a severe skin disease.** 'Now put your hand back into your cloak,' the Lord said. So Moses put his hand back in, and when he took it out again, it was as healthy as the rest of his body. The Lord said to Moses, 'If they do not believe you and are not convinced by the first miraculous sign, they will be convinced by the second sign. And if they don't believe you or listen to you even after these two signs, then take some water from the Nile River and pour it out on the dry ground. When you do, **the water from the Nile will turn to blood on the ground.**'" Exodus 4:1-9 (NLT)
- d. "But Moses pleaded with the Lord, 'O Lord, I'm not very good with words. I never have been, and I'm not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled.' Then the Lord asked Moses, '**Who makes a person's mouth?** ...Is it not I, the Lord? **Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say.**'" Exodus 4:10-12 (NLT)
- e. "But Moses again pleaded, '**Lord, please! Send anyone else.**' Then the Lord became angry with Moses. 'All right,' he said. '**What about your brother, Aaron** the Levite? I know he speaks well. And look! He is on his way to meet you now. He will be delighted to see you. Talk to him, and put the words in his mouth. **I will be with both of you as you speak,** and I will instruct you both in what to do.'" Exodus 4:13-15 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! God delights in shattering our excuses and using ordinary people like us to carry out His purposes. "Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that **few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you.** Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. **As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.**" 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! "Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think." Ephesians 3:20 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions:

1. Has God ever given you an assignment? How did you respond?

2. Read through Moses' excuses in Exodus 3:11-15 & 4:1-15. What is the lamest excuse you've ever heard someone use to get out of doing something God clearly wanted them to do?
3. Read Acts 7:23-29 & Exodus 2:11-22. Why do you think Moses was confident he could lead the Israelites out of slavery when he was 40 but afraid to go when he was 80?
4. Why do you think God was willing to bless and empower Moses at 80 but not at 40? How had Moses changed? (Zechariah 4:6, John 15:5)
5. Discuss the names of God and the significance of each of them in the following passages. (Genesis 16:13-14, Exodus 3:13-16, Revelation 4:8 & 22:13)
6. Read Exodus 2:23-25 & Isaiah 60:22. Why do you think we often disagree with God's timing? What does He know that we don't? (Isaiah 55:8-9, 2 Peter 3:8)
7. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 & Ephesians 3:20. What would you say to someone who claims to be unworthy/unfit for God to use for His purposes?