

I Am

The Names of God series #2

by Chris Famisaran

Let's pray. Father in heaven, as we now continue our series on the names of God, Lord, be with us as we look to see how you are the great I am. In Jesus' name, amen.

Graham Watson shares a story of a young man. It was November 5, 2011. It was a Saturday night. Freshman Derek Brodus was lying peacefully on his couch in the fraternity house. eating chips, waiting for the Tennessee volunteer game to kick off at 7 p.m. Less than an hour before kickoff, though, as he was lying down on his couch, his phone started to buzz and he's fumbling trying to catch. Where's the phone? He gets it. He hears a voice and he says, a police escort is coming to pick you up. A police escort. What's going on? Police escort was going to take him to the stadium. The game that he was supposed to watch. As Derek said, I thought it was a dream. I was lying on my couch relaxing and I answered my phone and they just told me they needed to come to the stadium as soon as possible. Just minutes before the call, however, the backup kicker Chris Rome had pulled a muscle during the pregame warmups and already their starting kicker Michael Party was already out injured in a practice earlier that week. So an hour before kickoff, the volunteers were out of kickers. And lo and behold, they called Derek Brodus, who had tried out for the place kicker, but didn't make the team. And now Derek was their only option. And so minutes after Derek hangs up his phone, he sees a squad car come out. He goes to the police car, gets in it, and he's escorted from the frat house to the stadium. The team's trainer began to immediately take him to the locker room, and even help him put on pads and even a jersey that didn't even have his name on the back. Even so, Derek made the best of an opportunity, an opportunity of a lifetime. He made all three of his extra point attempts and he also kicked a 20-yard field goal at the end of the first half, and his team won 24 to zero. Back in the locker room after the final last whistle, the kicker, who began his evening lying on a couch eating chips was given the game ball. Celebrated as a hero.

Now, when you look at Derek's life, how many of you wonder, could that happen to me? It's possible. Situations like this, is God not amazing? Could God do wonderful things in our life and place opportunities that we would never ever expect in a million years? God works powerfully in our lives and sometimes, unexpectedly, even sometimes when we're laying down on the couch, maybe even eating chips. When we look at the life of Moses, let's go to the book of Exodus chapter 3. Exodus chapter 3, we find Moses, a man who is tending a flock. God is about to call Moses to a wonderful, mighty work.

Exodus chapter 3. And it says, *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. 2 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. 3 So Moses thought, I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.*”

4 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.”

5 “Do not come any closer,” God said. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”

Notice that Moses's first act when he and God meet, what is it? It is worship. It is reverence. God continues, *6 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.*

God intentionally does this because he's reminding him of all that he had done before, leading Abraham out of the comfort of his home, leading Isaac and also Jacob. *At this, Moses hid his face because he was too afraid to look at God.* What is God doing? God is giving his credentials, reminding him of the patriarchs, what he had done. Moses has a deep, deep respect and reverence for God, so much so that he hides his face.

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

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

And it's here in verse 12, God gives him a promise. He says, *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[b] will worship God on this mountain.*"

God literally calls Abraham from his home to a place that is filled with promise to have many children. Of course, Jacob as well. Jacob was led by God, promised many sons. Verse 13, *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,[d] 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.*

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.

Notice how many times does God say that I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There's a pattern here because any good Israelite would recognize and recall what God is trying to say. God again is showing his credentials as I am the God of your forefathers. They would look back. Looking back was better than looking forward in some ways because they could think back and remember the promises that God had given them or how God had led. Now, there is a bigger context to this passage that in that God is calling Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt.

And you notice at the very beginning, **when Moses meets God, he expresses humility. not the bravado he had as a young man.** You see, this is the same Moses, whose life was almost taken by Pharaoh when all the young boys were supposed to be murdered. And his mother, wanting to make sure that he would be okay, places him in a basket and sends him down the river. And who of all people rescues Moses, Pharaoh's daughter? He's raised up in Pharaoh's own kingdom. He's given the best education, the best resource, the best of everything. But he also recognizes eventually he knows what his true identity. He's not an Egyptian. He's an Israelite. There was a sense of arrogance to him. In fact, one day

he thought, well, maybe I'm a prince, but yet I'm going to help my people. Let's actually jump back to the last chapter, Exodus chapter 2.

And I want to go to verse 11. Exodus 2, verse 11. Now *one day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor.* Hmm. Moses knows that he's different. He's grown up in a life that is much more leisurely and much more pleasurable, much easier than those of his people who've had to work hard, breaking their backs, the sun hitting their bodies, maybe hopefully getting enough food and water and nutrition to be able to survive. Moses had the best of everything. He could have eaten anything and probably ordered anything that he wanted. *But he then saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. And so looking this way and that way, check your left, check your right to make sure nobody's around. He killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. The next day, he went out and he saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew? The man said, who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian? And then Moses was afraid and thought, what I did must have become known.*

You see, Moses, in some ways thought he was above the law. Notice he looked left, he looked right, and then he immediately killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand because he realized maybe he didn't mean to kill him, but he did. And he had to cover up his mistake. And he thought he got away with it. And yet the next day he's asked, hey, why are you guys fighting? The person who he must have saved must have told everybody else. Word traveled fast. Because the person he accuses then turns around and he says, what are you going to do? Huh? You going to try to kill me too? There's an arrogance and a bravado that he had to now in Exodus 3 is met with humility. And what happens? Because Moses realizes that he cannot come back. He has to leave. He has to flee.

And so he spends 40 years in the desert. And living 40 years in the desert is not an easy life. It's hard, it's hot, it's windy, it's dry. Finding water, making sure you have food are not easy tasks in the desert. We just go to the grocery store or better yet, we order it, maybe even just have a subscription. We can order food and it immediately comes to our door. We can order groceries, we can order mattresses, we can order everything and it comes to us so easy. Moses and his family had to

scrap for everything. But were those 40 years wasted or was God preparing for him? A greater task.

So when God calls Moses, he's older, he's wiser, he's more mature, maybe a little more cautious. When you get older, you realize maybe you're not so quick to want to jump into the fray. right away. He's a father. He's a husband. Maybe he's become a little bit more risk-averse.

Now **God uses fire to catch Moses's attention**. And this isn't the first time that God uses fire. In fact, in Exodus 24:17, God appeared as a fire on the mountain. Deuteronomy 4:11 through 12 also recounts when a fire was ablaze on a mountain as God spoke to Israel. When Pentecost happened, Acts 2 verse 3 talks about there were tongues of fire. Sometimes God uses fire to catch our attention and I'm going to be honest, if you're a young man, I think sometimes we all have a little bit of a pyromaniac in us. Amen. God calls Moses to do something that is potentially scary, to lead God's people. He did something similar with Gideon and Jeremiah. All three of them had a revelation of God. God makes an introductory statement, I am God. He then commissions the minister, I want you to do something wonderful, beautiful, powerful. And then the messenger says, well, hold on, hold on. I got a couple of questions. God reassures the messenger. Sometimes God gives a sign. Now for Moses, he's thinking practically, okay, when I go back, who am I supposed to say who this, who's sending me? I am. And I love how in this story, just as God was personal with Abraham, God is definitely personal with Moses. reaching out through the medium of a fire, a burning bush. God called out to Abraham, God called out to Jacob. What did God and Jacob do? They literally wrestled. How much more personal can you get than that? And so think about this too. What other God will come and personally meet with God's people?

Now, of course, God reminded him in verse 12, I will be with you. Does that sound familiar? Where else does God say that? How about Matthew 28, when Jesus leaves the disciples and ascends into heaven. Now, when we hear this term, **I am, it can be translated as to be**, much like Yahweh, okay? **Is God though trying to avoid describing God's name?** Can it be a little more descriptive? Now, when we look at this passage, at this particular verse, we have to look at the larger context. Some may be thinking, well, is it about God's essence or trying to be

philosophical? Is God being evasive? No, God is calling Moses to lead God's people out of slavery. They've been in slavery for how many years? Over 400 years. They've been oppressed.

Now, another way we could describe this, **John Dybdahl says, you should know me as a God who is active on your behalf now and will continue to be in the future.** Amen. What a beautiful promise. You should know me as God who is active on your behalf now and has been active in the past and will continue to be in the future. God is not some distant God, but sees us, knows us, again, is personal. Dybdahl goes on to say that, another way you could also say this, I have been, I am working on your behalf, and I will continue to work on your behalf in the future. God is revealing God's self, I am.

So again, Moses has been out in the wilderness for 40 years. It's a difficult life. It's a hot life. And out of nowhere on this mountain a bush starts to burn. And he's called by name. He's standing on holy ground. Imagine being Moses. You hear a voice and it is of God and immediately, what is your first thought? Reference, respect, worship. So much so he takes his sandals off. Have you ever revered God so deeply and so personally before? Is God trying to scare Moses? I think not. Because if Moses was afraid, well, maybe he could have been paralyzed by fear. Most people, though, would probably try to run away. I don't think so. I think Moses is not afraid. He understands that he is in God's presence. And again, his first act is to worship. If you continue the story on, why does God send Moses to Egypt? Not only to save them, but that they may also be able to worship God. That was the very basic premise. Moses goes and he asks Pharaoh, let the people go so that they may worship God. That would be the first act. Of course, so Pharaoh says, no, you're not going anywhere.

I am is a saving God. Now, if you continue to read the story, you know, Moses tries every which way to get out of this. If you continue on, he tries to make up excuses. And eventually he says, well, I cannot speak well. And God always has an answer for all of his points that he says, I'm not good enough. He sends Aaron, Moses' own brother, because he's a better speaker apparently. God had answers to every problem Moses presented. We are loved and saved by a God who is deeply personal and is intentional. And may we never take that for granted. Now, sometimes I think we can be just like Moses.

In spite of sometimes our perceived inadequacies and our own shortcomings, God is able to make us capable and go forth in the calling and life God has called us to. If you look at the many heroes of the Bible, David, was he perfect? No, he made many mistakes. And in spite of that, God used him. God used Samson in spite of his mistakes. All of the disciples, but one, essentially abandoned Jesus in his greatest hour. John was still there as he was at the cross with Jesus' own mother. The disciples also even dealt with anger issues. Remember when the sons of thunder wanted to rain down fire? And yet, God still loved them. And later on, as we can see, for instance, God restored Peter. And what did Peter go on to do? To lead the church. I Am will be with you, to lead and to guide you, just as God led Moses.

When you look through the Bible, Jesus makes several I Am statements, for instance, in the book of John. I am the bread of life. I'm the light of the world. I am the door. I am the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, the way, the truth and the life. I am also the true vine. May you take strength and be convicted to know that I am the one is to be. The one who is the bread of life, the light of the world, the door, the shepherd, resurrection in life, the way, the truth in life, the true vine, our Savior, our Redeemer is personal. Desire is to help you in every one of your problems, your situations, and also be able to express joy when something wonderful has come into your life. May you never forget that. May I Am be a source of hope, of confidence.

So. As we reflect, **where in your life has God helped lead and guide you to victory over significant challenges?** Maybe it was a cancer diagnosis, getting a promotion, dealing with a very troubled individual, reconciling with them, facing your greatest fears and overcoming them. Where has God helped to lead and guide you to victory over significant challenges?

This week, I want to challenge you. **Worship the Lord with confidence, but of reverence as well, just as Moses did, knowing that God will not abandon you in the calling that I am has given you.**

Let us pray. Father in heaven, thank you for your good, and your mercy endures forever. Forgive us, Lord, of our shortcomings, because it is only through you that all things are possible. Help us to see the wonderful, beautiful things that you are doing in our lives. And Lord, the things that are on our hearts and our minds that

plague us maybe with thoughts of doubt, with thoughts of fear, help us to overcome them and to replace them with thoughts of joy and of victories, Lord. Help us to be faithful ambassadors for you wherever we go, in Jesus' name. Everybody said, amen.

Grace and peace, everyone.