

RELUCTANCE
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EXODUS 3:4-14; 4:13-16

What can cause a person to doubt his or her ability to accomplish a challenging task? Look at these verses and let's make a list of the five excuses Moses gave God: Exodus 3:11&13; 4:1,10,&13.

Big Idea: God accomplishes His purposes through ordinary people like you and me. When He calls us to a task, He gives us the power to accomplish it. The question is when He calls, how will we respond?

In the book of Genesis we read that God raised up Joseph as Prime Minister in Egypt. Though living and working in a foreign land, the Israelites had influence at the palace. As we begin our study in Exodus, we see that time marches on, leaders pass from the scene, and things change.

Exodus 1:6–8 (ESV)

⁶ Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation.
⁷ But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them. ⁸ Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

There was a new Pharaoh in town and he put the hammer of oppression down on the Israelites. The more burdens he put on them, the more the Israelites multiplied. The king even tried to eliminate all Israelite male children, but God delivered one little boy straight to the arms of Pharaoh's daughter.

You know the story. Raised in royalty in Egypt and given the finest education, Moses still felt connected to his people. A moment of violence and the act of murder sends him into exile in

the desert. Now, he's an eighty-year-old man whose daily task is tending his father-in-law's sheep in a place of obscurity.

Moses was an ordinary man doing an ordinary job in a very ordinary place. That's usually when God comes calling. In this case God used a burning bush.

Exodus 3:4–14 (ESV)

⁴When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

⁵Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

⁶And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

⁷Then the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹ And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

- Let's pause and review. A burning bush wasn't necessarily unusual up on this mountain. **What did Moses find unusual about it (verses 2-3?)**
- These words of verse four really got my attention: "*When the Lord saw that he (Moses) turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!"*" **Any lesson there? Why did God wait to speak?**
- This verse implies that God wants our full attention before He assigns us the purpose He has for us. We might think there was no way Moses could have missed a burning

- bush. But the verse doesn't say Moses was blinded by the light or knocked to the ground. He stopped to pay attention.
- Here's a question to ponder: How often do we miss God's purpose for us because we don't slow down and pay attention when God is speaking?
 - Verse five: *"Take off your shoes, you are on holy ground in the presence of God."* The presence of God isn't something to take lightly. In the 21st century church we have become too casual about God's presence.
 - When someone approaches you about a place of service for God do you think about it as just another volunteer slot to be filled, or pray about it acknowledging His presence and power in your life?
 - Verse six: **Why was God so specific in identifying Himself?**
 - A lesson for us – when we get the idea God is calling us to a purpose; we need to make sure it's really HIM calling us to HIS purpose.
 - God said he was going to deliver His people through Moses.

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

- **What is Moses feeling in this verse? Why is he feeling this way?**
- Excuse #1 – I'm just a "nobody." **Was this false modesty? What happened to that confident forty-something who fled from Egypt?**

Steve Russo writes:

"Everybody struggles with thoughts of being a nobody— until they step out. As Moses stepped out and took risks, being courageous inside a body shivering with fear, he was able to move his people out of Egypt. His journey was not always easy, but after he fell down, he did what he needed to do. He got back up and kept walking, looking to God for strength and guidance. Think about your own future. Wouldn't you rather step out and

walk through the wilderness than stay behind and struggle with feeling like a nobody?”¹

¹² He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

- A simple truth: “*I will be with you*” is enough when God says it.
- Once we’ve determined a call is truly from God (through prayer, godly counsel, etc.), the real test of whether we trust His EMPOWERMENT is believing Him when He says, “*I will be with you,*” and believing that is enough. Moses wasn’t quite there yet.

¹³ Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”

¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I am has sent me to you.’ ”

- Excuse #2 – I don’t have all the answers. How often do we miss out on the blessing of serving because we feel we don’t know enough?
- This task wasn’t about Moses it was about God! Moses didn’t have to have all the answers he just needed to be available to God and when he needed credibility with the people he was to point them to the great “I AM.”
- Wiersbe: “*God revealed His name, Jehovah—“I AM WHO I AM” or “I was, I am, I always will be!” Our Lord Jesus added to this name in the Gospel of John where we find the seven great I AM statements (6:35; 8:12; 10:9 and 11; 11:25; 14:6; and 15:1–5). If God is “I AM,” then He is always the same, and His purposes will be fulfilled. God promised Moses that He would see to it that the work was done, in spite of the opposition of Pharaoh.*”²

- In the remainder of chapter three God gave Moses more instructions and explained how things would go. The Israelites would listen (v.18) but Pharaoh would not (v.19.)
 - So, God gave Moses some supernatural signs and wonders to get their attention. [I'm reminded of James Bond going to see "Q" to be equipped with all the high tech gadgets needed for his mission.]
 - Finally, God says in Exodus 3:20 (ESV)
- ²⁰ So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go.

- Did Moses salute and say, *"Yes sir, I'm on it?"* Not quite.
- In 4:10-11 Moses said, *"Lord, I'm not very good with words. I never have been. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled."*
- *"Then the Lord asked Moses, "Who makes a person's mouth? Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I, the Lord? ¹² Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say."³*
- So, NOW Moses saluted and marched off to do the job, right? Wrong.
- Moses resorted to the favorite excuse of anyone who feels inadequate to fulfill God's purpose for them:

Exodus 4:13–16 (ESV)

¹³ ...*"Oh, my Lord, please send someone else."*

- God was not happy. But he agreed to give Moses a mouthpiece:

¹⁴ Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses and he said, *"Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. ¹⁵ You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. ¹⁶ He shall*

Speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him.

- We know the end of the story. After all the excuses, Moses finally moved out in faith. It was a difficult task but as promised, God was with him.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- This lesson applies to every follower of Christ in some way. Either you are feeling called to do something and you are resisting; or you have said yes but you are scared; or there is a "burning bush" just around the corner of your life and soon you will have a decision to make.
- Ephesians 2:10 (ESV) tells us: "...we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand..."
- God has a job and a purpose for every one of His children. He accomplishes His purposes through ordinary people like you and me. When He calls us to a task, He gives us the power to accomplish it. The question is, when He calls, how will we respond?
- When God revealed His purpose, Moses was not checking for burning shrubbery. Moses was an ordinary man doing an ordinary job in a very ordinary place. That's usually when God comes calling to all of us.
- Are you willing to serve in the "ordinary tasks" of God's work in order to be available for God's "extraordinary" moments of calling?
- "*What if I'm not gifted or qualified?*" God will only call us to a task He's willing to equip us to accomplish. [Now it might be a little "rough" as He drags us out of our comfort zone.]
- "*What if I misunderstand and try to do something He hasn't called me to do?*" He's God. If you're down on your knees with matches trying to set the wrong bush on fire, He won't let it catch!
- Here is the truth from this passage that always applies to all of us: If God truly calls us to something, He will be with

us, will strengthen us, and will bless it. All He requires is our saying, “yes” and moving ahead in faith.

- Any bushes burning near you?

¹ Steve Russo, *Random Thoughts: Get Real with God, Others, and Yourself* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour, 2011).

Hunt, Josh. *Question Based Bible Study Guide -- Exodus Leviticus: Good Questions Have Groups Talking* (Kindle Locations 164-168). Good Question Publishing. Kindle Edition.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Ex 3:11–4:17). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ex 4:10–12). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.