

Exodus

Moses, the early years

Today the story which is the Bible takes us to what is called Exodus. Maybe this will help you start to put the story together. [Video intro to Exodus](#)

You can find this video on **The Bible Project** and hit the link for videos. **Any book of the Bible** they will have one of these over views which I feel are helpful.

God has made a promise to give Israel a homeland in Canaan, make them a great nation and bless all people through them.

The fly in the ointment is that they are enslaved to the superpower in the world of that time, Egypt. It's not like Pharaoh is going to **give up all that free labor because they explain who Yahweh is and that he promised them Canaan** as a home and ask nicely. **Tyrants** don't operate that way. **They are bullies** and Pharaoh **didn't care about what a great guy Joseph was** and how he helped Egypt during the 7-year famine. **No good deed goes unpunished with that guy.**

Is God faithful to his promise and able to save them? As the people **groaned under the oppression** of slavery and forced labor, **even those who remember the covenant** and God saving them from starvation are having a hard time seeing it as possible. **This situation is the definition of bleak.**

Even if someone could believe that God could rescue them, I'm sure they couldn't have imagined a plan. They couldn't have imagined what is going to happen in the next few chapters. **The unlikely situation has an unlikely person who will take the lead. This guy was God's choice.**

If you brought your chronological Bible, you could turn to **Exodus 3**, which is the reading for **Feb. 1.**

Moses, having been raised by Pharaoh's daughter, tries to get in touch with his Hebrew roots. While **slumming** with his enslaved brothers, he sees an Egyptian **beating a Hebrew man.** He comes to his defense and kills the Egyptian. Of course, he hides the body. **Later, he finds out that someone saw this happen** and the word is getting around. **So, he flees to the land of Midian** where he becomes a shepherd for a man named **Jethro.** He marries his daughter and **works the family business,** shepherding. Let's pick up the story in Exodus 3:1. **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.** ² 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.** ³ **"This is amazing," Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it."**

⁴ 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. ⁵ "Do not come any closer," the Lord warned. "Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. ⁶ I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." When Moses heard this, he covered his face because he was afraid to look at God. ⁷ Then the Lord told him, "I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. ⁸ So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live. ⁹ Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. Here's where the story takes a **left turn**. Not that voices from a burning bush aren't enough, but this next part isn't going to even register with Moses. ¹⁰ Now go, for **I am sending you to Pharaoh**. You must **lead my people Israel out of Egypt**." ¹¹ But Moses protested to God, "Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?" ¹² 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." So, the sign that you are with me happens after I do these two ridiculous, scary, life-threatening things. **Can't I get a sign now?** Ok, yes, there is a burning bush. ¹³ 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?" ¹⁴ God replied to Moses, "I am who I am. Say this to the people of Israel: I am has sent me to you." ¹⁵ 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 3:1-15

This name, Yahweh, connected with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will make it clear to the people that regardless of what they think of their self-proclaimed leader, this is the God of the covenant.

Remember what you heard in the video, Exodus is a continuation of Genesis. This is the same God speaking who said this to Jacob, son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham.

³ "I am God, the God of your father," the voice said. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make your family into a great nation. ⁴ I will go with you

down to Egypt, and I will bring you back again. You will die in Egypt, but Joseph will be with you to close your eyes." Genesis 46:3-4

This same God who spoke to Moses is the one who promised Jacob that if he leaves the land of promise during this famine to go down to Egypt, not the land of promise, then he will bring his ancestors back. But this time they will not be foreigners, they will be owners.

This part of the story is Moses being "called" by God. God called to him and gave him a task to complete that would demand that Moses trust him.

What could this crazy story have to do with people like us? Everything. Being called by God is God saying, "I've got something for you to do, but you're going to have to trust me because it's not always going to make sense to you." That is a definition of the life of a disciple of Jesus.

How does God call people?

God initiates contact, he comes to Moses, not the other way around.

The story of the Bible is a missionary story and God is the missionary. The Christian faith is not finding your way up a mountain where you arrive at God. It's just the opposite, God came to us. Climbing the mountain is practicing religion. Moses' calling is to a relationship.

This is a pattern that God establishes and follows throughout the Bible. Even when people are searching for truth and God, that means he is already calling them, giving them an itch that they need to scratch.

This may not sound very spiritual, but it is vital for how God calls people. He doesn't pick up the phone, because people like us know what to do for his kingdom. No, God always gets there first.

Was it Moses' idea to take the flock to Sinai? No, it wasn't. It was God's idea. He was drawing Moses to the point where he would make his calling to him more direct. It started as a vague desire to take the flocks to that place, that very important mountain. Then God gets more specific and clearer about what he is calling Moses.

If you've walked with God for a while, you can think of when this happened to you. A vague desire when pursued starts to take shape and form into God's call upon your life.

It's vital that we get the direction of the invitation or call correct because that sets up the next part...God calls people out of ordinary circumstances.

He didn't call him while he had some influence in the house of Pharaoh. God waits until he is on the run for murder and living as a shepherd.

We are always looking for positions of power, political or economic, that make us able to turn the tide of culture for God. Let's do something that will bring America back to God. Wouldn't it have been better for God to call people who have power?

Mark it down, you will see this over and over as we move through the story of the Bible, God's involvement with people. You could write it in the margin of each page that starts a new book of the bible, "look for people God calls out of ordinary circumstance."

Why not call Pharaoh himself. Well, because he wouldn't agree to give up control and he would want credit. Moses and regular people don't have a leg to stand on. Pharaoh has a throne.

The excuse people have always given is the very reason God chose them. I'm nothing special, I'm powerless, broken. Perfect, God can work with that.

People often respond with both humility and disbelief. Which can lead to resistance.

Humility is good, but disbelief is something different. Any person who thinks they could do all God asks them to do and believes that God is lucky to have him is a liability, not an asset.

In Moses' case, it was a little more dramatic...a talking burning bush! But even at that, he displayed some positive humility and some negative disbelief that created some resistance to doing what God asked.

When Moses heard this, he covered his face because he was afraid to look at God. This is humility with a healthy dose of fear. He's in the presence of God!

¹¹ But Moses protested to God, "Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?" I really can't argue with this as an initial response. Yes, it's God, but the reality of his reason for leaving Egypt and the fact that he can't see either side listening to him makes this understandable.

There are two realities at war in Moses' mind. #1. This is the God of the universe talking to me. He created everything. He is the one who originally took his ancestors from Canaan to Egypt to save them. He's no doubt heard the stories. Is any of this beyond him? #2. Moses is a criminal on the run from his home, where neither the Israelites nor the Egyptians have any reason to listen to him. As for his character, murder is a pretty serious character flaw. These two realities are at war. Only one can win. They cannot coexist.

If God is good, faithful, and all powerful, then that settles it. He will make this work. But if the focus is on Moses and all his flaws and poor track record, then this isn't going to happen.

Here's his final protest. ¹³ 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 tells him that he is Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That makes it clear that this is the God who made the unbreakable covenant with this family and is the God who sent them to Egypt. And he promised to return them to the land of promise.

Back to humility and unbelief that leads to resistance. I'm not sure where along the line of this reaction to God's command he slipped from simple humility into resisting God, because he doesn't really trust that he's got the right person. But that happens with people today that God is speaking to about their need to follow him. There's that point between humility and disbelief that happens, and we walk away.

Here's reality—God choosing you makes you the right person, period! More of that later.

Let's look at how God deals with Moses' unbelief. What is God's response to unbelief?

I will do what I am calling you to. My call to you is an invitation to join something that I am already doing and will complete.

¹² 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."

Here it is again. You get the sign that I am in it only after you step out in faith. It's not "God show me, and I'll trust you." It's God calling you saying, "Trust me and I'll show you more than you could have ever imagined."

Why trust me? ¹⁴ God replied to Moses, "I am who I am. Say this to the people of Israel: I am has sent me to you." ¹⁵ 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.

A little further into Moses' story, he tries to do what God has called him to do. He is rejected by Pharaoh and by the leadership of the people of

Israel. God wants him, but apparently neither side of the conflict **wants anything to do with him. He has failed.**

He **blames God** just as the Israelite leaders blamed him. The question is, **"why did you ever pick me for this job; both sides hate me."** Then the Lord told Moses, **"Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh. When he feels the force of my strong hand, he will let the people go. In fact, he will force them to leave his land!" Exodus 6:1**

After He makes it clear that He is the one doing something, we get a restating of the covenant between God and his people Israel. **² And God said to Moses, "I am Yahweh—'the Lord.'³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as El-Shaddai—'God Almighty'—but I did not reveal my name, Yahweh, to them. ⁴ And I reaffirmed my covenant with them. Under its terms, I promised to give them the land of Canaan, where they were living as foreigners. ⁵ You can be sure that I have heard the groans of the people of Israel, who are now slaves to the Egyptians. And I am well aware of my covenant with them.**

⁶ "Therefore, say to the people of Israel: 'I am the Lord. I will free you from your oppression and will rescue you from your slavery in Egypt. I will redeem you with a powerful arm and great acts of judgment. ⁷ I will claim you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God who has freed you from your oppression in Egypt. ⁸ I will bring you into the land I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I will give it to you as your very own possession. I am the Lord!" Exodus 6:2-8

"Moses, this isn't about who you are or aren't. This is all about who I am. I am Yahweh and I am faithful to keep my promises and there is nothing I lack for accomplishing all that I have promised."

God's name will become famous because he is not only faithful to keep his promises, but he is also the **God who redeems** and the most powerful nation in the world will have a **front row seat**. This is about **who God is**.

This is where the idea of redemption begins in the Bible. That word in Hebrew is used to describe a **slave being purchased** from her owner. **God is inviting Moses and people down through his story to join him in his plan to redeem what sin, decay, and death has owned.** Then what is redeemed gets **returned to its previous intended state**.

This is the Kingdom of God that Jesus came to announce. This is God restoring his loving rule over all things. **This is what Moses has been called to join very early in the story.** This pattern of calling continues through the rest of the Bible with Jesus calling his disciples to **drop their nets and follow him and fish for**

people. And that same pattern continues with people like us, called, invited by Jesus to join him as he restores or makes all things new.

We come back to the idea that God is doing something that he is calling, inviting someone to join him. He's always doing something. He is always redeeming. And that means unlikely, unqualified, lots of baggage people, like you and me.

I was going to state this jeopardy style in the form of a question. I decided to make it a statement of fact or reality. **God is calling you.** If you are here and you have or desire to follow Jesus, then that means he is calling you to join him in what he is already doing around you, all of **that redeeming stuff!**

Here's how he calls people and, other than the voice coming out of a burning bush, it hasn't changed much.

- He's the one who **takes the initiative.**
- He still calls people from **ordinary circumstances.**
- He knows we will **initially respond in either** humility or unbelief.
- He still says, **"I will be with you, I will do it."**

There is a general call to join Jesus before anything specific, like a what or where. Moses got that **all in one shot.** Follow me and that means lead my people out of Egypt. What kind of general call does Jesus now make to people like us? **1. To follow Jesus as his disciple.**

What does that mean? Here's how we boil down how the New Testament describes a disciple. This is **on the wall** in both of our places where we worship. **A disciple is someone who is following Jesus, being changed by Jesus and committed to Jesus' mission.**

Following means I'm trusting the direction of my life to him. This is about **obeying** all that Jesus taught.

Being changed by Jesus, is an openness to the Holy Spirit coming into us and changing our thinking, our attitudes, and our behavior. Nothing is held back. We use the word **"transformation."** The Holy Spirit **will change us progressively into someone more and more like Jesus.**

Finally, "committed to Jesus' mission" means that we will be a part of the family business, helping others learn how to follow Jesus, and loving others like Jesus would by serving.

This general calling starts to take form because it means that a disciple is... #2. To represent Jesus as his ambassador. An ambassador is a **human bridge** connecting God with people who need to experience love and forgiveness. **We are called to view ourselves differently, not as free agents, but as his representatives. This happens wherever we happen to be.**

This is how we make the kingdom present for others by going about our lives representing him by living, loving, and serving like Jesus would.

This is how the apostle Paul says it in the verse that is our true north, here at Eagle Ridge. *And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. ¹⁹ For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. ²⁰ So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" ²¹ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17-21*

Still too general, you've been following him for a while and have even started viewing yourself as his representative. Here's the next step. **#3. To uncover how God has uniquely designed you for his service.**

Again, God got there first. He has **designed you from birth** and through your experiences in life, both the good and the bad, to do some specific things in his name.

*⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. ¹⁰ For we are **God's masterpiece**. Not only designed but perfectly and beautifully. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. Ephesians 2:9-10*

We are uniquely designed for service, for these good things God has planned for us to do. **The problem is that we are born into a broken sinful world that tries to tell us what we are designed for.** The enemy tries to **affect how we see ourselves**, making it hard to see our true design. **He uses our mistakes, our fears, and our flesh, to distract us from seeing that we are masterpieces designed for God's service.**

You received a card when you arrived this morning. There are two parts; the first part applies to how you have heard God's voice thus far in our journey through the Bible. (There are **pens in the back pouches** of the seats.) I just want to get some stories of how *God* is moving in our lives. How is *God* changing the way you think, feel, and behave? Are there changes you have made because you believe that is what it means for you to follow Jesus?

The second part applies to this last challenge to uncover or discover how *God* has designed you to serve. **Tammy Naffie is our director of mobilization.** That is exactly how it sounds. She helps people walk through some assessments and reflect with you to take steps toward **how God has designed you to serve.** **This is a way of uncovering your calling that has been covered by misunderstanding, cultural noise, the enemies lies, and sin.** Tammy will walk you through this

process. **I have done this myself** and it helped me see my calling even more clearly after 30 years of ministry.