



2019 YEAR OF SCRIPTURE
Monthly Devotions
January 2019

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Dear Church Council Members,

We all have our favorite Bible Stories. Tonight, I hope you'll enjoy diving into one of mine. It's the story of Moses...and the burning bush...and especially how reluctant he was to be the leader God wanted.

The story is found in Exodus, chapters 3 and 4. I'm hoping you've all had a chance to read these two chapters on your own prior to tonight's meeting. But if not, here's a quick summary before we dive right in to a few key sections.

Briefly, Moses was born an Israelite at a time when the Egyptian Pharaoh was killing off all the babies under two-years of age. Thankfully his mother and sister couldn't bear to see him perish. So, they hid him for a while and then eventually found a creative way to present him to one of Pharaoh's daughters who had pity on him and raised him in her own home. But as he got older, knowing his heritage, he had a penchant for justice for his own people—so much so that at one point he actually killed an Egyptian for mistreating a fellow Israelite. As you can imagine, that didn't go over well in Egypt and so Moses had to escape Egypt and carve out a new life for himself elsewhere.

Eventually he married and started tending sheep for his father-in-law. That's when he came across this burning bush from which God speaks (beginning of Exodus, chapter 3).

So, there are a couple of things going on here that I find fascinating. The first is in verses 7 and 8 of chapter 3. To get into this, could I please ask for a volunteer to read verse 7 of Exodus chapter 3 (and the first part of verse 8—before all the big names) right now?

[pause while the person reads the verse].

Thanks for reading. I love the fact that God says, "I KNOW their sufferings...and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians..." I love the fact that God can identify with the plight of people who suffer. This is not the God of Bette Middler's "From a Distance" song. This is a God that sees up close and personal what's going on. It's like a company CEO who actually gets out of the plush office and checks out first-hand what his or her workers are dealing with on the factory floor.

I'm pretty sure Moses liked this part too. After all, he was an Israelite too and, like them, had been longing for God to come down and deliver them.

But then we get to the big-time surprise in verse 10! Could one of you please volunteer to read verse 10 from chapter 3 right now?



[pause while the person reads the verse]

Wow, God's way of delivering is to ask Moses to do it! Can you imagine being Moses at this point? His head must have been spinning. I can imagine Moses saying something along the lines of, "WAIT a minute! I thought YOU were going to deliver them!!!! Hold on here!!!!"

If Moses said that, Scripture doesn't record it. BUT, and this is big, what Moses DID offer was a bunch of excuses! FIVE of them! And that's the 2nd part of the story that I find fascinating. Let's check out those excuses right now, starting with chapter 3, verse 11.

Excuse #1 (chapter 3, verse 11)

"Who am I that I should Go to Pharaoh...."

This is the classic "I'm not good enough" excuse. You know...not enough knowledge, experience, or notoriety to get the job done. Have you ever used that one yourself? I have too. But God responds in verse 12 with re-assurance. God will be with him.

Excuse #2 (chapter 3, verse 13)

If "they ask me, 'what is his name?' what shall I say to them?"

This excuse is Moses' attempt to say that he and God are not all that close. He can't represent someone he barely even knows. But of course, in verse 14 God reveals God's name, which interestingly enough is not a noun but rather, a verb. "I am who I am."

Excuse #3 (chapter 4, verse 1)

"but suppose they do not believe me..."

In this excuse Moses claims to lack the ability of persuasion. So, God gives him that gift in the form of some supernatural kinds of powers. Kryptonite kind of stuff. That should take care of that but, well, no. Instead we find:

Excuse # 4 (chapter 4, verse 10)

"O my Lord, I have never been eloquent...."

In this excuse Moses claims to lack even basic communication skills. But God promises to be with his mouth and teach him what to speak.

Excuse #5 (chapter 4, verse 13)

"O, my Lord, please send someone else!"



This is not so much an excuse but, rather, what Moses probably wanted to say all along. The excuses were just feeble rationalizations for the deeper truth...Moses simply didn't want to do what God wanted him to do! Moses wanted someone else to do it!

At this point God actually gets a little angry and brings Moses' brother Aaron (and sister Miriam) in on the adventure too. But not without keeping Moses' role very much in play.

I love this story because it reminds me that the kinds of people that God uses are often very ordinary and, at times, even cowardly. When we watch "The Ten Commandments" movie on TV we often see Moses portrayed as a larger than life figure, which is great if you want to sell movie tickets and commercials for advertising. But what we've just read in the Bible paints a more realistic picture. Moses was a person on the run, just trying to make it through life when he is suddenly called to a higher purpose. Did he jump at the chance? Not so much. But God used him anyhow. And God can use you too...as leaders...in this congregation...right now...this very night...Just make sure your actions and decisions are guided by the kind rescuing and redeeming love that God has for all of us!

[Note: I hope you found this helpful. Now would be a good time to ask for prayer requests and then ask for a volunteer to pray, thanking God for the story of Moses, lifting up in general terms all of the prayer concerns that have been mentioned, and for the mission of your church as a whole and for the rest of the meeting to follow.]

