



Moses Listens to God in the Burning Bush

Exodus 2:11 - 4:31



This week we see the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob act because of His compassion for His chosen people. God calls Moses to be used in a mighty way. Moses listens to God and becomes part of the promise God made so many years before. Listen to the heart of God as He promises never to leave His humble servant.

Day #1: Moses' People

Moses was raised in the palace of Pharaoh, as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. We are not told when Moses learned that he was an Israelite (also called Hebrew). Perhaps his birth family told him when he was a young boy, or perhaps he found out when he was older. Moses must have thought a great deal about his fellow Hebrews - how they were treated so harshly, while he lived in a luxurious palace. When Moses was 40 years old (Acts 7:23), he went out among his people to see the way they were being mistreated.



When Moses had grown up, he went out to visit his people, the Israelites, and he saw how hard they were forced to work. During his visit, he saw an Egyptian beating one of the Hebrew slaves. After looking around to make sure no one was watching, Moses killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. - Exodus 2:11-12

Of course, we know that murder is wrong. In this case, Moses was defending the life of his fellow Hebrew. The original Greek wording of this action in Acts 7:24 tells us that Moses "acted rightly" and "did justice" when he defended this man. This is similar to how a police officer might have to shoot a criminal to save an innocent person's life. Moses went out the next day and was disturbed to see two Hebrew men fighting with each other.

The next day Moses went out again. He saw two Hebrew men fighting. He asked the one who had started the fight a question. He said, "Why are you hitting another Hebrew man?"

The man said, "Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking about killing me as you killed the Egyptian?"

Then Moses became afraid. He thought, "People must have heard about what I did." - Exodus 2:13-14

Moses had looked around to make sure that no one would see him defend the slave. But someone did see - more than likely, it was the slave himself! It was big news that Pharaoh's adopted grandson would defend a Hebrew slave, and the news traveled quickly. Pharaoh found out and he was angry! Pharaoh was the one who ordered that the Hebrews become slaves in the first place. He had taken Moses in as his grandson and it must have seemed Moses was turning his back on Pharaoh and the people of Egypt when he killed one of them. Pharaoh tried to kill Moses. Moses fled to live in the land of Midian.



Moses felt compassion for God's people who were suffering. Today, it is against the law to worship God in many countries. People all over the world suffer for their belief in God. We who are Christians are instructed to remember them. We should pray often for our spiritual brothers and sisters. Hebrews 13:3 tells us, "Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering."

Day #2: The Burning Bush

When Moses fled to Midian, he came to a well. There he found seven sisters trying to get water for their sheep. Some unkind shepherds came along and drove the young woman away. Once again, Moses came to the rescue. He came to the sisters' aid and watered their flocks. When their father heard about what Moses did, he invited Moses to dinner. Moses stayed in Midian and married one of the girls, named Zipporah.

It is interesting that Moses did not choose a wife while he lived in Egypt as an Egyptian. Surely, at age 40, he had every opportunity to marry *any* Egyptian woman he wanted - since he was the grandson of Pharaoh. But Moses did not choose the things around him, instead he set himself apart as one of God's people (Hebrews 11:25).

Moses and Zipporah had two sons (Acts 7:29). Moses named his first son Gershom which meant, "foreigner," because Moses felt he was a foreigner in the land of Midian. Moses had already fled from the land of Egypt. Moses may have felt he didn't fit in anywhere. But he was right where he needed to be. God was at work, and God has perfect timing!

Moses became a shepherd in Midian. Forty years passed. One day Moses was tending sheep in the desert, near Mt. Sinai. He saw a strange sight. A bush was on fire, but it was not burning up. Moses went to take a closer look.



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."

"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." 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. - Exodus 3:4-6

Moses had a proper reverence and awe of God. Because God is perfect and holy, and man is not, Moses was rightly afraid to look at God (Genesis 32:30, Exodus 33:20).

God was about to reveal an amazing plan to Moses. Moses had thought he would be used by God to rescue the Israelites forty years earlier (Acts 7:25), but instead they rejected him (Acts 7:27). It took four decades for the timing to be right. The Pharaoh that had been ruling the land had died, and God was listening to the cries of His enslaved people (Exodus 2:23-24).



It is often so hard for us to wait for an answer to prayer, or want to be used by God. Remember Moses was in a foreign desert land for forty years. Always remember that God has perfect timing.

Day #3: Too Big for Moses

If you had to describe God, what words would you use? When God called out to Moses from the burning bush, how did God describe Himself?



He said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." - Exodus 3:6

God could have said, "I am the God who spoke the whole universe into existence," or, "I am the God who can do all miracles." Certainly, those descriptions are true and accurate. But God was calling attention to something very specific when he described Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

God had made covenant - a binding promise - to Abraham (Genesis 12:2-3) which carried down through his son Isaac (Genesis 19:19) and his

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grandson Jacob (Genesis 27:27-29; 32:28-29). God promised to make Abraham into a great nation, bless him, make his name great, bless those who blessed him, curse those who cursed him, and bless everyone on earth through him. God promised to give Abraham a son even though he was very old (Genesis 15:4). And this son would be the first of thousands of offspring for Abraham (Genesis 15:5). God is the ultimate promise keeper! He makes better promises than we can even imagine. Abraham and his wife always wanted a child, but they probably never dreamed of the line of offspring God had in store. And, when God makes a promise, He has to keep it! God was about to tell Moses his part in the promise. Would Moses listen and obey?

God told Moses He had seen the misery and heard the cries of His people in Egypt. God had compassion on them and He was about to save them.

So I have come down to save them from the Egyptians. I will bring them up out of that land. I will bring them into a good land. It has a lot of room. It is a land that has plenty of milk and honey. - Exodus 3:8a

So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh. I want you to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. They are my people. - Exodus 3:10

This was exciting and long-awaited news! God was going to bring His people out of slavery and give them the land that he had promised to Abraham (Genesis 3:14-15). But Moses had doubts that he could do what God was asking him to do.

But Moses spoke to God. "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" he said. "Who am I that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" - Exodus 3:11

Listen closely to God's reply to his doubting servant. *God said, "I will be with you." (Exodus 3:12a)*

Was the job too big for Moses? YES! Was the job too big for God? NO! God promised Moses that He would be with him.

 When we focus on ourselves, we become frightened and overwhelmed. Keep your focus on our all mighty God. Nothing is too great for Him to accomplish. He promises to be with His children. He will never leave us nor desert us (Deuteronomy 31:8). In Matthew 28:20, Jesus promises, "And you can be sure that I am always with you, to the very end of the age."

Day #4: Back to Egypt

Moses not only doubted his ability to confront the new Pharaoh, he wondered if the Hebrew people would even believe that God had sent him. When Moses tried to help them by defending one of them forty years before, he was rejected.

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?"

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.'" - Exodus 3:13-14

I AM is one of God's names. **I AM** may seem like an unusual name to us, but it is the most powerful name of all! **I AM** means that God is the only true God. The Egyptians worshipped many false gods. **I AM** is the God who always was and always will be. There is no other god besides **I AM**. God told Moses, "The elders of Israel will listen to you." (Exodus 3:18)

Moses questioned God further. He asked God what he should do if the Israelites did not believe God sent him. Moses had a staff in his hand.

 *The Lord said, "Throw it on the ground."*

So Moses threw it on the ground. It turned into a snake. He ran away from it. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Reach your hand out. Take the snake by the tail." So he reached out and grabbed hold of the snake. It turned back into a staff in his hand.

The Lord said, "When they see this miraculous sign, they will believe that I appeared to you. I am the God of their fathers. I am the God of Abraham. I am the God of Isaac. And I am the God of Jacob." - Exodus 4:3-5

God showed Moses another miracle. He told Moses to put his hand inside his cloak. When Moses pulled his hand out, it was covered with the disease of

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leprosy. He put it back inside his cloak and it returned to normal. God told Moses if the people still did not believe, he should take some water from the Nile River and pour it on the ground. It would turn to blood.

Even after seeing these miracles, Moses continued to focus on his own abilities instead of the power of God. He told God he was not a good speaker, even though Acts 7:22 describes Moses as a powerful speaker because he was well educated in Egypt. Moses did not feel adequate for the job and begged God to send someone else to lead the Israelites. The Lord became angry, but He told Moses He would allow his brother, Aaron, to go with him and speak for him. (Later in this story, we will see that Moses should have trusted God and spoke for himself.) So Moses took his family and left Midian. God sent Aaron to meet him and together they did what God had instructed.

Moses and Aaron gathered all of the elders of Israel together. Aaron told them everything the Lord had said to Moses. He also did the miracles in the sight of the people. And they believed. They heard that the Lord was concerned about them. He had seen their suffering. So they bowed down and worshiped Him. - Exodus 4:29-31

 Trust that you can rely on God. When you are weak in a certain area, that is when He shows Himself the strongest. God promises, "My grace is all you need. My power is strongest when you are weak." - 2 Corinthians 12:9

Day #5: Humble Character

Moses had clearly broken all ties with his Egyptian family. He gave up all the rights he had as Pharaoh's grandson when he disobeyed Pharaoh's command and defended a Hebrew slave. When he returned to Egypt, it was not as a member of the royal family, but as a member of the Hebrew race. And the Hebrews were slaves.

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. - Hebrews 11:24-25

What "pleasures of sin" did Moses refuse to be a part of? Riches given to Pharaoh that were earned by the sweat of slaves, power taken by force, and worshipping the many false gods of the Egyptians. Moses showed incredible humility to refuse the worldly things around him so that he could be counted among God's people. How many people would *choose* to give up a palace, riches, and power to become a slave? The Bible says he did this because, by faith, he was looking ahead to his reward.

 *He (Moses) thought it was better to suffer for the sake of the Messiah than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to the great reward that God would give him. - Hebrews 11:26*

Moses turned away from the pleasures at hand, to suffer because there was something better ahead. Compare Moses' actions and attitudes to those of Jesus:

Let us keep looking to Jesus. He is the author of faith. He also makes it perfect. He paid no attention to the shame of the cross. He suffered there because of the joy he was looking forward to. - Hebrews 12:2a

Moses, like Jesus, knew that the rewards of doing God's will far outweigh anything this world has to offer. It is true humility to give up luxury, power, and prestige, and lay it at the feet of God. It should not surprise us that the Bible describes Moses as, "a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth." (Numbers 12:3) Even more so, we see the picture of perfect humility in Jesus. He left the very throne of heaven to come to earth and die for the people He created (Philippians 2:5-8). Rest assured, God promises there is great reward for those who humble themselves (Luke 14:11).

 Are you willing to give up things around you for the sake of the reward ahead of you? This might mean spending less time with TV or video games in order to spend time in God's Word. It might mean spending time with someone you would not ordinarily choose to hang around with, because you know they need to hear God's truth. Discuss what you might be asked to give up in your life.