# Getting Started

**(Hebrews 11:24-26, Exodus 3-4)**

Today I want to share with you, certainly one of the most fascinating characters in history, definitely one of the most important, and his name is Moses. There’s no doubt that Moses’ life is an interesting story but it’s so much more than a story, it’s history. And so, as we look closer at the events of his life, there are just so many lessons to be learned, and lessons that still have meaning today, because history has a tendency to repeat itself.

We’re going to talk about “Getting Started” and we’re going to examine certain events in Moses life, some highlights, and some of the turning points, and then we’ll see what God has to say to us through them. It’s important that we have eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to understand, because the Bible tells us,

“These things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did” (1 Corinthians 10:6).

In other words, these things happened to Moses for a reason, and one of those reasons is so that God can teach us more about himself and his plan and purpose for us.

As we look at the calling that God had placed on Moses’ life, we’ll see that God had big plans for Moses, but I want you to realize that God also has big plans for you. And just as he used Moses in a great way, he wants to use you in a great way too. And so, today I want to encourage you to start off this year differently, because I truly believe that you’re never going to effectively finish something that you don’t start with your eyes on the goal, the end, or the finish line. I want to spur you on, motivating you from God’s Word as we look at Moses, a man whom God had called, but who had a really hard time “Getting Started”.

As we open the Scriptures, we’re going to look at his life and see how he can encourage us to begin something that God has called us to do as well. This is so important, because I believe that everybody has been called to something and yet many of us have a hard time “Getting Started”. You know, maybe for you, it’s trying to lose some weight and get healthy? Or maybe you’re determined to practice some spiritual disciplines like consistent times of prayer, Bible reading, or generous giving? Maybe you want to start something new, like a new ministry, a new job, or a new relationship? But whatever it is, we want to assure that unlike 2017, that you have success “Getting Started” in 2018. And so, if you’ve been stuck in the past, you need to have a clear vision of where you want to end up so that you can see clearly where you need to begin and the most effective path to travel.

You see, as we look at the life of Moses, he always had a sense of God’s call on his life, but it took him some time to determine exactly how he was to fulfill it. You could say, he backed out of the driveway, but then spent decades circling the cul-de-sac. He just couldn’t quite make it out to the road, because he didn’t have a clear vision of where he wanted to go. The lesson Moses eventually learned was that a person becomes most effective in life and in ministry once they decide to do God’s will God’s way.

Now before we look at the life of Moses, we’re going to fast forward to the very end of his life. We’re going to skip past the New Year’s resolutions and move directly to the memorial service. We’re going to overlook the troubles and trials and go straight to the Hall of Faith. We’re going to go to the end of Moses life and look at one of the most popular chapters of Scripture. You know, if there was ever a special edition, “Greatest Hits of the Bible,” there would be certain passages of Scripture just like this one. Psalm chapter 23 would be there, first Corinthians chapter 13, and certainly Hebrews chapter 11 would be there.

Hebrews chapter 11 is called the Hall of Faith, because the author mentions 16 people by name who exemplified a life of faith. He even says that there are many more, but he doesn’t have time to mention them all. And though, he lists some great people of faith, people who did great things, I want you to know that everyone he mentions was a normal, average human being, just as weak and flawed as you and me. And so, when they mention Moses in Hebrews chapter 11, what that means is that we have the same potential. Verse 24 tells us,

“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. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward” (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Isn’t that a great tribute to Moses? He was faithful, because he was looking ahead to his reward, but that’s not where Moses began. And so, I want to rewind a little bit and give you some context so that you understand a little bit more about him.

First of all, when Moses was born, his people were called the Hebrews and later they were called the Israelites, but at this time they were slaves in Egypt. The Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, felt threatened by the growing number of Hebrews so he ordered that all the newborn baby boys should be murdered. However, Moses’ mother couldn’t bear to see him put to death, so she hid his birth, and in a desperate attempt to spare his life she placed him in a basket and put him in the Nile River hoping and praying that somehow, someway, that God would protect him and guide him to safety. God answered her prayer and Moses was discovered in the Nile by the Pharaoh’s daughter who took him and raised him as her very own.

As we follow the story you can see God’s hand preparing Moses from the very beginning. Even though he was born a Hebrew slave, God worked it out so that he would be raised in the house of Pharaoh and educated in the wisdom of the Egyptians. The Bible records the Hebrew tradition regarding the early years of Moses as the martyr Stephen testifies in Acts chapter 7 and verse 20,

"At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for in his father's house. When he was placed outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action” (Acts 7:20-22).

Interestingly enough, from an early age Moses identified with his people, and set about trying to rescue them from the torment of their Egyptian masters. The Bible says in verse 24, that one day,

“He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not” (Acts 7:24-25).

As a matter of fact, this event forced Moses to flee the country, and he went into hiding as a shepherd of flocks in the land of Midian. It would appear that his dream to save the Hebrew people had gone up in smoke. It seemed as if he’d been forgotten by God, that he’d failed and become nothing more than a could’ve been, but God didn’t forget about Moses and he didn’t forget about the plight of the people. As a matter of fact, during this time, these 40 years as a sheepherder was really a time of character building in Moses’ personal life. Some important changes were taking place in Moses, but God was just getting started, waiting for that day when he could use Moses in a greater way.

As we’re “Getting Started” I want you to recognize and acknowledge as your baseline that God can use the events of your life as points of preparation for the calling that he has given you. No matter what family you were born into, what geographic area, or what events both good or bad, all of these are part of the process of preparation. God can and will use the events of your life, even the mistakes and tragedies that are beyond your control, to launch your life in such a way as to bring him glory. So, no matter what mistakes you’ve made, no matter what painful things you’ve experienced in your past, God is using this time to prepare you for the work he’s called you to do and your entire life has been leading you toward its fulfillment.

This is the point where we’re going to pick up today as we transition into 2018. It’s in that time of waiting, we know where Moses ended, but now we’re going to find the motivation to live a life of faith. We’re talking about “Getting Started” and we’re setting the stage to see God do great things in our lives. You see, we have the advantage of being able to look back on Moses’ life and understand that these things will happen, that there are seasons of life, and that there are times of waiting, but it’s absolutely essential that we start where we are; knowing that number one, God is with us. That’s what he said.

## ****1. I Am With You****

If you’re following along in your Bible, take a look at Exodus chapter 3. Here we find Moses who’d lived 40 years in Egypt in Pharaoh’s household before fleeing for his life. Now he’s lived 40 more years out in the wilderness shepherding sheep when all of a sudden, one day, he has an unusual experience. He observes this bush burning in the distance, it continues to burn, it doesn’t consume itself, it’s unusual and so Moses goes over to check it out. The Bible says in verse four,

“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” (Exodus 3:4).

And so, God introduces himself and he and Moses have this dialogue at the burning bush. In verse seven the Lord said,

“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. 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. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:7-10).

The bush continues to burn and Moses is like, just wait a minute, hold on; verse 11,

"Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:11)?

He says, “But Lord, I killed a man 40 years ago, I’m a wanted man and I’m pretty sure my picture is still hanging in the post office! They’re going to execute me if I go back.” But God says something to Moses that I believe he would say to you and me today, verse 12,

“And God said, "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 will worship God on this mountain" (Exodus 3:12).

We can’t miss the power of that statement. You see, many of us have discredited ourselves, disallowing or reducing what God can do through us because of our past mistakes, but we need to understand that just like God said to Moses, God says to you today, “I am with you.” And today, if you wouldn’t harden your heart, but if you’d receive that, understanding who’s with you, you’d have the confidence to do things that you wouldn’t do otherwise.

You see, we’ve got to remember who is with us, no matter what you’re facing, no matter what your past, no matter what thing you’ve come up against, because God says, “When I call you, you need to understand that I am with you, and I am able to do immeasurably more than you’d ever imagine.” And so, it doesn’t matter what happened in the past, you may have experienced loss in 2017, but God says to you today, “I am with you. We’re going to do it together, we’re going to make it, because I’ve got so much more for you.” Moses learned that God was with him and today God’s got something he wants to do in you and through you. It doesn’t matter where you are, because you know who you’re with. God said, “I am with you.” And then number two, you’re going to use what you’ve got.

## ****2. Use What You’ve Got****

In spite of God’s promise to be with him, Moses is uncertain, he’s lacking confidence, and so he asked God in chapter 4,

“Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The Lord did not appear to you'?" Then the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" "A staff," he replied” (Exodus 4:1-2).

Now I want to make sure that you don’t miss this, because this wasn’t something extraordinary, this was simply what Moses had in his hand. And he had a staff in his hand because he was a shepherd. This wasn’t some kind of special gift that he had brought to offer to God and yet God’s going to take that staff, an ordinary shepherd’s staff, and do extraordinary things with it. Look with me at verse three.

“The Lord said, "Throw it on the ground." Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. Then the Lord said to him, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail." So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand. "This," said the Lord, "is so that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers — the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob — has appeared to you" (Exodus 4:3-5).

And so, God’s going to take that staff, he’s going to use what Moses had in his hand to perform miracle after miracle. Moses struck the water of the Nile and it turned to blood. He stretched out his staff and frogs covered the land. He struck the dust with his staff and gnats canvassed Egypt. Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky and the Lord sent thunder and hail like never was experienced before. He stretched out his staff and locusts invaded all of Egypt. He touched the Red Sea with his staff and it parted allowing him and his people to escape from bondage. He struck a rock with his staff in the wilderness and water flowed out of it for the people to drink. Moses took this old ordinary staff and held it above his head as God crushed their enemies in front of them. Time and time again, God told Moses to “use what you’ve got” and it’s amazing as we step out in faith taking that thing that seems so ordinary, that God would take that very thing and do extraordinary things through it. And yet, that’s exactly what God does, he uses what you have.

What is it that you have in your hand today? We all have something. You know, some of you can build things, some of you can fix things, some of you can paint, some of you can cook, some of you enjoy hanging out with kids, and all of these things, though just ordinary things in our hands, when given to God produce extraordinary results. God asked Moses, “What is that in your hand?” And today, I’m believing that he’s asking the same thing of you. You see, we’re just “Getting Started” because we know who we’re with, or I should say who’s with us, and we’re going to use what we have, because that’s exactly what God uses. And then, number three, we’ll have confidence to get started, to do what we can, because God has said, “I will help you.”

## ****3. I Will Help You****

Once again, Moses has another excuse, he gives another reason why he can’t get started. Kind of like my children do when it’s bedtime. Maybe you’ve noticed how when it’s time to go to bed they always have a million reasons why not? My son, Jeremy, in particular won’t stay in bed. I put him to bed, I pray with his sister, and no sooner do I come out of her room then he has every excuse in the world why he’s up again. You know, he may be dead tired, but the moment you tell him it’s time for bed it’s like giving him a shot of espresso. All of a sudden, he needs to clean his room, wants a drink of water, maybe put a Band-Aid on his toe, or he’s scared of the dark. It’s really amazing and in the same way, in verse 10, Moses said,

“Moses said to the Lord, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue."  The Lord said to him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say" (Exodus 4:10-12).

And you can sense the stern fatherly tone in God’s words as Moses continues to postpone “Getting Started” and God tells him “Now go!” “Just go! Get back in bed, Jeremy,” “Get started Moses,” and maybe for some of you God needs to take his size 14 boot and put it on your backside to get you moving in 2018. You’ve got to get started, you’ve got to get moving, and God’s going to help you. But you’ve got to start where you are, and you’ve got to do what you can do.

God says, “Now go, Moses! Just go, do what you can, I will help you and I will teach you along the way.” Isn’t that such grace? God tells Moses not to worry, just go, because I’m going to teach you as you go. You see, we don’t need to have all the directions, all the resources, or all the training, because many of us are educated far beyond our level of obedience. Like Moses, we don’t need to be fully equipped and resourced before we ever take a step toward Egypt. We simply need to get going, to use what we’ve got, to do what we can, all the while knowing that God’s going to fill in the gaps.

As we begin this New Year, it’s about “Getting Started”. It’s just about doing something, anything besides sitting on the couch. You see, God has promised to be with you, he takes that ordinary thing in your hand and uses it for extraordinary purposes, and so we just need to do what we can knowing that God will help us. God performs the miraculous through ordinary people just like you and I, but we’re never going to finish something that we don’t start.

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