Moses: Following God into The Unknown - Part 1

# Exodus 2-4

Are you ready? If you’re ready put it there in the chat, let us know, because today we’re beginning a series entitled “Following God into the Unknown” looking at the life of Moses. And he was a man who would lead millions of people, he would sit before kings and shake the nations, but he didn’t start out so well. The canvas of his life was filled with obstacles and failures. In fact, my prayer is that you are encouraged in spite of the difficulties, the hard times, and the problems that you are facing today, realizing that none of that can keep you from your calling in Christ Jesus.

Now, I know that things are so much different today and you may feel a little bit disoriented because all of our routines have been disrupted, events are canceled, activities are postponed, and so many people are hurting because of the economy. And it would be so easy for me just to say, “Trust in the Lord and everything will be okay,” but when you don’t have a job, you’ve got children at home to feed, and you’ve got bills to pay, trusting the Lord become so much more difficult. And so, what I want to encourage you to do today is to do what David did when he was worried, life was difficult, and he was feeling all alone.

The Bible tells us that David was a man after God’s own heart and when he was stressed out, when he was surrounded by his enemies, what he would do is get into the Word of God. In first Samuel, chapter 30, we read that David was greatly distressed, because in verse six it tells us,

*“…the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the Lord his God. Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod." Abiathar brought it to him and David inquired of the Lord…” (1 Samuel 30:6-8).*

Praying, seeking a word from the Lord, reading the Word of God, and spending time in his presence brings peace when you feel anxious, alone, or fearful. David inquired of the Lord and we know from the Psalms that he made a regular practice of meditating on the Word of God. This is really practical advice when you’re following God into the unknown, this is something Moses knew and countless believers through the ages have found comfort in the pages of Scripture. In fact, there are so many great promises in the Bible and you and I can stand on the Word of God, because the situation you are in today doesn’t define you, it’s God’s word that defines who you are and what you are.

We stand on the Word of God and the Bible says in Romans chapter 3,

*“Let God be true and every man a liar” (Romans 3:4).*

And so, today it’s the Word of God that encourages us, the Spirit of the living God that comforts us, and that is such good news because many of us like Moses didn’t have a good start in life. Some of you, your childhood may have had a few high points, but for the most part it was just so much less. Maybe you had people walk out of your life, people who took advantage of you or abused you, people said that you would fail or that you would never make it. You may have grown up listening to all of these voices that told you what you can’t do, who you can’t be, or what you can’t have, but it’s the Word of God that tells you that,

*“You…are from God and have overcome…because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).*

We need to be reminded of this. You need to know that you are from God, you have overcome them, and that the one who is in you is greater than your spiritual enemy.

Now, I’m telling you all that as an introduction, because as we look at the life of Moses, he was just really messed up. The man who is the main character, the backbone for this series; the man who wrote the majority of the Bible was a man whose life was a mess. In fact, when he was born, he was hidden for three months, he was kept out of sight, because the Pharaoh had issued a decree saying,

*“Every boy that is born you must throw into the Nile…" (Exodus 1:22).*

You see, the Israelites had become too numerous and the Pharaoh was concerned about a rebellion, and so he determined to control their population by killing all the baby boys. But the Bible tells us that Moses’ mother kept him hidden, and so when he was born, in those formative years of Moses life, when he should’ve been loved and nurtured the most, he wasn’t even held or played with because he was hidden.

With that kind of childhood, it’s hard to imagine Moses becoming the greatest leader of the Old Testament. With that kind of background, it’s hard to believe that he would be entrusted with the very words of God. But even though his location was hidden, his identity was hidden, his destiny could not be hidden. And so, when Moses mother could not hide him any longer, Exodus chapter 2 tells us,

*“She got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile” (Exodus 2:3).*

Moses was just three months old when he was abandoned, put in a basket and left to float down the river with the snakes and crocodiles, but God’s hand was upon him. One day the Pharaoh’s daughter went down to the Nile to bathe and the Bible says,

*“She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to get it. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying and she felt sorry for him” (Exodus 2:5-6).*

Moses who had been hidden and abandoned as an infant, was protected by the sovereign grace of God, and was rescued from the perils of the Nile River. The Bible says in verse 10,

*“He became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water” (Exodus 2:10).*

As his name suggests, Moses was drawn out of the water, a Hebrew by birth, but adopted according to God’s grace, becoming a son of Egypt by circumstance. Not only was he drawn out of the water, but he was drawn out of his culture, and so as Moses is trying to sort out his identity, surrounded by his own people, but growing up in the Pharaoh’s house, he soon finds himself in trouble.

One day, after Moses had grown up, verse 11 tells us,

*“He went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand” (Exodus 2:11-12).*

Now, it’s not that Moses was a bad guy, he was just confused, because he didn’t really know who he was. And so, as he’s trying to figure all that out, unleashing some vigilante justice, he takes matters into his own hands. It’s almost as if he had a sense of his destiny, but he just didn’t know what that looked like or how that was going to happen. Unfortunately, verse 15 says that,

*“When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian…” (Exodus 2:15).*

The Pharaoh wouldn’t allow any such duplicity in his house and suddenly Moses found himself running from the Pharaoh. He flees from Egypt as an outlaw, a murderer, and before long he runs into a group of Midianites. There was a priest of Midian who had seven daughters and verse 16 says,

*“They came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's flock. Some shepherds came along and drove them away, but Moses got up and came to their rescue and watered their flock” (Exodus 2:16-17).*

You could say, Moses had a Messiah complex or maybe the white night syndrome, because he’s already on the run for attempting to rescue one of his people from Egyptian brutality. Now, as soon as he arrives in Midian, he comes to the rescue of these seven daughters, and so even at 40 years old God was still drawing things out of him, God was still working on him.

When the girls returned to the father, verse 18 says,

*“He asked them, "Why have you returned so early today?" They answered, "An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock" (Exodus 2:18-19).*

Their father welcomed Moses to stay with them and Moses tried to make a new life for himself among the Midianites because they didn’t know who he was. And so he spent 40 years with them working as a shepherd, trying to figure things out, because he didn’t know who he was either. And so, now it’s been 80 years and Moses is tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law when he saw a bush that was on fire but didn’t burn up. The Bible says he went over to look at this strange sight and verse four says,

*“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” (Exodus 3:4-5).*

Moses is still trying to figure things out when he has this encounter with God. He’s 80 years old, but God is still fathering him, and he’s about to unfold his destiny before him. In verse six, God 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. 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” (Exodus 3:6-7).*

God had heard the cries of his people, he’d seen their misery and the oppression, and so he says in verse 10,

*“Now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:10).*

Suddenly, it’s all unfolding before Moses, he had saved one of his own people from a cruel Egyptian taskmaster, he rescued the seven daughters from the shepherds in Midian, and now God was telling him to undertake this seemingly impossible rescue mission. God gave this assignment to a man who was running and hiding, to a man who was confused and insecure, to someone who had so much he hadn’t even worked out yet. And Moses replies to God saying,

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

Some of you may be listening and you’re thinking the same thing, “Who am I?” Because you’re still trying to figure out, and that’s okay, because it takes a long time to figure life out. And I’ll tell you, it’s okay if you feel unworthy, if you’re feeling small inside, if you know that there is so much that you haven’t worked out yet, because that doesn’t reflect the reality of your calling.

Moses was like this is unbelievable, “Who am I” and then he asked a second question in verse 13,

*“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?" (Exodus 3:13)*

God replied in verse 14,

*“I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you…. The Lord, the God of your fathers — the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob — has sent me to you” (Exodus 3:14-15).*

Still not satisfied, Moses continues to make excuses; first it’s who am I, then it’s who are you, and then he says in chapter 4, verse one:

*“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. The Lord said, "Throw it on the ground." Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it” (Exodus 4:1-3).*

God is about to teach Moses a very important lesson, because if he keeps running from everything, he’s going to run from responsibility, and he will never be who God called him to be. And so he says, “Stop running from stuff that scares you and especially those things that I gave you.” Then, the Lord said to him in verse four,

*“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” (Exodus 4:4).*

You see, God wants to use people, to use what is in your hand, and so he says reach out and take it in your hand. He is teaching all of us a lesson, because some of us have a limited perception of what is in our hand. Some of you may think it’s just a stick, but God wants to show you the potential of what is in your hand.

Moses needs to get a hold of this, he needs to understand, because when he gets down to the Red Sea he’s going to have to use that same stick to part the Sea. He needs to know what he has, understanding the potential, because the reality is that he has more than he thinks he has and he can do more than he thinks he can do. And so, God tells him to reach out and take hold of it. He says, you’re going to have to grab it terrified, anxious, and concerned. You’re going to have to take it by faith, you’re going to have to grab something you’ve been running from, you’re going to have to reach out and take hold of it, because you’ll never overcome what you won’t confront.

“This” said the Lord, in verse five,

*"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.” Then the Lord said, "Put your hand inside your cloak." So Moses put his hand into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was leprous, like snow” (Exodus 4:5-6).*

In other words, God is saying, we’ve got some more work to do, because they’re not going to believe you until you do. And so, God was showing Moses that he is sovereign over every situation. He says, “Stick your hand inside your cloak” and when he pulled it out it was leprous.

Now, we talked about leprosy on Wednesday night in Bible study, and if you remember I talked about how back then there was no cure for leprosy. In those days, anybody who had leprosy died, and so what God was doing was he was giving Moses a death sentence and then he was taking it away. In other words, he was demonstrating that he was in control of the outcome of every situation. He was demonstrating that he was trustworthy, that Moses didn’t need to question him, that he had called him and wanted to use him in spite of his insecurities and doubts.

The real problem that God was addressing with Moses is what he actually believed. The reason God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, the reason he asked him what was in his hand, is because God was challenging what Moses believed. You see, you can get all dressed up and you can say all the right stuff but that won’t overcome the belief you have in your heart that you’ve made too many mistakes to be used by God. It won’t overcome the belief that you’re too old to do anything worthwhile and it’s those things that you believe, those things that you are rehearsing in the back of your mind, that become your vision statement.

As we are following God into the unknown, I want to challenge your belief, because faith of any kind always comes by hearing. And so, your unbelief is a result of something you have heard about yourself, something that you have come to believe about yourself, like a curse pronounced over you telling you that you can’t do this or you can’t do that. Now, I’m not saying that you don’t believe in God, I’m just saying that maybe you’ve never changed your beliefs, maybe you’re bad at believing in yourself.

The apostle Paul said it this way, his mantra was,

*“I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13).*

And until you change the words that are in your head, you will remain struggling, doubting and unbelieving, missing the opportunities that are before you. And so, you need to reprogram your inner narrative, you need to change your story and say, “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”

You see, what you believe will make the difference between where you fell short and what God called you to be. The apostle Paul tells us in Romans chapter 4,

*“Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness" (Romans 4:3).*

And so, your belief is credited, it goes into your account as righteousness. God said, “I will credit righteousness to your account even though you’re not righteous because you believe me.” You see, what God is concerned about you and I today is exactly what we believe, whether we will follow him into the unknown. Not just what we say, not what we do, none of the sacrifice or religiosity, because none of that is going to count as much is simply taking God at his Word, believing what he has said about you and walking in grace and truth.

Pastor John Talcott

Christ’s Community Church

303 West Lincoln Avenue

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

June 07, 2020

(301) 447-4224

[www.cccaog.org](http://www.cccaog.org)

*Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, PC Study Bible, Preaching Library, and Sermon Central. Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*