

Moses, God's Chosen Leader

Exodus 3:1–4:17

Story Summary

God spoke to Moses from a burning bush, calling him to go to Pharaoh and free the people. Moses asked how he should answer the people's doubts, and God said to tell them, "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob sent me to you." God gave Moses three signs so that the people would believe. Moses still asked God to send someone else. God promised that Moses' brother Aaron would do the talking.



Faith Link

We can express our fears and doubts to God.

Bible Essay

by Timothy Harvey

The story of Moses' call is a helpful continuation of the previous session's focus on biblical characters who respond to God's call. Shiphrah, Puah, and Moses' mother found God's call in their daily routines. God's call to Moses will require a significant change of circumstance. The Bible passage for this session introduces us to Moses, tending his father-in-law's sheep in the desert far from home with little expectation that his life will be anything more or less than it is at that moment. But when Moses sees a bush that is burning but "not burned up" (3:3), he chooses to look closer. In this examination, he meets God.

It is tempting to believe that responding to God's call would be easy if it came in a dramatic fashion. But Moses' experience is not typical of how God calls. In the absence of a "burning bush" type of experience, God's call can go unnoticed because it seems less clear. Many times, God's call comes in ways like the one received by the Hebrew midwives—a situation presents itself, and faithful courage is required.

In whatever way God's call comes, this session's text shows Moses wrestling with the implications of what God asks. Moses might have been away from Egypt for 40 years, but he understood the risks involved in returning to confront Pharaoh. Notice the ways that Moses objects to God's call. How many times have we raised similar objections: "Who am I to do this?" "Who are you to ask this of us?" "What proof do I have that you'll do what you say?" "Please find someone else."

Even though God does grow weary of Moses' questions, expressing our doubts and fears to God is not necessarily a lack of faith. Following God sometimes brings great risk. Church of the Brethren leader Alexander Mack wrote the hymn "Count Well the Cost" out of the early Brethren experience of the suffering that came from answering God's call. The lyrics encourage us to make an informed response to God's call:

*"Count well the cost," Christ Jesus says, "when you lay the foundation."
Are you resolved, though all seem lost, to risk your reputation,
yourself, your wealth, for Christ the Lord as you now give your solemn word?*

In time, the sessions will reveal what Moses accomplished by saying yes to God. For this session, it is enough to consider this somewhat reluctant servant.

How do you resonate with the objections that Moses raises? With God's answers to those objections? Do God's answers help with your own doubts? Consider the lyrics of Mack's hymn as you examine your doubts and fears.

God, your call comes with risks—some we easily imagine, others that we will never know unless we say yes to your invitation. It is easier to choose the safe, comfortable paths that we know so well. But on these safer paths, we will never know the blessing that you seek to bring into the lives of your people. Grant us creativity to examine your call and the courage to say yes. Amen.