

## God's Call...Your Response

Exodus 3–4

By [Tom Cheely](#)

*May 26, 2013 – Evening Sermon*

I got a letter from Jesus but I don't have time for that in the midst of all my other stuff. There are a lot more things important than reading the Bible and paying much attention to that. I don't have that time but if you have your Bible I would direct your attention to Exodus 3 and 4. I want to share this passage of Scripture with you and ask you how you would respond when God calls. This passage deals with Moses which is a familiar passage to most. Moses' mom and dad lived in a very difficult time politically and they were not supposed to rear their children, particularly this little boy. Yet they practiced civil disobedience. They knew that the law of God was much more important than the law of man, particularly when the law of man calls for a contradiction of the law of God. They did their best to hide Moses and keep up with him for a number of years but finally they had to put him in the basket down at the river. Pharaoh's daughter found the little boy. She adopted him but gave him back to his mom and dad to rear for those critical years and then he moved to the palace.

There came a time in Moses' life as he was walking through the land watching the Hebrew people build things for the Egyptians and he was faced with the issue of whether he was a Hebrew or was he an Egyptian. He found out that blood was thicker than water. As he rose to help his Hebrew friend and caused the death of an Egyptian, in panic he ran for his life. He gets married and ends up in the desert raising sheep, taking care of the flocks for his father in law. So he was working for his father in law and based on one of those occasions Exodus 3 begins.

Moses is out with the sheep and notices a bush that is burning. Fire is a captivating thing. Nothing is more exciting and enjoyable on a cold winter night than sitting in front of the fireplace watching the flames as the heat comes from the fire. Out in the desert there is not a lot to do and so watching a bush burn would be fascinating. I'm not advocating getting carried away with fire but Moses was captivated by the bush. That was God's way of getting his attention. What does God have to do to get your attention? To what extreme does God push and work on your life to get your attention? As Moses approaches this bush to watch it, God initiates a conversation to speak to him. God is always the Initiator. God says to Moses "I have seen the afflictions of My people. I have heard their cries

in Egypt and I have come down to deliver them. I will send you to Pharaoh for you to lead My people out of Egypt.” The conversation begins at God’s initiation.

Moses replied right away with a question to God, “Who am I that I should lead these people out of bondage?” Moses didn’t hear God. Did you? God didn’t say that Moses had a job to do and that Moses needed to find a way to make it happen, to come up with a plan. God said “I have seen, I have heard, I have come down and I will send you to deliver My people.” This was God’s idea, God’s plan. This was something God was going to do but He was calling Moses and summoning him to be an instrument that God would use as God does His work. To emphasize that and bring it clearly, God responds to Moses’ question by saying “Surely I will be with you.” It wasn’t quite enough for Moses.

You would think at that point that if God said He was going to do something and He was going to let you be a part of what He was going to do, you would have thought that Moses would have taken the sheep back to Jethro, gathered up his family and headed down to Egypt, but not so. Moses says to God again, “But what’s Your name?” It’s been four hundred years since the Israelites have been in Egypt. They have moved from a blessed people and a welcomed people in this place to now being slaves and having overbearing landlords in their life. They haven’t heard anything from God although they are God’s people and Moses says “What’s Your name? Who am I going to tell them that You are?”

The book of Exodus begins that a Pharaoh had come to the throne in Egypt that knew not Joseph. Can you imagine that? Joseph was the one that God had used to save the nation during those years of famine. The Bible reads that all the people of the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph. How could you forget someone like that?

A few years ago the Alabama Board of Education was reviewing how much American History students would have to study in the state of Alabama before they graduated. They had narrowed the decision down to being the last semester of the junior year of High School would be all the US History they would have to study. That made my Virginia blood, boil. They would grow up not knowing George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe and James Madison. They are four of the first five Presidents we gave to the rest of you. Imagine that people would grow up in this country not knowing the history of who we are and why we came to be the nation under the hand of God. Fortunately the Board of Education did not adopt that principle but that is where they were headed. Not knowing your history is incredible, to think that, that would happen. Not knowing God is unfathomable and that the people of God would not know God. How could that be?

God says to Moses, “You tell them, ‘I am that I am.’ I Am has sent you.” That didn’t do a lot for me for a long time. “I Am.” You are too. We all are so what is God trying to say when He says “I Am”? Go over to the New Testament and

you'll see the numerous times that phrase occurs. I am the Bread of Life. I am the Living Water. I am the Good Shepherd. I am the Way. I am the Truth. I am the Life. I believe God was saying to Moses "You tell them I Am. I am whatever they need, whenever they need it, I am." Think about that. You need forgiveness for your sins. God is your forgiveness. You need strength, the living of life on a daily basis. God is your strength.

These Israelites soon left Egypt and they were wandering around in the wilderness. They needed to travel at night to get out of the heat and God provided a cloud for them to walk in the shadow of the cloud so that the heat would not bother them. As they moved about at night the Scripture says there was a pillar of fire that would come. God turned the flashlight of heaven down upon the earth so that as they walked in the light they would not stumble and fall. Whatever was needed God was for them and God is for you. You would think if God had a job that God was going to do and that God was whatever was needed for the people whenever needed it, Moses would have taken the sheep back to Jethro and gathered up his family and headed down to Egypt.

Exodus 4 goes on with the conversation as Moses again turns to God and says "What if I get there and they don't believe me?" God says to Moses, "What's that you're holding in your hand?" He had a rod, staff, tree limb or walking stick and God told him to throw it down on the ground. When he threw it to the ground it turned into a snake. As the conversation goes on God tells Moses to pick up the snake by the tail. Why would God be so specific? God knows which end of the snake to mess with. That is true but that's not why. Remember that Moses grew up in Egypt and the Egyptians played with snakes. They had learned that there was a way you could grab a snake right at the base of the back of the neck and if you held it tightly long enough the snake would become as straight and stiff as a rod. They would give the head a little shake and they would have a live snake walking cane, rod, staff in their hand.

Moses probably had four or five snake rods standing in the corner of his bedroom but God said to pick it up by the tail. Moses is probably thinking 'that's not the way to do this. Watch, I'll show You.' God said to pick it up by the tail. When he picked it up by the tail it became a straight staff, rod, walking stick once again. God went on to tell Moses to put his hand inside his coat and when he pulled it out it was covered with leprosy. When he put his hand back in his coat and pulled it out again it was clean, healthy and strong.

What happened down in Egypt? Moses went to see Pharaoh and said "God, sent us here to take the Israelites home and we're going to leave." Pharaoh said, "You've got to be kidding. We're not going to do that." Moses said, "Watch this!" Pharaoh said "You've got to be kidding, we're not going through with that." Moses said "Watch this!" He threw his stick on the ground and it turned into a snake. All the Egyptians said "Pharaoh just dropped his walking stick and it turned into a snake." They went over to the corners and got their walking sticks.

They threw them to the floor and they had a floor full of snakes. Then what happened? Moses' snake ate up all the other snakes and then when he took it by the tail it became a rod in his hand again. You could hear the ripple go through the crowd, "How did he do that?"

This issue is not how he did it but what happened. What was the question Moses asked God? He said "What if they don't believe me?" God said "They will believe you because when we get down to Egypt things are going to happen that only I can be responsible for and when I work, people believe. As I stand up here talking I can see all of you and I can see only something God is responsible for. Only God can forgive sin and take a life that's broken and ruined and make something significant out of it. Only God can take a group of lives like that and bring them together as a congregation who have one purpose, goal and responsibility together as they move forward as the people of God. Only God can be responsible for that and when God works people believe.

Many times when we lived in North Carolina I heard some people in our community make comments about one of my dearest friends. They would look at Bob and say "You can't trust him. You don't know what he was like." I said, "No, the problem is that you don't know what he has become. What he was is irrelevant. It is what God has made him to be for only God could be responsible for that." You'd think that if God had a job that God was going to do and God was needed whatever was needed and things were going to happen that God only was responsible for Moses would have taken his sheep back to Jethro, gathered up his family and headed down to Egypt, but Moses responds to God again and says "My mouth doesn't work right. I can't possibly lead this group of people. I'm not very eloquent in speech. I don't do well in front of groups."

It's like Moses is saying, "Please don't ask me to lead a Bible study or work with VBS or get up in front of people to give a testimony." Any resemblance to persons living or dead is purely providential. God responds to Moses as he is trying to back out of what God has called him to do. God says to Moses "Who made you? Was it not I the Lord? Who makes the dumb, the deaf, the seeing, the blind?" God was saying to Moses "Don't tell Me what you can and can't do. I made you. I know more about you than you do. I made you for this moment. This is the purpose in all of these things, Moses, up to this point that you would be prepared and equipped as the instrument that I use to do My work. Don't talk to Me about what you can't do. Just trust Me. I'm going to handle it. It's going to be okay."

You would think at that point that Moses wouldn't have needed anything else and he would have moved to Egypt but yet he had one more thing to say to God. Translators are very polite as they translate the Bible from Hebrew or Greek to English to read it or understand it. They take some of the edge off it sometimes but at this point it's recorded in the Scripture that Moses says "Please Lord, find somebody else to do this. Lord, You're talking to the wrong person. Get someone

else.” That’s very polite for what the Hebrew actually says. The connotation here in the Hebrew is that Moses actually stomped his feet in front of God and had a two year old temper tantrum and said “You do whatever You want to but I’m not going. No, no, no I will not go.”

God said “Do you want to bet? You’re going to Egypt. Down in Egypt you have a brother whose name is Aaron. When we get there I’m going to speak to you, you will speak to Aaron and Aaron will speak to Pharaoh but Moses you’re going to Egypt.” Do you know what happened? Moses went to Egypt. Just like God said, God spoke to Moses, Moses spoke to Aaron and Aaron spoke to Pharaoh and this repeated several times. Then God spoke to Moses and Moses spoke to Pharaoh. He took all of this hassle down around the bush and three plagues in Egypt but God got Moses where God wanted him to be.

I want to walk you through one other passage in the Bible and when I’m through I’ll tell you where it is. Jesus is getting ready to go to Jerusalem. His disciples are with Him and as they are moving in that direction the Scripture reads ‘Jesus said to Peter and John, “Go into the city and prepare for us the Passover.”’ There is the instruction. Jesus initiated the call and the purpose. There is a task to be performed and Jesus has picked these two to go and do it. That is the way God works. He has a task. He has a job. He has decided what is to be done and He determines the means by which He is going to do it. Peter said to Jesus “Peter and John, it’s always Peter and John, why don’t You ever ask Matthew or Bartholomew to do anything?” I don’t think that’s the way it’s supposed to read.

Jesus said to Peter and John, “Go into the city and prepare for us the Passover.” And Peter said to Jesus, “Where do you want it prepared?” I believe that’s the only legitimate question Christians can ask. We have a whole book of what we’re supposed to say, the Gospel. It’s not when are we supposed to say it because the instruction already is, as you are going, make disciples. The question is ‘where now, Lord?’

For most of you, you are where God wants you to be in doing the work of the Kingdom. For most of you, it’s here in Birmingham that God has put you for the purpose of the advancing of His Kingdom to doing the work of ministry and being a part of the life of the church. There are some of you that God wants to relocate geographically for the cause of the Kingdom. For some of you that relocation is outside the United States, but the question is where, now? Peter said to Jesus “Where do You want it prepared?” Jesus said to them, “As you go into the city, you’ll see a man walking with a water pot on his head. Follow him and the house in which he goes, prepare it there.”

Don’t you just love this about the Lord? He doesn’t make things complicated. He has a plan. He has a job to do. He has a way about getting it done. When you ask and are ready to obey He makes it very clear and very plain. It’s not always instantly but He comes straight to the point. If it’s your desire to do the will of

God, you will discover the will of God. I don't think God has time to deal with people who are going to run around and say "I don't know what God wants me to do with my life but I'm not going to do it." But for people who desire to do God's will, they will discover God's will. Isn't it interesting that we always seem to place the emphasis on 'I want to know God's will' but the emphasis is on God's will. God wants you to know the plan more than you want to know the plan because it's God's plan. He will see His plan fulfilled.

Jesus gave a very simple instruction to Peter and John about where to prepare the Passover, because men in those days didn't walk with water pots on their head. That was the women's job. So as Peter and John left and came to the edge of the city it wasn't hard to spot this man because this wasn't a common thing for men to do. When they walked to the edge of the city Peter said "There he is." It is that God makes things that clear for us. The passage continues.

Maybe the most significant part of the verse is what follows after Jesus gives them their instructions when it is said "and immediately they did as He instructed." They did it immediately, not next week or when they felt like it or not exercising providential procrastination. They responded immediately to what the Lord has instructed. They prepared the dinner and maybe the next most exciting part says that Jesus came and joined them and they all dined together. It was the fellowship and intimacy of being in the presence of God. That passage is found in Luke 22:8-14.

There it is—two responses. There is one who hassles, haggles, objects, pushes and shoves and deals with all the anxiety and angst that creates. Then there is a response of one who does it immediately. How do you respond to the call of God? How do you react when God says "I have seen, I have heard and I have come down to deliver and it's through you that I will do this"? You can hassle and haggle with God like Moses did but God is going to get you right where He wants you. Just cut out all of the mess in between and respond immediately. Join the workforce and become a part of that great work of the Kingdom of God. Be that instrument that He has determined you will be as He does His work as He builds His church.

I'm going to let you in on how weird I am. I thought as I was thinking on this that this is just like the race at Talladega. We are believers and we have lined up behind the lead car and we are following Jesus. Some of us decide that we can run this race on our own and in the jostling around of things that happen we zoom off around the track on our own. Others follow and things seem to be going well for a little while and then all of a sudden there's a crash. Everybody slows down and gets back in line behind that lead car. We go around the track a couple of more times and then somebody takes off on their own again. This is our spiritual pit stop where we come back for the rebuilding of God's Spirit so that we get back in line behind Jesus Christ, the Leader, and follow Him. Stay in line so that we can flow together but I know me. You know you. I know you. We'll be

back in the pit again because we just can't live obediently. We need that rebuilding and refueling that takes place when we come to the Table of the Lord. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, we thank You for this time that we can be together in the study of Your Word. Lord, You know every person reading this. You know every thought in their mind and heart. You know every aspect of their life and You love them anyway. We have come now to this very high, significant moment of worship and we ask that Your Holy Spirit come to us in a special way to fill us and use us once again. We have run out of gas. We have been smashed and battered with the wrecks of life and we come to You for forgiveness, cleansing and rebuilding. Lord, help us to respond rightly to You when You say 'I have something I want to do and I'm going to do it through you.' We praise You and bless You for Your love for us and for Your goodness, grace and mercy, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

#### **Subscribe to *Biblical Perspectives Magazine***

BPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like BPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [BPM](#), please select this [link](#).