

WHEN GOD CALLS YOUR NAME

Exodus 1-4

I. God Knows Your Name

A. Moses, Moses.... (Exodus 3:4).

Remember when your mother (or father) called your name twice? Occasionally God does the same thing.

- *"Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy.... Now I know that you fear God...." (Gen. 22:11-12).*
- *"Jacob! Jacob!" "Here I am," he replied. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt.... I will go with you...." (Gen. 46:2-4).*
- *"Then the Lord called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am.".... The Lord called Samuel a third time.... "Here I am.".... The Lord came and stood there calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." (1 Sam. 3:2-10).*
- *"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed." (Luke 10:41-42).*
- *"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail." (Luke 22:31-32).*
- *"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4).*

B. Has God called your name?

1) God knows your name.

- *He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. (Ps. 147:4).*
- *Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. (Isa. 43:1).*
- *(The shepherd) calls his own sheep by name and leads them out... his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger... I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me... (John 10:3-5, 14).*
- *If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:15).*



- 2) God has a **plan** for your life.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jer. 29:11).

He created you, knows you, has a plan for your life. This morning we are going to examine "**the call**," God's will for your life. The only way to live a life of real significance is to discover the reason why I am here... and do it!

- 3) Here I am.

When God begins to reveal His plan, your response should be an immediate, "Here I am," **at Your service**.

II. Fabricating Your Own Call (Exodus 2:11-14).

Moses somehow knew that he was to get involved with the suffering of his people and work for their deliverance. But he ran before he was sent! He tried to find his calling without first **listening** to the Caller!

A. He was **self-appointed**..... not God-appointed.

- 1) There is no call without a Caller.
- 2) Moses' action is just human initiative, nothing more.
- 3) Others knew that God was not involved in Moses' acts of "compassion".
Who made you ruler and judge? (v. 14).

B. He lived by **fear**... not faith.

- 1) Glancing this way and that... (v. 12).
- 2) He hid (the body) in the sand... (v. 12).
- 3) Then Moses was afraid... (v. 14).
- 4) Moses fled... (v. 15).

C. He operated in the **flesh**.... not the Spirit.

- 1) It seems like a good idea at the time.
- 2) Motivated by humanitarian concerns.
- 3) He assumed human preparation (a two-culture kid) was sufficient.
- 4) Murder.
- 5) Cover up.
- 6) Where is the Arm of the Lord?

D. He became easily **discouraged**.

- 1) When things didn't turn out well, he quit.
- 2) When his life was threatened, he fled.



E. He was **driven**... not called.

Listen to Gordon MacDonald describe the difference between those who are **driven** and those who are **called**. In his book *Ordering Your Private World*, (1984), he outlines eight symptoms of a driven person (pp. 29-42).

- 1) *A driven person is most often gratified only by accomplishment. This is the kind of person who sees life only in terms of results. As such he has little appreciation for the **process**. Arrival is everything...the trip means nothing.*
- 2) *A driven person is preoccupied with the **symbols** of accomplishment (titles, office size and location, organizational charts, special privileges).*
- 3) *A driven person is usually caught in the uncontrolled pursuit of expansion.... He lives in a constant state of uneasiness and **restlessness**...*
- 4) *Driven people tend to have a limited regard for **integrity**.... Shortcuts to success become a way of life. Because the goal is so important, they drift into ethical shabbiness. Driven people become frighteningly pragmatic.*
- 5) *Driven people often possess limited or undeveloped **people skills**.... Projects are more important to them than people. Because their eyes are upon goals and objectives, they rarely take note of the people about them, unless they can be used for the fulfillment of one of the goals.... There is usually a "trail of bodies" in the wake of the driven person.... He gets things done, but he may destroy people in the process.*
- 6) *Driven people tend to be highly **competitive**.... The driven person feels he must win.... Winning provides the evidence the driven person desperately needs that he is right, valuable, and important. Thus, he is likely to see others as competitors or as enemies who must be beaten – perhaps even humiliated – in the process.*
- 7) *A driven person often possesses a volcanic force of **anger**, which can erupt any time he senses opposition or disloyalty. This anger can be triggered when people disagree, offer an alternative solution to a problem, or even hint at just a bit of criticism.*
- 8) *Driven people are usually abnormally **busy**.... They operate on the precept that a reputation for busyness is a sign of success and personal importance.*



TABLE TALK

1. Discuss the differences between a man who is driven and one who is called.
2. Describe someone you know who is driven?
3. Describe someone you know who is called?
4. What about you? Are you driven or called? Explain.

III. Desert U (Exodus 2:15-25).

A. Forty years at the University of the Desert. Characteristics of the desert:

- Dry.
- Barren.
- Lonely.
- Silent.

B. All of God's saints (those who have a "call" on their lives) have spent large amounts of time learning God's lessons at U of D.

- Elijah.
- David.
- John the Baptist.
- Paul.
- Martin Luther.
- John Wesley.

Even Jesus spent time at Desert U. Apparently, there were some things He needed to learn that could only be learned there!

- *Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. (Luke 4:1-2).*
- *Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered. (Hebrews 5:8).*



C. The core curriculum includes “courses” such as the following.

1) **Humility 101.**

Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. (Deut. 8:2).

- I’m not the Big Shot I thought I was.
- The answer to the question of Exodus 2:14 is – “No one!”

2) **Contentment 101.**

... I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. (Paul wrote this in prison!) (Phil. 4:11-13).

- Contentment comes not from our circumstances but from inner peace.
- Contentment is found in the presence of God not the absence of pain.

3) **Faith 101.**

He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna... to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. (Deut. 8:3).

- In a desert, you have to depend on God for survival.
- Even though Moses is inactive... God isn’t (vv. 23-25).
- In the desert you learn how to pray, *Give us this day our daily bread.*



4) Calling 101.

*A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the Lord."
(Isaiah 40:3).*

- The best place to hear God's call is in the desert.
 - The seductive voices of "the world" are less audible.
 - One has more time and leisure to meditate and pray.
 - The stress and demands of "the city" are removed.

Moses could never have received his calling if he had remained in Egypt. Only after a lengthy stay in Desert U did the call come....

III. The Call.

A. Any Old Bush Will Do.

B. The God of the Second Chance.

Moses probably imagined that his opportunity for living a life of significance had been squandered and he would not be given another chance. After all:

- He was a murderer.
- His people would not follow him.
- He was a wanted criminal in Egypt.
- He was old (80 years of age).
- He lived in a desert.

And yet, God gave him another chance.

C. The Call.

*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... 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.** (3:7-10).*

Moses' life was never again the same. From this moment forward he had:
Direction, Purpose, and Significance.



But in contrast to his earlier attempt at delivering his people this time there was:

- A Caller.
- The promises of God.
- The power of God.
- The revealed will of God.

D. Listen again to Gordon MacDonald talk about the difference between being called and driven. He mentions five characteristics of a man who is called (*Ordering Your Private World*. pp. 55-65).

- 1) *Called people understand **stewardship**. When it comes to careers, assets, natural or spiritual gifts, health... are these things owned, or merely managed in the name of the One who gave them? Driven people consider them owned; called people do not. When driven people lose those things it is a major crisis. When called people lose them, nothing has changed. The private world remains the same, perhaps even stronger.*
- 2) *Called people know exactly **who they are**. Driven people can have an increasing inability to separate role from person. What they do is indistinguishable from what they are.*
- 3) *Called people possess an unwavering sense of **purpose**.*
- 4) *Called people understand unswerving **commitment**.*
- 5) *Called people experience **peace and joy**. (Not to be confused with happiness – a state of feeling dependent upon everything turning out all right.)*

E. Dwight L. Moody said it well.

*Moses spent his first forty years thinking he was **somebody**. He spent his second forty years learning he was a **nobody**. He spent his third forty years discovering what **God can do** with a nobody. (Dwight L. Moody).*

IV. Making Excuses.

Before agreeing to obey the call on his life, Moses first had to work through a long list of excuses (two chapters!). Contrast his response with Mary's: "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said." (Luke 1:38).



A. Who am I?

1) Moses' excuse.

But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (3:11).

I'm old... a criminal... just a shepherd... and besides, I tried that once and it didn't work!

2) God's answer.

And God said, "I will be with you." (3:12).

Moses' identity will not be found in himself... but in God.

B. Who are you?

1) Moses' excuse.

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?" (3:13).

Are You able to pull this off? There are many gods in Egypt! Who are You? Are You stronger than they are?

2) God's answer.

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." Say to the Israelites, "The LORD... has sent me to you." This is my name foreve,... (3:14-15).

Not only does God know Moses' name, God wants Moses to know His name!

I AM WHO I AM means... I will be all that you need when you need it...

- When you go to Pharaoh... I am!
- When you are hemmed in at the Red Sea... I am!
- When there is no water... I am!
- When the Amalakites attack... I am!



C. What if they don't believe me?

1) Moses' excuse.

Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, "The Lord did not appear to you"? (4:1).

When it comes to obedience to the call, the list of "what ifs" is long:

- What if there are no finances?
- What if I fail?
- What if my wife is not in agreement?
- What if the Democrats regain the White House?

2) God's answer.

Then the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" "A staff," Moses replied. The Lord said, "Throw it on the ground." (4:2-3).

An ordinary shepherd's staff became "the rod of God." To do miracles, bring plagues, divide the sea, strike the rock, etc. Just give God whatever is in your hand and watch what He can do!

D. I can't speak.

1) Moses' excuse.

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." (4:10).

How many thousands have sought to excuse themselves from the call of God on their life because of a supposed inability at public speaking!

2) God's answer.

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." (4:11-12).

Some of the best sermons in all the Bible are preached by this man who felt he could not speak! (See the book of Deuteronomy).



E. Send someone else!

- 1) This is not an excuse... this is insubordination!

But Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it." (4:13).

- 2) God's response.

Then the Lord's anger burned against Moses... (4:14).

With this, the discussion is rapidly brought to a close. And Moses reluctantly obeys... and becomes the greatest deliverer in the history of the world.

V. Hearing God's Call... Finding God's will.

A. Prerequisites for hearing God's call:

- 1) Am I a child of God?

Communication is built on communion, relationship. How should I expect God to reveal His will to me if I don't have a relationship with Him?

Jesus is "the way" (John 14:6). More than we need guidance, we need a Guide.

- 2) Do I will to do His will?

If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. (John 7:17).

Have I chosen to do His will... regardless of what it is? If not, then it is doubtful that I will "find out" his teachings.

- 3) Do I trust Him? And do I distrust myself?

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6. NKJV).



- 4) Have I come to a place of **full surrender**?

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. **Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is** – his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1-2).*

- 5) Am I **Asking? Seeking? Knocking?**

Ask (keep on asking) and it will be given to you; seek (keep on seeking) and you will find; knock (keep on knocking) and the door will be opened to you. (Matthew 7:7).

- 6) Am I asking with **right motives**?

You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. (James 4:2-3).

Write down some possible "wrong motives" for seeking God's will:

- _____
- _____

B. Specific steps to take in discerning God's will, listening for his call.

- 1) Search **the Scriptures**.

There is no need to seek guidance for areas in which the Lord has already revealed His will! For example:

- *Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. (II Corinthians 6:14).*
- *It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality. (I Thessalonians 4:3-5).*
- *Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (I Thessalonians 5:16-18).*
- *Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair... (Colossians 4:1).*



2) Seek wise counsel.

- *The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice. (Proverbs 12:15).*
- *Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed. (Proverbs 15:22).*
- *It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.... (Acts 15:28).*

3) Prayerfully interpret circumstances.

God is sovereign in the affairs of men. This means there are no "coincidences" in life. Everything comes to us filtered through His permissive will.

- *Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me (prison!) has really served to advance the gospel. (Philippians 1:12-14).*

4) Inner peace.

- *Let the peace of Christ rule (arbitrate, referee, make the decision) in your hearts.... (Colossians 3:15).*

TABLE TALK

*Therefore, do not be foolish,
but understand what the Lord's will is (Ephesians 5:17).*

1. Are you aware of a "call" from God on your life? Why or why not?
2. Have you tried to use any of Moses' excuses (pages 7-10)? How did God respond to your excuse?
3. Is there an area now where you need divine guidance?
4. Look again at the pre-requisites for guidance (pages 10-11) and the specific steps for discerning God's will (page 11). What needs to happen in order for you to know the will of God?
5. Pray for one another. Especially pray with "pure motives" that you would know God's will...and do it.

