

“Moses: Lose Excuses”

Dr. Jeff Meyers, Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church of Conyers

September 11, 2011

I do want to encourage you this morning to open your Bible to the Book of Exodus, the second book of the Bible, to chapters 3 and 4. As Sylvia mentioned, we will be studying one of the most famous characters in the Old Testament. This fall, as we are going through “Be A Loser” (if you are a first time guest or visitor, please understand that is not a condescending statement that we are making), but as we go through the Old Testament characters, we are studying the things that these characters did lose or needed to lose in their lives so they could be positioned to be more effective for the purpose of God in their lives. We’ve looked at characters such as Adam and Eve, Abraham, Esau, and others.

Today we come to one of the great ones. Today is very reminiscent to me of what is taking place in my home. If you do not know, we have three little boys. We have a nine year old, an almost seven year old and a five and one-half year old; and they have all kind of hit this stage together. I call it the superlative stage. Now what that means is every question they ask me or my wife, Traci, is what is the biggest, who is the fastest, what is the best? And the question they love to ask me because they know I’m a sports fan, and we could debate this for hours: “So Daddy, who was the best baseball player of all time?” That will get a good argument going on because are we talking back in Babe Ruth era or the modern era. And I try to explain to them but they are not of the age to understand it yet, that you have to ask questions like that according to different eras because the game changes.

If you were to take Jesus Christ out of the equation because He is God in flesh and you come to the Bible and ask who is the greatest character in the Bible; was it Moses; was it David; was it Paul; who was the greatest? You almost have to do like you would in baseball or football – you almost have to go to an era. If you go before King David, I don’t think there’s any question about it: that Moses is the greatest of characters. After all, it was Moses

who brought down the Ten Commandments. It was Moses who led the Israelites out of captivity through the Red Sea. It was Moses who through the provision of God struck the rock and water came and manna showed up. It was Moses through whom the Lord gave us the first five books of the Bible. When you look at the character of Moses, he is the superlative, he is the EST, he is one of the greatest ones. And I think oftentimes we look at characters like Moses and many others we're studying this fall and we put them on a pedestal and say, "Wow! That could never be me."

Today we're going to go back in time to chapters 3 and 4 of the Book of Exodus and we're going to find out where Moses was before he was Moses. Now he was always named Moses, but before the Ten Commandments, before the Red Sea and all those famous things. Where was he in chapters 3 and 4?

Exodus 3:1-6. "1Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. (Now I want to stop right there before we get to verse 2. Do you see where he is? The backside of a mountain in the desert. Yes, God knows where you are even if you are halfway between West Texas and New Mexico.) 2And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. 3And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. 4And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. 5And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground. 6Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."

We know the story of Moses. We know about his mom having the faith to put him in the basket or the ark going down the river. We know he was raised up in the Egyptian home. As we're going to study today, raised in

that Egyptian environment and cast out when he murdered an Egyptian. He was out in the middle, literally the backside of nowhere, serving as a shepherd to his father-in-law, Jethro's flock. And God calls him. There are three real excuses that Moses uses in chapters 3 and 4 that, believe it or not, I think we use every day of our lives when God calls us to be a part of something. The first excuse is this: I'm just not called. The second excuse is I'm not credible. The third one is I'm just not capable of doing this.

But focus on the first one: I'm just not called; surely God would not call me. We'll spend more time on this when we talk about the credibility of who you are in relationship to God. But can I just be honest with you, there are several things we need to understand about the calling of God, and first is that we need to understand the plans of God. Do you realize that Moses was not a part of a three-week long revival service when this occurred? He had not been fasting for seven days. Let me tell you where Moses was when God called him. He was doing what he normally did on any other given day.

And I think that is the key to understanding the call of God. What we expect is the heavens to open up and the lights to come down, and what God is saying is where you are in the factory, where you are at the school, where you are at home, wherever you are He is there and He is calling us. And oftentimes we think that because it's not dramatic, surely that's not how He calls us. For those of you ladies who had the privilege of being at Dine by Design on Thursday night with Julie Hadden, former runner-up on The Biggest Loser television reality show, she talked about her turning moment. What was the thing that really got her attention in that whole process of losing weight and giving glory to God for it? Was it in the weight room? No. Was it with the trainer? No. She told the story Thursday night about how she was out on the beach looking at some sand. That doesn't sound real profound, holy and spiritual, does it? Moses is out on the backside of the mountain, in the middle of a desert, doing what he did every day of his life. When God calls us to be a part of what He is doing, oftentimes He calls us just in the midst of living life.

That brings up the second thing: in the midst of His calling upon our lives, we need to understand how God presents His calling to us. We notice what happens here in verse 2: a bush that is burning but yet not being consumed. One of the great understatements in the Bible is that it simply said Moses turned and said why is this bush not burning? I have a feeling it was a little more dramatic than that. I have a feeling that he kind of looked at it like a calf does at a new gate and goes what is this?

Let me ask you a question; how many of you would say if there was a bush burning in my life, I think I would pay attention. Do you know what the problem with that is? When we talk about the calling of God on our lives, oftentimes we get into the “other side of the fence” theology. In other words, if it would happen like it did with him or with her or with them. But God presented Moses with a burning bush because that’s what was needed to get his attention. The problem is oftentimes we’re looking for burning bushes in our lives when God is just gently whispering in our ear. As Sylvia mentioned in her testimony, a sermon that you and I included have all since forgotten, she’s here every week doing what she does every Sunday, normal life and God presented something to her supernaturally that just looked normal.

So understand that the way He presents His calling to us leads us to this point: understanding the power of God in the calling. Notice what God told him in verse 5: you are standing on holy ground. When God calls us to do something, when God says I need you to serve in this area, I need you to give to this ministry, I need you to be a part of this, and we say yes, do you understand that even changing diapers in the preschool becomes holy ground? Handing out bulletins becomes holy ground. Being in Nicaragua becomes holy ground. Because where God calls us to be and what He asks us to do, no matter what it looks like to anybody else, if it’s His calling on our lives and we are faithful, it becomes holy.

So the first excuse we often have to deal with is this fact that somehow we don’t have a calling. Many times we miss God’s calling on our lives

because we're so busy looking for something else that we miss what He is saying to us. But I have a feeling that in our midst today, we get that part. And I think deep down every one of us knows that God has called us to do something and to be a part of something. So there are these other two excuses we use that are so prevalent and so relevant for our lives. We have to go into chapter 4 to see these two excuses.

What happens is this: God presents Himself to Moses, the bush does not burn, it is not consumed, it is declared holy ground. And Moses says when I go back and tell the Egyptians to let your people go, what do I say? This is where we get the famous name of God in the Old Testament; the name of Yahweh, I Am That I Am. Exodus 3:14 is the first occurrence of that name in scripture. Then as Sylvia testified, Moses begins to do what you and I do: we begin to make excuses now that we realize God has called us to do something. "How can I go there when this is happening at home? How can I give to that situation when this is happening in the economy?" We begin to make these two excuses: our credibility to do it and our capability of doing it.

Exodus 4:1. "1And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee." Basically, he begins to argue with God and the first argument is our second excuse: "God, do You not understand that I am not credible? They will not listen to me; they will not pay attention to me. What You have asked me to do is going to fall on deaf ears."

How do we make the excuse that we're not credible to do what God has called us to do? The first thing is we focus on our past. If you look and study the past of Moses it is ugly. He was raised up in Pharaoh's home. He goes out one day and sees an Egyptian mistreating a Hebrew, a fellow person of his background. He slays the Egyptian and buries him in a shallow grave. He is discovered and he runs away for forty years. Wow! What a testimony: a murderer, a liar, and a runaway. And he is saying, "Do you understand, God, they're not going to listen to me. They're not going to

believe me.” Oftentimes we are avoiding what God wants to do in our lives today because we’re so focused on the mess-ups that we have in the past. I would say, and I’m going to kind of do a tangent here, the number of people that I talk to personally who are lost, do not know Jesus, are not saved, they’ve never asked Jesus to be their Savior, to forgive them of their sins, if I could lump all of their excuses into one big thing, they truly believe that based on their past there is no way that God can forgive them in their present. That’s exactly what Moses said, there is no way they’re going to believe me. Why? Because of his testimony: not only will the Egyptians not believe him because he ran away from the murder of an Egyptian, but how are the Hebrews going to believe him because he left them high and dry.

So there is the issue of credibility because of our past, but there’s a second thing: we say I’m not credible because of my present. I’m going to give you a statement that I hear all the time, whether it’s going on a mission trip or serving in a specific area or doing something on behalf of God: I feel like God is calling me to be a part of this but I’m “just a” _____. The lady who spoke Thursday night, the former contestant on *The Biggest Loser*, said, “But I’m just a housewife.” Do you know what Moses could have said? “I’m just a shepherd on the backside of nowhere.”

What we need to see from the life of Moses is when God calls us to be a part of something bigger than we could ever imagine, when He calls us, we’re all “just a.” I was just a high school student. You were just a whatever that is. And when we allow the past and the present to form our excuses, what we begin to say is, “God, there is no way You could use me. I’m not even credible. It’s not even possible that this could happen. Don’t You know my past? Don’t You know that this is all that I am?” Billy Graham sold paint brushes door to door. He was just a door-to-door salesman. D. L. Moody was just a shoe salesman. Moses was just a shepherd. I think God delights in taking “just a” and turning them into “gonna:” I going to take you just as you are and I’m gonna do something with you.

That's the third point of this under our credibility: the possibilities with God. In the rest of chapter 4 God begins to almost toy with Moses. He says, "Okay Moses, I understand you've got a past. I understand presently you're just a. So here's what I'm going to ask you to do. I want you to pick up a snake by the tail." (Now you know in the Meyers' family there's only one kind of good snake and that is a very dead snake.) God said, "I want you to pick it up by the tail." Moses picks it up by the tail and it turns into a rod. He throws the rod down and it turns back into a snake.

But the thing that's amazing to me in chapter 4 is He asks Moses to take your hand, put it in your cloak and pull it out. It turns leprous. He puts it back in and it is healed. Do you realize that all through the Book of Genesis through four chapters of the Book of Exodus that is the first occurrence in scripture of somebody being healed of a disease? It had never happened before. It had never occurred, at least in scripture, like that.

And what God is saying is, "Regardless of your past, regardless of your present, let Me show you what the possibilities are. I can do something in your life that you've never seen anybody do before." And that's exactly what He did in the life of Moses. And oftentimes when God calls us to do what He's called us to do, we don't have a book to read to see how somebody else did it. Oftentimes there's not a blueprint to look at. But we say, "God, I'm not even credible. Don't You know my past? Don't You know my present?" And that leads us to the third excuse, and this is the most important one. It's what Moses is so famous for in his excuses. We begin to say I'm not capable.

Exodus 4:10-13. "10And Moses said unto the LORD, O my LORD, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. 11And the LORD said unto him, Who has made man's mouth? or who makes the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? 12Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shall say. 13And he said, O my LORD, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou will send."

When we start saying, “God, I’m not even capable of doing this; I can’t go on that mission trip; I can’t be a part of that ministry; I can’t give in that fashion; I can’t serve like that,” we need to get a new and a fresh perspective because one of the problems we have is we see things from our perspective and not from God’s perspective. I love what Moses said, “I am not eloquent.” Understand this man is at least sixty years of age. For forty years he’s been out in the wilderness as a shepherd and it’s almost as if he says “Okay God, I know You’re almighty, I know You’re all powerful, I know You’re sovereign, but do You not know that I can’t talk?” Understand the Lord knew Moses couldn’t talk when He called him.

Now I’m going to get real personal with you this morning and I want you to know in advance that I so appreciate you. And many of you come up to me about this subject matter and it happens on a regular basis and trust me, please don’t stop doing this; someone will come up to me and say, “Jeff, why do you always make fun of being short? I don’t think you’re that short.” You know most of the people saying that to me are taller than me by the way! But how many times could we say, “Lord, don’t You know I’m short; don’t You know I can’t walk; don’t You know I can’t talk; don’t You know I don’t have a formal education; don’t You know these things God?”

I want to interject some humor this morning. Yesterday our family participated in the twenty-eighth running of the Fuzz Run for the Covington Police Department for multiple reasons. Number one is we’re having a 5 K here in about six weeks and I wanted to see a race from the ground level. Secondly, my family wanted to run and Traci runs races so I ran the one mile race with my sons. It just so happens that my sons made the paper. We’ve got a picture to show you. The circle on the left is Marshall; the circle on the right is George. Do you see the arrow? That’s me but you can’t see me because the guy in front of me is too tall!

But let me ask you a question: how many times has God called you to

teach His Word and you say, “But I don’t have an education? No one will listen to me. Do you not know what I’ve done in the past?” Or maybe God has called you to serve in an area and you say, “But God, do you not know my mistakes?” We need to get a new and a fresh perspective. As my wife so eloquently put it a couple of months ago when we were talking about this subject matter and I love what she put said, “Honey, you know when I met you eighteen years ago, I didn’t look at you and say, ‘Lord, he’s already twenty years old, surely he’s got a growth spurt coming!’”

I want you to understand it doesn’t matter if you’re twenty, it doesn’t matter if you’re eighty, if God has called you to be His hands and His feet and you say, “But Lord, I’m too old, I can’t talk, have You not seen my legs - they don’t move,” do you know the Lord knows that? He is completely aware of that in advance. He knew Moses was just a shepherd; He knew Moses was a murderer; He knew all those things. So what we need to do is change our perspective. Moses said, “You obviously can’t work with this,” but realize what God said is, “I want to work with this.”

That leads to the second aspect of this: we need to realize that God works in the plurality. Do you realize that we have what is called a church? And I realize the church at large is bigger than just this church but the Bible says do not forsake the gathering of believers. Jesus didn’t call one disciple; He called twelve disciples. Christianity is not a lone ranger faith. The Book of Proverbs says that a strand of two is not easily broken and three is really not easily broken. I believe when the Lord calls us, He calls us as a piece of a jigsaw puzzle that fits with all the other pieces. Mrs. Sylvia’s sewing ministry wasn’t just about her; it’s about others coming along. And when God calls you to serve, I promise if you serve in the Preschool you won’t be the only one back there. He doesn’t just call one; He calls us all to come together. Moses said, “But God, I don’t talk very well,” and God said, “That’s okay because I know about Aaron, your brother. And you’re going to tell Aaron what to say when I tell you what to say and then because that guy can sell ice to an Eskimo, it’s going to all work out.”

And we so easily say, “God I can’t do this,” but let me be honest with you: you are right. You can’t. And that’s why the Lord will call you and He calls others to come alongside – that’s why we’re called a church and we do things together and there’s power and synergizing in that. But whatever God calls you to do, whatever ministry He has for you, whatever purpose He has in your life, understand that He’s not going to call you in isolation. He’s not going to call you to be a lone ranger. He’s going to bring others beside, He’s going to bring a church beside, a community beside, and He’s going to go forth with you all, not just you.

That leads to my final thought about this third excuse, the one that we use so often about I’m not capable. We need a new perspective. We need to understand God works in the plural. And I put this in quotes for you, but understand that the Lord is a peculiar God. Here’s what I mean by that. It amazes me every day how God decides to do what God wants to do. Let me take you back.

God has told Moses, “Here’s the situation: for four hundred years my people have been enslaved by a guy by the name of Pharaoh, a country by the name of Egypt. You’ve been there, right?” “I was there,” “I need you (who does not speak well) to go to him and tell him my people are leaving.” He makes all the excuses. Can you imagine, just work with me hypothetically, what if God had put Moses at this table and interviewed him and said, “Okay Moses, how do you suggest we do this?” I promise you, the plan that Moses would have come up with would not have been very good. I guarantee you he would have never thought of turning water into blood. He would have never thought of frogs, lice, flies, sores, total darkness or the first-born being killed all across the country.

What I’ve learned in life is God doesn’t often show up the way I expect Him to show up. Eighteen years ago this summer, I got up early in the morning and I went to a restaurant that I had been working at for days. The same morning, my now wife got up and went to interview at that restaurant for a

job. All she was doing was looking for a job; all I was doing was trying to get through school. We didn't know that God had bigger plans for us meeting at that restaurant. And if you had told me to write down where you want to meet your wife, it would not have been in the kitchen of the Elite Café in Waco, Texas. It would have been romantic and glorious! It wasn't very glorious.

One of the things that Traci and I, regardless of our marriage, have seen through these years is when we desire God to move in a way and He's called us to do something, He never does it the way we expected Him to. And I think that's our biggest problem when it comes to excuses: we've so got God in a box that if it doesn't look like this and sound like this and feel like this then it wasn't God. Can I be honest with you after being in ministry for twenty years: if it looks like and it sounds like what I thought it was going to be, it's probably not Him because according to Ephesians 3:20 He is able to do exceeding abundantly more than we could every think or ask.

Do you think that Moses would have said, "Okay God, I've got this great idea! Why don't You put the walls of the Red Sea up and let's just walk through on dry land. That would be great! How about You bring Krispy Kreme doughnuts from Heaven for forty years every day? That's wonderful!" Do you know what Moses said? "God, when I give this speech, how's he going to listen to me?" And God said, "Oh my child, have I got such bigger things for you!"

Today when we talk about losing excuses, I believe wholeheartedly God has got amazing plans for you as an individual, for you as a family and for us as a church. But we've got to lose the excuses. We've got to realize why would God call you and me and us as a church on the east side of Atlanta in the twenty-first century? Because God can call whom He wants, how He wants, when He wants. You say, "Well you don't understand my history, our history." God understands everything. Can we really change the world starting here? So why would God give us the slogan if He didn't mean it? Why would God put it upon our hearts to collect blue jeans? Why would God put that on us if He didn't think we, doing what He asked

us to do, could literally change the world starting here? I think in our heart and in our head we know it – the problem is getting it to our feet and doing it. I want to challenge you today to lose your excuses. Let's pray.