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Moses – When You Run Out of Excuses
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Exodus 3:1–4:17

Good morning and welcome to Brewster Baptist Church. My name is David Pranga. I am one of the pastor's here. I am so glad to be here this morning. Pastor Doug has been away on vacation this past week, playing his favorite sport—baseball.

If you are new or it's been a while since you been in church, we are in a series entitled "New Beginnings."

This morning, we are going to be talking about excuses. Every one of us has used an excuse from time to time. I found this article from Readers Digest, "Most Ridiculous Excuses for missing work."

1. An employee got stuck in the blood pressure machine at the grocery store and could not get out.
2. An employee caught their uniform on fire by putting it in the microwave to dry.
3. An employee had to attend the funeral of his wife's cousin's pet, because he was an uncle and pallbearer.
4. An employee said that someone glued her doors and windows shut, so she could not leave the house to come to work.
5. An employee's false teeth flew out the window while driving down the highway.
6. An employee woke up in a good mood and didn't want to ruin it.

People have been making excuses since the beginning of time. Moses was no exception. Moses was one of the top excuse makers of all time. Many of us remember the movie, *The 10 Commandments* starring Charlton Heston, a popular movie from the 1950's depicting Moses' life. How many of you have ever seen the movie? Let me summarize Moses' early years in case you missed the movie or have not read Exodus. Moses was an Israelite born in Egypt during the time when his people were enslaved by Pharaoh. It was during this time that there was a command that every Israelite baby boy born was to be thrown into the Nile River.

After Moses was born, his mother hid him for three months until she could hide him no longer. Then Moses' mother sent him down in a basket in the Nile River. Pharaoh's daughter found him and decided to keep him. Moses grew up in Pharaoh's household. Moses became a well-educated man. As years passed, Moses grew up knowing his own people were in bondage to Pharaoh. It made Moses mad. One day, Moses saw an Egyptian beating one of his people. Moses came to the defense of the Israelite slave and ended up killing the Egyptian. When Pharaoh learned what Moses did, he tried to kill Moses. Moses fled to the country of Midian. This once proud man, who lived in the palace with Pharaoh was now on the run. Moses eventually settled down and became a shepherd, caring for sheep far away from his Israelite people and Pharaoh.

In the passage that was read earlier today, we meet Moses. Forty years have passed since Moses ran off. Moses is tending sheep and minding his own business, when he comes across a bush that is burning. What made this bush so remarkable was that it was on fire but it was not burning up. This intrigued Moses and Moses moved forward. Then God called to Moses from within the bush. God shares with Moses his plan, how Moses was going to lead his people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.

Can you imagine what Moses was thinking? When he hears what God is telling him? Let me ask you a question. Have you ever had a burning bush moment? Have you ever felt like God was calling you to do something difficult? Something that would really challenge you if you said, "YES"?

For example:

- God may be calling you to be a Sunday School teacher or a small group leader in the church, but you fear talking in front of people and you don't have much bible knowledge.
- God may be calling you to move away from home and family. You know this is from God but you are scared.
- God may be calling you to care for a sick parent but you have no idea how to do it, plus you really don't have room in your house to do it. It will change the family dynamics.
- God may be calling you on a mission trip but you're nervous about going. What could I possibly contribute on this trip and how am I going to pay for it.
- God may be calling you to take a promotion at work but you feel like it's out of your league.

Sometimes it's really hard when you feel like God is calling you to do something you feel inadequate to do. It is far easier to tell God maybe next time or offer an excuse. I like what Benjamin Franklin once said, "He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else."

As we go back to the story of Moses, God is speaking to Moses through the burning bush. God tells Moses something very important in *verse 10*, "So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." God has a plan for Moses. Here is the big problem for Moses. Moses really did not want any part of God's plan. I can only imagine when Moses hears what God has for him, it brings back painful memories.

Egypt was a place Moses had left on the run. He was running away from Pharaoh. I believe Moses wanted to forget that part of his life. Now God is telling Moses that he has to go back, return to his homeland to rescue the people from slavery. Back to the he people that did not like him. Meet up with the new Pharaoh that wanted his life as well. I am guessing that Moses was very content being a shepherd and taking care of his sheep.

Let's continue *Exodus 3:11* and see how Moses answers God, "**But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?'"** Moses

shares with God his first excuse, his first objection to what God wanted him to do. Remember when I said Moses is the king of excuses. What is Moses' first excuse and objection to God?

Excuses and Objections:

What does Moses say?

1. Who am I?

I am a nobody; I am a has-been.

I am old and wrinkly; I am past my prime.

I am just a shepherd over sheep; I am not a leader of people

What was Moses was dealing with? I think Moses was dealing with self-doubt. Anybody here ever deal with self-doubt? Moses lacked confidence in himself. I don't know about you but I can be a lot like Moses with self-doubt. I can lack confidence in myself. I wonder why God has called me to do something. I make excuses in my mind. I can think to myself, I am nobody. I'm too old or too young to do whatever it is God is calling me to do. Yet God sees something different in us. God sees something in Moses that Moses does not see in himself yet.

What was God's response to Moses excuse?

Exodus 3:12, "And God said, 'I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.'"

God's Response:

1. I personally will be with you! God is giving Moses assurance. Yes Moses, you are the right guy for the assignment. I know you fled from Egypt. But I am calling you. I am calling you, Moses. I want you, Moses. Are you up for the challenge Moses? I know you have insecurities. I know you have a past. I know you are past your prime. I know all these things about you. God is saying, I still believe in you, Moses!

What is Moses' response to hearing what God has to say?

Let's continue to *Exodus 3:13, "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?"*

Excuses & Objections:

1. Who Am I?

2. I Don't Have **All** the Answers.

Moses is treading water at this point. Moses is worried. Moses is afraid. Moses is full of fear. What is Moses afraid of? There are two groups of people that Moses is afraid of, the Elders of Israel and Pharaoh. These two groups would know of Moses in some way. Moses was no

unknown character. Moses had been hiding for 40 years. Moses starts questioning God. God, I don't have all the answers to the questions they may ask of me. What happens if they ask me questions that I don't have the answer to? God, what will I say to them? I will be a fool before them.

How does God respond?

Exodus 3:14, **“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.”** God's response to Moses's second excuse is if somebody asks you who sent you, you can tell them “I AM” sent you. I AM is the Father of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—The Almighty and Eternal God.

Remember when I said, that Moses was afraid of both the Elders of Israel and Pharaoh? If you continue reading in Chapter 3, you see that God also gives Moses the exact words to say when he is before Pharaoh, as well as the outcome. God knew what each group needed to hear. God is re-assuring Moses that he will be with him. God is willing to answer the questions. God just wants Moses to trust him and believe in him. Would that be enough for Moses?

Let's move on to *Exodus 4:1*, **“Moses answered, ‘What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, “The LORD did not appear to you”?’”**

Excuses and Objections:

1. Who Am I?
2. I don't have all the answers.
3. They will not believe me.

Moses went from

1. Who am I? (Insecurity)
2. I don't have all the answers. (Knowledge and Plans)
3. Will they even believe me? (Respect)

What is Moses concerned about now? Respect

Another concern Moses faced was the question, will they “believe” me? Moses is asking, will the Elders of Israel and Pharaoh “believe in” what I am saying? Will these people believe and listen to me? I get what Moses is asking for. Moses is asking God for credentials and validation that what he is saying is from God. Moses is afraid that no one will believe him.

Let's see how God responds *Exodus 4:2-9*. God gives Moses a sign. **“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. Then the LORD said to him, ‘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. ‘This,’ said the**

LORD, '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, the skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow. ‘Now put it back into your cloak,’ he said. So Moses put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored, like the rest of his flesh. Then the LORD said, ‘If they do not believe you or pay attention to the first sign, they may believe the second. But if they do not believe these two signs or listen to you, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the river will become blood on the ground.’”

God once again answered Moses' excuses. You are afraid people will not listen to you. Let me give you three signs validating that you are my chosen one.

God gives Moses three signs:

1. Staff turns into a snake – represents God's power & might
2. Moses' hand turns white with leprosy and then is healed – represents God's power to inflict disease and power to save his people and heal them
3. Miracle of turning water to blood – represents a foreshadowing of future plagues

Do you think all these signs, the credentials and validation that Moses was wanting would be enough? Would Moses come to his senses and lead? Or would another excuse be coming?

Exodus 4:10, **“Moses said to the LORD, ‘Pardon your servant, 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.’”**

Excuses and Objections:

1. Who Am I?
2. I don't have all the answers.
3. They will not believe me.
4. I am not gifted as a speaker.

When I look over the excuses and objections that Moses shares with God, I still see many of them today. Not much has changed in thousands and thousands of years. People are still good with excuses. What is Moses' excuse now? I am not a gifted or eloquent speaker. I think Moses was being honest and true about himself. Moses understood that speaking was not a strength of his. In fact, Moses said that he was slow of speech and tongue. Some commentaries believe Moses had a speech defect, that maybe, Moses had a stuttering voice. Moses had to be thinking to himself, “Why God, would you choose a guy who has a tough time speaking to be your leader? You know how painful it is for me to speak in front of crowds, to pronounce the words correctly, to think and say, just the right thing.” Moses was full of doubt.

Sometimes, I am like Moses thinking, “God there must be someone better than me to give this sermon; somebody who is funny or more intellectual; a deeper thinker; someone who commands the presence of people.” I will be honest with you. I often feel inadequate speaking in front of people.

How does God respond to Moses’s excuse of not being a gifted speaker?

Exodus 4:11-12, “The LORD said to him, ‘Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.’”

I like what God says at the end. Now go! I will help you speak. I will teach you what to say. God is once again sharing with and assuring Moses that he will be with him. I will help you with the words to say. I will teach you how to inspire people. I will be with you Moses. What do you say, Moses? Are you ready to lead? Are you done with these excuses? Are you willing to trust and put your faith in me? What do you think the answer is?

Exodus 4:13, “But Moses said, ‘Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else.’”

Excuses and Objections:

1. Who Am I?
2. I don’t have all the answers.
3. They will not believe me.
4. I am not gifted as a speaker.
5. Please God, send someone else.

Have you ever said to God; please send anyone else to do this job but me? I really don’t want to do this. Please God; there must be someone else who can do it? What is Moses saying to God with excuse #5? God, I am begging you! Please, send anyone other than me to do this job for you! I really don’t want the job! Where is Moses’ focus? It is only on himself. Moses can only see what he sees in himself. Moses can only see himself as a nobody, a person who lacks answers, a person that is not believable, and someone who is slow to speak. Moses is telling God, I am no leader. I am a shepherd over sheep.

The question Moses should be asking is, “God what do you see in me, Moses?” I believe God sees something special in Moses. God sees the final product in Moses. God knew Moses was the perfect leader despite the flaws. God had been preparing Moses his whole life from the time he was a baby and was scooped out of the Nile by Pharaoh’s daughter. How do you think God responds to Moses? How would you respond if you were God?

Exodus 4:14-15, “Then the LORD’s anger burned against Moses and he said, ‘What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and he will be glad to see you. You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do.’”

At this point God's patience was wearing thin; at least that is how I see it. God decided to give Moses what he wanted—another leader who could speak, his brother, Aaron. God would speak through both Moses and Aaron. Finally, Moses is out of excuses and objections and can move forward. As you continue to read Exodus, you will see God uses Moses to be the leader that God called him to be. It is a great story of how Moses leads his people out of Egypt.

What do we take from this story? How can this story apply to my life?

1. You are valuable to God.

God sees us differently than we may see ourselves. As Moses looks at all his weaknesses: old, timid, insecure, lacking knowledge, and challenged in his speech, Moses focuses too much on himself.

God saw Moses as a person who deserved a second chance. God put his trust in Moses. Why? God saw what Moses could become. God could see that Moses was the right leader for what God was asking him to do. Moses did a terrific job as you read the rest of *Exodus*.

In life every one of us will face certain challenges. Some we see coming. Many times we will not. There are times when the door will open up for us to do something, to take a risk. We are not sure if we can. Remember God may be calling you to do it. God may be opening the door to grow you in your faith and as a person. I want you to remember this. You are valuable to God! God loves you.

2. When God calls us to do something, it takes faith and belief on our part.

Moses was full of excuses, why he could not lead. All God wants from us is this. God wants us to put our faith and believe in him. When God wants you to do something, it requires putting our faith and belief in him.

We have to do our part, then move out of the way and let God take over. Often we won't have all the answers. But we need to exhibit faith in God to overcome our struggles with resources, money and time. We have to believe God will provide for us. Remember God will call us to something great. But we have to remember it takes faith and belief on our part.

I am reminded of *Philippians 1:6*, "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Let's pray.

Blessings: *Hebrew 13:20-21*, "Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Questions for Discussion & Reflection:

1. What are some of the excuses we make for not doing something that we know we should be doing?
2. Why did God use a burning bush to get Moses' attention? If you had been Moses, what would you have thought about this event?
3. What has the burning bush (God's attention-getter) been in your life: Good times? Bad times? Something else? How would God get your attention and encourage you to accept a new mission for your life?
4. What does God ask Moses to do for Israel? How does Moses reply? Do you think Moses was more uncertain of himself or God?
5. Why is Moses reluctant to go back to Egypt and do what God asked? Moses comes up with four excuses and objections not to follow through with God's plan for him. What are the excuses Moses has? What reassurances does God give in return to each excuse and objection?
6. Moses is very relatable in this story. What excuses do you make to God? How do you think God feels about them?
7. How can you exhibit more faith when God is calling you to do something? This week, try asking God for faith and the ability to trust him more.