

**WHO AM I?**  
**MOSES AND THE CALL TO MISSION**  
**CITY OF GOD CHURCH**  
**10.24.10**

*Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.' "*

There are very few moments in my life where I felt like God was calling me to a task and I immediately responded in faithfulness. I can literally count on one hand the times where I sensed God leading me, and my heart was already in a place simply to respond. You shouldn't feel bad when God calls you to mission and your initial response is to discover reasons why you can't do what he's calling you to do.

So far here is God's plan for Moses: I'm going to lead my people out of their slavery in Egypt (Ex. 3:7-9), and I'm going to send you as the one who's going to lead them out by confronting Pharaoh (Ex. 3:10-12). You will go before the most powerful man in the country, and speak to him on my behalf.

Very rarely have I sensed a call that big on my life. Typically what I feel the Holy Spirit leading me to do is much smaller. Have you ever had an instance where you've been around someone and you feel compelled to start a conversation with them? What about sitting at the computer and a person or situation comes to mind? You feel an urge to send an e-mail or make a phone call to see what's going on. How about when an opportunity has presented itself for you to be able to give generously to someone?

There are those moments where the Holy Spirit brings to mind real opportunities to do ministry. What's our gut reaction to those moments? I wish I could say it was always obedience, but my initial response is usually to begin justifying why I can't do what I feel called to do.

Several times Moses has raised concerns over why he can't do what God has asked him to do. First, he raises the objection "Who am I" (Ex. 3:11)? There are lots of people you could ask to do this. Send someone who more people know. Send someone better equipped. Moses felt completely inadequate for the size of the task God was asking him to accomplish. If God calls you to mission you're going to feel like this at moments.

Secondly, Moses is worried about his authority to do such a thing (Ex. 3:13). Who should I tell them has sent me to do this? Because things are in the Bible and we know how the story will end we lose some of its craziness. Pull this into real life. A once well known leader in the country who fled for forty years after murdering someone shows up after spending time in the desert and has a message from God.

We've seen guys like this. They end up in some obscure country all wearing black, drinking kool-aid, and waiting for comets that they're going to ride on. I know I mixed three different stories there. That's how we would look at someone today who

showed up saying things like this. Moses knew this was going to sound crazy to most people.

If we're honest this is a huge struggle we have with living on mission today. God has called us to tell others about Jesus. When you start doing this there's always that awkward feeling of knowing some of the things that you're going to say. I've got a relationship with God because a thirty-three year old Jewish guy who happened to be God died on a cross where he was punished by God. I now have a personal relationship with God. I talk to him regularly and he's involved in my every day life. So do you have any questions about that?

Moses had a third objection, and that's the one we run into here. I can tell them God sent me, but they aren't going to believe me. I could do everything you've told me to do and they might just laugh. They'll treat me like the guy that shows up on Purdue's campus preaching with a sandwich board.

We live in a culture driven by success. There are very few things I'll try more than once if I know I won't be successful or get better in the end. I'm not thrilled to admit this, but when the last summer Olympics were happening I caught a little Michael Phelps fever. It's okay, we all did. So I found a "swimming club" in town and decided I'd go at 6 AM everyday.

I swam for a couple of years in middle school and figured I'd be able to hop right back in. I went three times. While everyone else was doing their normal drills I had a floating board practicing breathing right because I couldn't figure it out. No matter what I did I always ended up with water in my mouth. Needless to say I wasn't going to spend much time being the guy at the end of the pool.

So God has called us to mission. Maybe you tried to talk about Jesus once and it didn't go so well. Someone asked you a question you didn't know the answer to and you felt silly. There's a chance someone just absolutely shut you down. You could be worried about losing a friend or straining a relationship. What hope do you have that if you live a life on mission God will do anything?

God made Moses a promise. If you do what I've called you to do, I will do a work to convince people. I will do something to show people that what you're saying is true. God promised Moses three different signs to confirm his message. Pick up in verse two.

*<sup>2</sup> The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." <sup>3</sup> And he said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. <sup>4</sup> But the LORD said to Moses, "Put out your hand and catch it by the tail"—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand—<sup>5</sup> "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."*

The first sign that Moses gives to Moses is the ability to turn his staff into a snake in the presence of Pharaoh and his leaders. There's more to this sign than simply being a cool trick. Why did God give Moses this ability?

Let's just be honest most people are weirded out by snakes. I was cutting the

grass on a riding mower one summer and all of a sudden this snake head popped out of the grass, and I was gone. As fast as my little riding mower could go I was on the throttle. In reality I could have run faster than this, but who's thinking clearly in that moment? I didn't care that the grass was only half mowed; it just stayed that way. Just so you don't think I was completely crazy, our neighbor killed the 5-6 foot snake a week later.

There were a lot of different snakes in Egypt. A lot of them could do some pretty nasty stuff to people. Several spells have been found from Egypt where magicians attempted to gain control over snakes and what they could do because of their power. For Moses to show up and apparently have control over snakes without any type of spell or trick would have been fairly convincing of the power of God to many people.

That's not the only sign that God gives Moses. Let's move down now to verse six.

*<sup>6</sup> Again, the LORD said to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. <sup>7</sup> Then God said, "Put your hand back inside your cloak." So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. <sup>8</sup> "If they will not believe you," God said, "or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign.*

Again God allows Moses to demonstrate God's power and authority. Moses placed his hand inside his cloak and when he took it out the Bible says it was "leprous like snow." When you encounter "leprosy" in the Old Testament it doesn't necessarily mean leprosy in a strict sense. Today we call it Hansen's disease, but this term for leprosy could refer to a number of skin diseases. That Moses skin was like snow probably had less to do with the color of the disease and more to do with the fact that this disease would cause his skin to flake off like snow (cf. Num. 12).

This skin disease was another example of God showing the power and authority he was giving Moses. For many people they believed that disease like this was a punishment or a judgment by the gods on someone (cf. Jn. 9:1-3). Moses now appears to have power over something only the gods can control. Again, God is clearly displaying to people through Moses that he is working through him.

God gives Moses one final sign. Pick up in verse nine.

*<sup>9</sup> If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground."*

Because we have running water in our houses it's difficult for us to understand the importance of the Nile to the people in Egypt. It was literally a source of life for them. For many the Nile was actually worshiped as a God because it was so central to all of life in Egypt.

We won't spend a lot of time on this because God will do something more dramatic with the Nile later, but again God was giving Moses power over something that only the gods should have been able to control. In these three signs Moses shows that God has given him power over the things that the gods in Egypt should have had control over. For many these signs should have been sufficient to believe that Moses was from God.

Now let's wrestle with how we fit in this story at this point. God called Moses to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt. God has called us to be on the mission of making God known and sharing the good news of Jesus with other people. What power and authority does God work through us toward this end?

Honestly it's easy to feel like if God would let us do similar signs that it would be easy to share our faith. "So do you love Jesus?" "No, I'm not really interested in religion." "Oh, well hang on just a second. Do you want a skin disease or a snake bite?" That seems to be a little more convincing than what we're working with right now.

So why doesn't God give us a similar ability to do incredible things so people will believe? If God is really concerned about being known wouldn't it make sense that he would do these big unbelievable signs so that people believed in him? Even if God gave people abilities like this today I don't think you would see a ton of people come to faith in Jesus. If you think that a sign like this would convince people to believe in Jesus you are way too optimistic about the hearts of people and their willingness to love God.

I can see this playing out way too clearly. You're living on mission telling someone about Jesus and God lets you throw your iPod down and turn it into a hamster. I know it's a stupid example, but just humor me for a second.

The person who witnessed this gets freaked out and starts to tell other people. Maybe some people start to listen to you because of this, but pretty soon the majority of people think you and your friends are absolutely crazy. On top of that more people are talking about what you were able to do rather than Jesus or the gospel.

So a news station picks this up with differing views on what happened. Pretty soon the news clip gets on You Tube and goes viral. Once it goes viral People Magazine TMZ, Entertainment Tonight and a number of other shows and their "experts" break down what happened.

It gets so popular that Dateline runs a special with scientists talking about what was happening in the minds of people who witnessed this incredible thing happening, and they decide that most of them had a Dad issue growing up so they wanted to see this thing happen.

A couple of weeks later David Blaine does a special where he does the exact same thing (the man floats)! Then there would be the books, movies, infomercials, t-shirts, and any other thing that could possibly make money. Finally, this sign that God allowed you to work would end up where everything that gets too popular ends up; as a spoof on the Soup being made fun of by Joel McHale in between the segments on the Kardashians and Sister Wives.

Tell me that's not exactly what would happen. Our situation and Moses' situation are similar because God placed a call on both, but the intended outcome is much different. I honestly believe that if Moses compared what he was attempting to

do with the call that God has placed on his people now he would think ours was much harder to accomplish.

Moses was speaking to political leaders about freeing slaves from captivity. He had to convince them that there was a power greater than them that they needed to listen to. He could do that with these types of signs and miracles, but we find out later in the story they didn't even believe his signs.

If you don't feel the weight of the mission that God is calling you to yet then let's lay it out clearly. God is asking you to convince people (who don't want convinced) to trust in a God (they don't want to trust in) that Jesus died for their sins (that they don't think they committed) and that he should now be Lord of their life (which they don't want).

This isn't ripping on people who don't know Jesus. This is just being honest about the reality of the human heart. People don't simply need to be persuaded about Jesus. They naturally have a bent against wanting to believe in God. If God called you to do this, and then left you to accomplish it on your own, he is literally asking you to do something that is impossible without him.

If this story gives us any encouragement it is that when God called Moses to do the impossible he worked through him to make it happen. As we live called lives on mission for God what are some of the ways that he has promised to work through us to accomplish this task?

1. The Holy Spirit illumines the Bible (gospel)
  - a. Text: 1 Corinthians 2:11-16

Earlier we mentioned one of the major issues that we are dealing with as we live on mission. People's hearts are hard toward spiritual truth. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, we are so stained by sin that our inclination is to run from God. I don't know of anyone that initially likes the idea of having a God over them that guides their life.

We like the idea of being in control of ourselves. Who doesn't remember how awesome those first few weeks at college were when you were literally on your own. Until you realized you would flunk out if you didn't change you loved it. Every human heart wants what it wants and doesn't want anyone else telling it what to do.

It's not only that our hearts are hard toward God, it's that because our hearts are hard we can't comprehend spiritual truth. Again, looking at the impossibility of this mission God is calling you to speak a message into someone's life that they can't understand unless he helps them.

The truth that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins and rose so you could have new life doesn't make sense to us personally unless the Holy Spirit does this work. We might be able to think intellectually through the ideas, but without the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit it won't be of any value. This is what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:11-16.

<sup>11</sup> For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup> Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. <sup>13</sup> And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

<sup>14</sup> The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. <sup>15</sup> The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. <sup>16</sup> "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

For most of us we can't explain how exactly this happens, but we've lived it. My guess is that very few of you can explain exactly how you became a Christian. For most people they weren't taught a truth they hadn't heard before. It wasn't some new piece of knowledge that someone gave you and it made Christianity click. For most people the way they describe becoming a Christian is that one day it just "clicked." John Wesley talks about one day as he was hearing the gospel his heart was "strangely warmed."

So what does this mean for us as we live on mission? You need to know this book. You need to understand the gospel, and exactly what Jesus did for you through his death on the cross. But, when the opportunity comes for you to share that with someone, you need to trust God that he will be the one to open a person's mind to this. The idea that you don't know enough or don't have the best argument flies in the face of this idea of illumination. God has used some of the worst explanations of the Gospel and some of the tackiest deas to save people. Why? Because any time the gospel is spoken God can do what he wants in the heart of someone.

## 2. The Spirit empowers gospel preaching

### a. 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5

We also need the Holy Spirit because as we speak the Gospel he does the work of empowering us for ministry. Paul says here in 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5 that he preached the gospel to this group of people. However, it wasn't him speaking that saved anyone. It was God working through his message and the listeners hearts in power that made the difference.

For some of you living on mission is terrifying. Right now you can't comprehend how you would ever share your faith with another person. In all honesty you're probably right. However, just as Moses was empowered by God to do his work the Holy Spirit does the work of empowering us for his ministry as we do it.

The flip side of this is some of you have never felt the Holy Spirit in your life in a powerful way because you are never doing any ministry. Many of us want the close

relationship with Christ that Paul describes in the Bible, but that life was born out of Paul's radical service to ministry. Paul says of his own life that it is poured out like a "drink offering" (2 Ti. 4:6). You don't have to be in full time ministry to live this way. If you will commit to living on mission for God at home, work, and in all of your life you will encounter this empowering presence of the Spirit at work in your life.

3. The Spirit brings regeneration  
a. John 3:6-7

The final promise of God we'll talk about this morning as we live lives on mission for the Gospel his promise to change people. God not only opens up the message for listeners and empowers those who preach, but he works the radical change in someone's life that brings them to God.

A lot of the fear we have in sharing the gospel is grounded in thinking that it is up to us to save somebody. What if they ask me about errors in the Bible? What if they have a higher degree than I do? What if they're better socially than I am? Sometimes I can't even convince my two year old of things, how am I supposed to persuade someone to change their entire life radically and follow Christ?

If we live like it depends on us to change someone then we won't ever share the gospel, and those around us will never be changed. However, if we commit to being in the lives of others, having spiritual conversations when they arise, and trusting in God for the results then fear will no longer inhibit us from doing what God has called us to do. What does it mean to be born again? The famous preacher Charles Spurgeon in thinking through this question had this to say.

*"One week-night, when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking much about the preacher's sermon, for I did not believe it. The thought struck me, How did you come to be a Christian? I sought the Lord. But how did you come to seek the Lord? The truth flashed across my mind in a moment—I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to make me seek Him. I prayed, thought I, but then I asked myself, How came I to pray? I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. How came I to read the Scriptures? I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that He was the Author of my faith, and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me, and from that doctrine I have not departed to this day, and I desire to make this my constant confession, "I ascribe my change wholly to God."<sup>1</sup>*

I think all of us could say the same thing about our own conversion. Why did you trust in Jesus? At the bottom of all of it is the simple fact that God changed you. He changed a heart that didn't love him, a mind that didn't understand him, and a will that didn't want him all to desire Christ for the first time.

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<sup>1</sup> Piper, J. (2000). *The pleasures of God : Meditations on God's delight in being God* (Rev. and expanded) (124). Sisters, Or.: Multnomah Publishers.

If Moses felt like the exodus from Egypt was all on his shoulders it never would have happened. In fact, most of his objections were right. He wasn't well known enough, he wasn't gifted enough, and he wasn't powerful enough to pull this mission off on his own.

Not to be a downer but the same is true of us. We want to see a major movement of God in this city it is going to rely upon God doing a work in and through us. None of us has the talent or ability to accomplish these things.