

I AM

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Young Moses, though he was raised as a prince in the house of the Pharaoh of Egypt, fled for his life after killing an Egyptian who was struggling with a fellow Hebrew.

He married a priest's daughter in neighboring Midian and became a shepherd for his father-in-law, and began to raise a family. Then, one day, something happened that would change Moses' life forever. It was more than an experience...it was a discovery. Learn about it in Exodus, chapter 3.

Moses' Discovery

¹ One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he went deep into the wilderness near Sinai, the mountain of God. ² Suddenly, the angel of the LORD appeared to him as a blazing fire in a bush. Moses was amazed because the bush was engulfed in flames, but it didn't burn up. ³ "Amazing!" Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go over to see this."

⁴ When the LORD saw that he had caught Moses' attention, God called to him from the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

"Here I am!" Moses replied.

⁵ "Do not come any closer," God told him. "Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground." ⁶ Then he said, "I am the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." When Moses heard this, he hid his face in his hands because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ Then the LORD told him, "You can be sure I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries for deliverance from their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. ⁸ So I have come to rescue them from the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own good and spacious land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites live. ⁹ The cries of the people of Israel have reached me, and I have seen how the Egyptians have oppressed them with heavy tasks. ¹⁰ Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You will lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

¹¹ "But who am I to appear before Pharaoh?" Moses asked God. "How can you expect me to lead the Israelites out of Egypt?"

¹² Then God told him, "I will be with you. And this will serve as proof that I have sent you: When you have brought the Israelites out of Egypt, you will return here to worship God at this very mountain."

¹³ But Moses protested, "If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' they won't believe me. They will ask, 'Which god are you talking about? What is his name?' Then what should I tell them?"

¹⁴ God replied, "I AM THE ONE WHO ALWAYS IS. Just tell them, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

The flaming bush got Moses' attention, but what happened *after that* was life-transforming. Moses had a conversation with God that shifted his perspective. And it was this new perspective that began to change his life.

Showing Up

The first thing Moses said when God called his name was, "I am here." Do you know that half the battle of serving God is achieved by just showing up?

When God prepares a situation for you, arranges circumstances for you, brings people across your path — people who can minister to you, people to whom you can minister; situations that require your input, circumstances that you require for moving forward — when God comes to meet with you, will you be there?

It was an unexpected meeting in an unassuming place, but Moses could answer, "I am here."

I Am Here, But I Can't Hear

God then identified Himself: "I am the God of your father — the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob." He described His compassion for the enslaved Hebrew people, and then gave His order: "Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You will lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

With the benefit of time for reflection, we can note that I AM was sending Moses: "I AM sending you." But all Moses could hear was, "sending YOU."

Isn't it amazing how often the world seems to revolve around you? Upon reflection, we know it isn't so. But all too often it seems that way. I feel self-conscious. The spotlight is on me. Everything depends on my choice, my response.

Of course, when connected to a masterful decision or a productive move, it may feel good. But connected to a faux pas or an obvious error, I have that unmistakable "want to get away" feeling. Is there a nearby shadow into which I could slink and disappear?

Who Am I?

When I AM sends you to someone, do you count it a joyous privilege or a dread burden? Jesus said, "*As the Father has sent me, so I AM sending you*" (John 20:21).

Moses began to slink away with this question filling his mind and mouth: "*Who am I* that I should do this thing?" This is why I have been addressing our identity in Christ for these past weeks. It is our one hope of real freedom.

We are inclined to think that our going and doing for God depends on *who we are*. That our effectiveness in living this life for Him depends on what we bring to the table. It does not.

God, who knows all things — including the number of hairs on our head and the thoughts in our minds — offered no answer to Moses' question ("Who am I?"), because it is the wrong question. It is not the issue.

Moses asked, "Who am I?" and God responded, "I will be with you."

To expand it, God said, “Who you are is of little consequence; who I am is of *great* consequence, and *I AM* will be with you.”

I AM will be with you. *“I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (Matthew 28:20). You can do whatever God asks you to do, because God will be with you to guide and enable you. What you bring to the table is of little consequence, compared to what He brings! His grace is sufficient for you.

God’s Identity

Returning to Moses’ story, he asked how he might identify God to the people. What should he call Him? God said, “I AM WHO I AM. Tell them I AM has sent me to you.” “I AM WHO I AM” is not a name, it is a description. God is known by many names, but there is no name that is sufficient to capture who He is. He is who He is.

We call Him Creator, for that is what He has done. But that is not all that he has done. He is also Savior and Deliverer and Healer. He is also Lord and King.

We call Him holy for that is His nature. But that is not all that He is. He is also loving and righteous and faithful.

All About Relationships

I am fascinated to see that when the God of the Bible identifies Himself, He most frequently identifies Himself by His relationship with His people.

That is not the case in other religions, where their God is identified primarily by His attributes. But the God of the Bible primarily identifies Himself by relationship: I AM the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

Exodus 3:15 God also said, “Tell them, ‘The LORD, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’ This will be my name forever; it has always been my name, and it will be used throughout all generations.”

Like it or not, God is known to humankind by His people. We are His ambassadors. Jesus said, *“By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”* (John 13:35). Not by our creed or our doctrine, but by our love, by our relationships. It is what sets our God apart, and it is what will set us apart in the eyes of the world.

Still Deaf and Dumb

Then God showed Moses miraculous signs: his shepherd’s staff became a serpent, then it became a staff again. His hand — just his hand — became leprous, then it became clean again, water poured on dry ground became blood.

Perhaps these signs indicated God’s power over the serpent (the devil) and over disease and over judgment. Regardless, they were not enough for Moses. They are not enough for most people. Some miracles are stunning when they happen, but are so unnatural that they soon become just a memory, often undistinguishable from a dream.

With his next breath, Moses reverted to thinking of himself alone:

Exodus 4:10 O Lord, I’m just not a good speaker. I never have been, and I’m not now, even after you have spoken to me. I’m clumsy with words.”

When faced with service for God, all of my perceived weaknesses and inadequacies swarm to the surface and assault my mind with the objection, "I can't do this! I'm not qualified. I don't have what it takes." Every week I wonder if I will get it right. If I look composed, it is only because I am trusting God to be with my mouth. I have to trust Him again every day.

Exodus 4:11 "Who makes mouths?" the Lord asked him. "Who makes people so they can speak or not speak, hear or not hear, see or not see? Is it not I, the Lord?"¹² Now go, and do as I have told you. I will help you speak well, and I will tell you what to say."

Owning Christ

And this is just the way it is with us. Identifying with Christ is not a one-time, get-it-all-together event. It is an everyday discipline of mind and behavior. Re-centering my world around Jesus Christ instead of myself. Again and again and again. My weaknesses come behind His strengths. My foolishness comes behind His wisdom. My uncertainty comes behind His faithfulness. My selfishness comes behind His compassionate love.

If I can do anything, it is because *He* is active in my life. If I am somebody, it is because *He* lives in me. All of my efforts amount to a pile of dust, unless and until *He* breathes on them.

Paul put it this way:

Galatians 6:14 *As for me, God forbid that I should boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that cross, my interest in this world died long ago, and the world's interest in me is also long dead.¹⁵ It doesn't make any difference now whether we have been circumcised or not. What counts is whether we really have been changed into new and different people.¹⁶ May God's mercy and peace be upon all those who live by this principle. They are the new people of God.*

So, come into the secret place, into the cleft in the rock, under the shadow of his wing, behind the cross. Hide your self in Him and let Him live His life through you.