

Sermon preached at Woodbury Community Church, Woodbury, MN on Sunday,  
January 29, 2012, by Rev. Brian D. Schulenburg

### **EXODUS 3:10**

10 Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

### **THE CHALLENGE #5** **WHEN GOD CHOOSES YOU**

Most of us have had the experience in our life where we have been asked to take on a task that seemed larger than life. Some of you can remember some of those first life experiences. Maybe you were in grade school and your very first major research project seemed larger than life. Maybe you were asked by a teacher to take the lead role in the class play, or sing a solo in front of the entire school. Maybe the larger than life tasks in your life came in the arena of work. Earlier than expected promotions were the reward for taking on tasks that others wouldn't take on. Maybe you can remember when your supervisor first came in to tell you, "We see something special in you. We'd like to give you an extra project, and if things go well with this, then there could be big things ahead for you in the firm."

It's special to be chosen, to be seen as someone who has risen to the top, capable of taking on complex projects. Sometimes it can feel like a curse. Maybe you don't want to take on another project. Maybe your calendar is already too full. Maybe your firm is expecting loads of extra work with no extra pay. Teachers have always been some of my biggest heroes. It's not uncommon for teachers in our school districts to be asked to take on more and more responsibility without any extra benefit, all because someone has to do the job.

If you are a people pleaser, it's easy to find yourself in a position where you are giving perhaps more than you should in multiple arenas of your life. To keep the peace at work, you take on responsibilities that others should. To keep the order at home, you do more than your fair share of work. To keep the organization running smoothly, you volunteer more for the sports team, church ministry team, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts or any number of other organizations than any one person should.

There are some things in life that we should just say, "No!" to. And, there are some things in life that we need to say, "Yes!" to. Today we're going to take a look at when saying, "No," just isn't an option.

John Hamby, in a sermon entitled, *Excuses Instead of Service*, wrote the following:

"Have you ever responded (that way) with excuses for God rather than obedience?"

\*You're asked to teach a class - the excuses start.

\* You're asked to serve in the nursery - the excuses start.

\* God put in on your heart to share your faith with a friend or neighbor – the excuses start.

\* You're made aware of someone with a need that you could provide – the excuses start.

\* In fact if you're asked to do just about anything for the Lord and the excuses start.

'I'm too busy, I'm already doing this, get someone else.'

Sometimes our excuses pile up and get in the way of doing something for God. I read a humorous story about some GI's on furlough that I think illustrates this.

The commanding officer was furious when nine GIs who had been out on passes failed to show up for morning roll call. Not until 7 p.m. did the first man straggle in. 'I'm sorry, sir,' the soldier explained, 'but I had a date and lost track of time, and I missed the bus back. Being determined to get in on time, I hired a cab. Halfway here, the cab broke down. I went to a farmhouse and persuaded the farmer to sell me a horse. I was riding to camp when the animal fell over dead. I walked the last ten miles, and just got here.'

Though skeptical, the Colonel let the young man off with a reprimand. However, after him, seven other stragglers in a row came in with the same story-had a date, missed the bus, hired a cab, bought a horse, etc. By the time the ninth man reported in, the colonel had grown weary of it. 'Okay,' he growled, 'now what happened to you?' 'Sir, I had this date and missed the bus back, so I hired a cab.' 'Wait!' the colonel screeched at him. 'don't tell me the cab broke down.' 'No, sir,' replied the soldier. 'The cab didn't break down. It was just that there were so many dead horses in the road, we had trouble getting through.' Excuses! (Contributed by John F. King ) Sometimes our excuses hold us back from accomplishing anything for God."<sup>1</sup>

If you are reading through the Bible in the Woodbury Community Church Challenge, this Tuesday you will find yourselves in the book of Exodus. Those of you who have grown up in church are going to find yourselves reading some very familiar, yet altogether thrilling stories. The Exodus is one of the most precious books of the Bible to the Orthodox Jew. Here we find the Children of Israel in bondage to the people of Egypt. The Pharaoh of Joseph's day is long gone. Joseph and his brother have passed away. Now the descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have become a mighty nation within a nation, and the Egyptian hierarchy is not pleased. So, the Israelites are made to work as slaves to the Egyptians. Those who were the descendents of the great leader Joseph, who had saved Egypt and much of the world from a great famine due to skilled planning and God's blessing were considered a scab upon the nation of Egypt.

So concerned was Pharaoh about the rate at which the Israelites were having children that he ordered that all of the newborn male infants born to Jewish slaves were to be killed. In Exodus chapter two we read about the birth of an extraordinary man named Moses.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.sermoncentral.com/print\\_friendly.asp?ContributorID=&SermonID=38562](http://www.sermoncentral.com/print_friendly.asp?ContributorID=&SermonID=38562)

3 When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank. 4 And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him. 5 Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it. 6 When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." 7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" 8 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the girl went and called the child's mother. 9 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. 10 When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, "Because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

Hollywood loves his story. There have been dozens of depictions of the story of Moses produced for the silver screen. Eventually Moses grew up, saw the injustice for which the Hebrews were being treated and killed a taskmaster who was abusing a slave. It was then that he fled to the desert, to a land called Midian, married a local woman, had a son, lived as a shepherd and hid in relative obscurity for some forty years.

The last three verses in Exodus 2 tell us what happened during that time.

23 During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. 24 And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. 25 God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.

Those verses are encouraging to me. The Israelites had been through so much trauma. They had experienced so much pain at the hands of their taskmasters. Like in the stories of Job, and Abraham, the story of Joseph in prison and the story of those who endured the great famine that we have already read about this year; God was working even through the pain. If Genesis and this early part of Exodus teach us anything, we should learn that God often times works through our pain in order to accomplish His greater purpose. Verses 24-25 show us that God hears, God remembers His promises, God sees and God knows. You can trust God!

Funny how we can give intellectual assent to that truth, but when the rubber meets the road, we sometimes have excuses for why we can't trust God. As Exodus chapter three opens, we find God ready to intervene for the people in the most unusual and unexpected of ways.

1 Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

Show Video Clip: *Moses and The Burning Bush* (5:15)

I love that video clip. As I said earlier there have been dozens of films produced that speak about this event, but most are historically inaccurate. This one almost got it right. As I watched the actor portraying Moses, I could feel the fear in body as he spoke to God. I could see the agony from within as he tried everything he could to not do what God was asking him to do.

In Exodus 3-4, Moses gives God five excuses for why he cannot do what it is that God is asking him to do. Moses saw himself as inadequate and not up for the task. God saw him as uniquely qualified to lead His children out of slavery and into the Promised Land. The problem was, Moses didn't want the job and didn't feel that he would ever be able to accomplish it even if he did want the job. Sometimes God calls us to do things that we think are absurd. When God calls you to do something, don't argue. Follow His lead. Don't make excuses. There is no better place for you to be than in the center of God's will.

Somebody once said, "God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called."

Jacob was a cheater, Peter had a temper, David had an affair, Noah got drunk, Jonah ran from God, Paul was a murderer, Gideon was insecure, Miriam was a gossip, Martha was a worrier, Thomas was a doubter, Sara was impatient, Elijah was moody, Moses stuttered, Zaccheus was short, Abraham was old, and Lazarus was dead. God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the CALLED!"

God would prove that to Abraham. And friends, if God has called you to do something, he will prove it to you as well. Let's take a look at Moses' five excuses and see what we can learn from them.

### **Excuse #1 – "Why Me?" – vs. 11-12**

God's call on Moses' life is summed up in Exodus 3:10.

10 Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

Now, after experiencing the amazing site of a burning bush, hearing the voice of God, speaking with Him, and hearing the Ultimate Boss give a command, Moses responds this way.

11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

I don't want to be too tough on Moses here, because I think many of us would respond the same way. "God, wouldn't it be a little bit more strategic to send someone who didn't grow up in the palace? Wouldn't it be more strategic to send someone that is well

known amongst the Jewish people, not someone who has been gone for 40 years? Wouldn't it be better to send someone who isn't wanted for murder?"

Moses' question is actually pretty theologically correct. Who are any of us to be used by God to do His work? But, Moses' question is wrong in the sense that ignores the fact that God has called Him to go into Egypt and bring the people of Israel out of their enslavement." If God has called us to do something, He is all we need to accomplish it."

Let me give you a theological equation that Moses needed to understand.

Moses + Everything The World Had To Offer Him – God = Nothing  
Moses + All of His Inadequacies + God = Everything He Needed

I've said it before, God will never ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, call you to do something that He will not also equip you to do.

12 He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

Moses was speaking to God on the very mountain that would be known to the Children of Israel as the Mountain of God. Mount Horeb, which is identified as the location of Moses at the beginning of the chapter is most likely the mountain range, with Mount Sinai, being a peak within the range where God regularly meets with Moses later in the book of Exodus. God answers Moses first excuse with the promise to be with him.

### **Excuse #2 – "By What Authority?" – vs. 13-15**

Moses wasn't going to just go on the word that God would go with Him. That alone should have been enough. I think God would have understood Moses initial question. It's natural to wonder, "Why me?" But now, Moses offers a second excuse.

13 Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" 15 God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

In the summer of 2005 I read the book, *I am not but I know I AM*, by Louie Giglio. If you haven't read that book, do. It's fantastic. In chapter three, Giglio talks about Moses' interaction with God here. I mean, God really gave Moses an interesting response. He said to tell the people, "I AM has sent me to you."

"Really, God, couldn't you come up with something better than that?"

But, I don't think there is a better name. Listen to some of Giglio's insight:

"God was telling Moses: I AM the center of everything. I AM running the show. I AM the same every day, forever. I AM the owner of everything. I AM the Lord. I AM the Creator and Sustainer of life. I AM the Savior. I AM more than enough. I AM inexhaustible and immeasurable. I AM God. In a heartbeat, Moses knew God's name - and something more. He finally knew his. For if God's name is I AM, Moses' name must be I am not. I am not the center of everything. I am not in control. I am not the solution. I am not all-powerful. I am not calling the shots. I am not the owner of anything. I am not the Lord."<sup>2</sup>

You would think that would be enough. Moses has an answer to why God has called him, and by what authority he can go to tell the people it's time to get out of Egypt. But, the excuses continue.

### **Excuse #3 – The “What if’s?” – 4:1-9**

Moses mind moves from practical questions to the hypothetical. I call this paralysis by analysis. This is the person who says, “What if it doesn't work?” and never considers, “What if it does?” Listen, if God has called you to do it, if it doesn't work, it's because that's part of His plan. You obey, and trust the results to Him.

1 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.’” 2 The LORD said to him, “What is that in your hand?” He said, “A staff.” 3 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. 4 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— 5 “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.” 6 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. 7 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. 8 “If they will not believe you,” God said, “or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. 9 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.”

What Moses is showing us in his question in verse one, is that he doesn't have the faith to accept God at His word. So, God gives Moses three signs to prove that what He said is true. And you would think that would be enough for anyone to move forward in obedience to God's calling.

But Moses has some Minnesota and Midwestern stubbornness in him. And so he offers excuse number four.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://bschulenburg.blogspot.com/2005/08/i-am-not-but-i-know-i-am-by-louie.html>

#### **Excuse #4 – Look at my Great Obstacle – 4:10-12**

10 But Moses said to the LORD, “Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.” 11 Then the LORD said to him, “Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? 12 Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.”

We saw the fantastic portrayal of Moses on that mountain. He is stuttering and shuttering in front of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I am slow of speech and tongue. I have a HUGE obstacle God. How in the world am I supposed to speak for the people with my stuttering problem? It reminds me of the true story behind the Academy Award winning film, *The King's Speech*. After his brother abdicates the throne, George ('Bertie') reluctantly becomes King. “Plagued by a dreaded stammer and considered unfit to be king, Bertie engages the help of an unorthodox speech therapist named Lionel Logue. Through a set of unexpected techniques, and as a result of an unlikely friendship, Bertie is able to find his voice and boldly lead the country through war.”<sup>3</sup> Sometimes the obstacles in front of us seem like large boulders that we are absolutely incapable of moving. In Moses' case it was his stuttering. God once again shows that He is bigger than the obstacle.

“Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or death, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.”

One command that God has given all of you is to be a testimony for Him in this generation. He has called each of you to be people who make disciples. That's what we'll be talking about in this Saturday's Journey module of our LifeFlow training. In the last part of Matthew 28:20, after instructing his disciples to make disciples Jesus said, “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” What a promise! That is essentially the same promise that God gave to Moses! You have assurance that no matter what obstacles are before you, God goes with you. You + God = Everything!

#### **Excuse #5 – Send Someone Else – 4:13-17**

Surely Moses has learned his lesson now! Right? The video clip I showed you ended here. But, Moses didn't.

13 But he said, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.”

We've all been here too, haven't we?

Please? Please, God! It's going to be so hard! I'm just not up to it. I can't! I won't! Send someone else! You almost feel sorry for Moses here. But, God doesn't. God is upset. The next verses show us that there comes a point where God gets tired of our excuses.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1504320/>

14 Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, "Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. 15 You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. 16 He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. 17 And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs."

There is no more room for excuses. The time for bargaining is over. Every one of Moses' objections has been met by a response where God has it under control. This was a job that God had for Moses to do, and Moses would do it, whether he wanted to or not. Why? Because God chose Moses! Could He have chosen someone else? Sure. But, He wasn't going to. It was God's sovereign will for Moses to be the one who be His voice in freeing the Jewish people.

At the beginning of the sermon I said, "There are some things in life that we should just say, 'No!' to. And, there are some things in life that we need to say, 'Yes!' to. Today we're going to take a look at when saying, 'No,' just isn't an option."

B. J. Miller once said, "It is a great deal easier to do that which God gives us to do, no matter how hard it is, than to face the responsibilities of not doing it."<sup>4</sup> "No," isn't an option when God chooses us. Most of us wouldn't dream of saying, "No," to a reasonable request by an employer, coach, or teacher. Why is it so easy to say, "No," to God? May today be the day you say, "Yes," to whatever it is you've been avoiding! After all, you are not, but you know, I AM!

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<sup>4</sup> *Today In The Word*, November, 1989, p.11