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## GOD'S CALL AND OUR RESPONSE

Businesses grow and expand by getting new business in foreign countries. They will train people in their domestic business so they can effectively operate in the foreign countries. You can find available training regarding the culture, the language, business practices, legal issues, and regulatory concerns. Most of the time when people are given an opportunity for a foreign assignment, they jump at the chance. They not only see the opportunity to grow with the company, but they also like the adventure and education such an experience brings to them. The typical practice for most companies is to pick the person and then give them the training. You can imagine the disappointments and problems it would cause if a person were given all the necessary training before they were asked and then they turned down the transfer. You might wonder why anyone would turn down such an opportunity. The reasons could be fear, family concerns, or outside interests. So, to avoid such a possibility, an understanding is reached at the beginning. The problem with that is the training for the new assignment is usually on a "crash course" basis and the person goes off less prepared than he should be.

In the Kingdom of God, when God is beginning a new work or "expanding the business" he will normally pick a person through whom He works to get the job done. Since God knows the end from the beginning, He can plan and provide training to prepare a person over a long period. The training that God gives is in the form of our life experiences. For the Christian, every experience can be used by God to prepare us for the work for which He has called us (Rom. 8:28). As it turns out, God does not tell us at the start what He is preparing or training us to do. When the time is right and the training has reached the right point (and God brings these two together), He calls us to the work for which He prepared us.

When God calls, what should our response be? I'm sure that it would please God for us to be as Isaiah was and to say, "Here am I, send me." Very few of us do that. We are more like Moses who looked for any excuse to avoid the call of God. But God would not accept Moses' excuses. He listened and provided support, but Moses was going to do what God called him to do. We can look back on his life and see that God had spent 80 years preparing Moses for the job.

God had already started the work of delivering the Children of Israel from bondage in Egypt so He could take them to the land of Canaan that He promised to give to Abraham and his descendants. He allowed conditions to get worse so the people would not want to stay in Egypt. In a spiritual sense, Egypt is the sinful condition in which a person lives before salvation. Unless the situation gets really bad, most people will not want to leave that life and make a major adjustment in their lifestyle to walk with God. This is why crises in people's lives are good opportunities to confront them with the gospel message. God had not only prepared the Israelites to want to leave, but He also had prepared Moses for the task of confronting Pharaoh and leading the Israelites out of their bondage.

God initiated the encounter with Moses at the burning bush and issued an invitation for Moses to be a part of what God was already doing. He spoke to Moses from the burning bush and Moses was forced into a crisis of decision. To decide to follow God would require a major adjustment in his life.

### GOD CALLS

<sup>10</sup>Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." <sup>11</sup>But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" <sup>12</sup>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." <sup>13</sup>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?" <sup>14</sup>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.'" <sup>15</sup>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. Exodus 3:10-15 (ESV)

Here we see God's invitation to Moses to join Him in the work He had already started to bring "My people . . . out of Egypt." This is the same call that Jesus gave to the church in the Great Commission. If Egypt represents bondage to sin, then the directive of Jesus to "go into all

the world and preach the gospel" is a call to bring all people out of their spiritual Egypt.

What did Moses say? It was not "Here am I, send me." Instead it was "Who am I, that I should go?" God could have asked him in return, "Who are you, that you should not go?" Why do we think we can say "No" to God? In Moses case, it was lack of confidence. He had started out so well. He had the best education, the finest of food and clothing, a bright future in ruling Egypt and it had all fallen down around him. Now he was on the back side of the desert herding sheep for his father-in-law. He probably thought of himself as a failure. Our human tendency is to write such people off. If they don't have super confidence and are timid, then we have no place for such people in business or industry. But God is not that way. In fact, it is difficult for God to use us if we are self confident. When we are self confident, then it is rare that we can come to the point of being confident in God. If Moses was going to do the work to which God called him, then He would do so because he relied on God and not himself.

Notice the reassurance that God gave to him. He said, "Certainly I will be with you." We can be smug in our insulated world and say, "Well, what else would a person need? If God is with us, then that is enough." This is a true statement, but saying it and walking in it are drastically different. We can "talk the talk," but the real question is can we "walk the walk?"

What else did Moses need? Look at his question. "What is Your name?" He didn't put it quite that way, but in essence Moses was asking to know the nature of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God's answer has puzzled people ever since. I AM THAT I AM is thought to communicate the idea of "existence." In other words, God's nature is shown in all the creation. The creation is an expression of the nature of God. This may be what Paul meant when he said in Romans 1:20 "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

## GOD ENABLES

<sup>1</sup>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.'" <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." Exodus 4:1-5 (ESV)

Moses' concern that people would not believe him if he told them "the Lord has appeared to me" is very understandable. You think about today's world and your own reaction if someone would tell you "the Lord appeared to me." God recognized the need for evidence for the Children of Israel. Except for what had been passed along from generation to generation and the evidence each could see in the creation itself, they had never seen the power of God at work. This is not much different from the situations that many of our missionaries find themselves when they go into countries that have barely or never heard of Jesus. God enabled Moses with special ability to deal with that situation. The rod that turned into a snake was so impressive that it frighten Moses.

Moses was still trying to find an excuse. This time it involved his lack of ability as a public speaker. I wonder how many times people have used such an excuse to turn down job responsibilities in the church. Moses kept forgetting that God was already at work and that He was going to continue to work. All God was doing was to invite Moses to join Him in the work that God would do through Moses. God summed it up nicely in saying: "Go, and I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you shall say." We need to hear God saying this same message to us.