

# “Meeting the I AM” // Exodus 3:1–4:17 // Rescue: The Book of Exodus #3y<sup>1</sup>

## Exodus Bumper

### Intro

OK... if you have a Bible, and I hope you do, meet me in Exodus 3.

I think this chapter is going to be really helpful for some of you today, because this encounter speaks to anyone who has ever found themselves feeling insecure about something, or fearful about some assignment you’ve been given and your ability to measure up to it. A new task, a new assignment, a new role.

I read an article this week about the prevalence of “**impostor syndrome**” in our culture, the idea that you’re a fraud, totally insufficient for the position you’re in, and soon everyone will find out. People you’d never think have it are consumed by it.<sup>2</sup> Maya Angelou said, “Each time I write a book, every time I face that yellow pad, the challenge is so great. I have written eleven books, but each time I think, ‘Uh oh, they’re going to find out now. I’ve run a game on everybody and they’re going to find me out.’”

**Insecurity is a voice inside you that whispers, “I am not \_\_\_\_\_ enough.”**

<sup>1</sup> Sources consulted: L. Michael Morales, *Exodus Old and New: A Biblical Theology of Redemption* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Press, 2020). Tim Keller: Talk on Moses: “The Lord of Salvation”, Exodus 3; Jen Wilkin, “A Leader Prepared”, Session 3 of God of Deliverance Bible Study, February 28, 2022; Jen Wilkin, “Sent Back to Egypt”, Session 4 of God of Deliverance Bible

What most often goes into that blank for you? I’m not... Smart enough; funny enough; pretty enough; spiritual enough; young enough... What is it, when you are nursing your doubts and insecurities, goes in that blank for you?

BTW, many of our **brothers and sisters in our prison** campuses have told me they feel this when it comes time for their release. “*I’m not sure how to function anymore in the real world! I don’t know if I have what it takes anymore.*”

**Exodus 3 opens up** with Moses as a pretty defeated man. He’d started out his life with all the advantages. Remember, he was a “beautiful” child, by his own description, which means he didn’t lack confidence, but I think it’s safe to assume he was a **pretty good-looking guy. He’d been raised in Pharaoh’s house**, which means he had access to all the advantages of royalty. But then one day, at around age 40, he got really incensed at the Egyptian mistreatment of some of his fellow Jews, and he felt like he was supposed to do something about that, and he ended up killing an Egyptian soldier. Pharaoh reacted by putting a death sentence on his head, and then the Jewish people he’d tried to rescue rejected him, too. In chapter 2:14, when Moses came to them, they said, “*Who are you, pal, and who appointed you our savior?*” (That’s a **bad day at work**, right? Everybody hates you, your boss fires you; then you kill someone on the way out to the parking lot). That was Moses around his 40th birthday.

Needless to say, it left Moses feeling **pretty defeated**. And so between chapters 2 and 3, Moses wanders in the desert for 40 years nursing that failure. His confidence had been shaken to his core.

Study, February 28, 2022; Joby Martin, “[Exodus - Week 2: Calling](#)”, January 11, 2015, The Church of Eleven22; Tyler Staton, “[The Wounded Healer](#)”, June 25, 2023, Bridgetown Church.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.forbes.com/sites/taraswart/2019/08/08/why-you-need-to-understand-the-neuroscience-of-imposter-syndrome/>

**3:1** Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro...

Listen, when you're approaching retirement and you're still living in your father-in-law's basement watching *his* sheep that's a 'fail' in any culture, Amen?

...and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. (Mt Horeb, btw, is another name for Mt Sinai. This is ultimately where God will descend before Israel in a cloud and give them the Law and the blueprints for the tabernacle. At this very place. And that's an important detail we'll come back to.)

2 And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. 3 And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." 4 When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see (BTW, I can't help but wonder, how different would Moses' life have gone had he not stopped?), God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." 5 Then (the Voice in the bush) said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6 And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

7 Then the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them... *All that is extremely important in this encounter.*

Vs 8, again, So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the (Uptights; those are the Baptists) Jebusites.

<sup>10</sup> So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

<sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, "*Who am I* that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

- Scholars say that this question, btw, is an echo of a question the Israelites had thrown into **Moses's face** the 1<sup>st</sup> time he tried to rescue them. If you remember 2:14, when Moses showed up to help them, they literally said, "*Who are you?*"
- Scholars say Moses' repetition of the question here shows that their criticism, their doubt had seeped down into his soul. Has that happened to you? Someone's criticism--a parent's, a teacher's, a coach's, a spouse's, a friend's--has gone on for so long, that the words have seeped into your soul? Whenever you are about to do something, their voice is the soundtrack that plays in your ears? Who do you think you are? You're not good enough, smart enough. You've never been good enough!" That's what is happening with Moses.

I want you to notice that God is very sensitive responding to Moses, the first couple of times, at least. Because he knows where Moses is coming from:

<sup>12</sup> And God said, "But I will be with you. (He doesn't rebuke Moses, but also doesn't do positive-self-talk with Moses. He doesn't say,

- "Moses, Look into the mirror and **repeat after me**: 'My name is Moses, and I am a smart, funny, and doggonit, people like me.'" Visualize taking Pharaoh down...)

None of that. Just "I will be with you." Vs 13, Moses replies: <sup>13</sup> 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?"

\*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.'"

This is the personal name for God. In Hebrew, "Yahweh=" which is built on the 4 Hebrew consonants: YHWH (Yodh, Heh, Waw, Heh), which in Hebrew also spells "I AM."

Your Bible may write it like this: LORD (small caps). Now, what's interesting, when you read Genesis, this is the name that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had all called God by, but up until now, in Exodus, everyone has referred to God as "Elohim", which is more like a title-- it's like saying, "Pastor," or "Mr. President," "Your Honor"--a title you call someone, not an intimate name you use with them. The author is showing us that, somewhere along the way, Israel had forgotten God's personal name, Yahweh. He'd become distant to them. A God they feared, but not one they knew or trusted in.

So God reveals this name again to Moses. It's a personal name. It's also a **mysterious name**.

- I just AM. In Hebrew, names were a big deal. They almost always indicated where you were from or whose name you were. In saying "I AM," God was saying, "I **don't have a beginning or ending**. I didn't come from anywhere; I am not going anywhere. I have always been there and will always be there."
- And now we see the symbolism of the fire in the bush. The text says the fire burned in the bush without burning up the bush. **Fires need fuel**. But the fire Moses saw was self-sustaining; it needed no EXTERNAL fuel, so it burned in the bush without burning UP the bush.
- **God, the eternal I AM, needs no external fuel**. Nothing preceded him. Nothing created him. If you could go back to the beginning of how this universe started, he'd be there, just as he is... eternal, unchanged, without beginning or end.
- **Scholars say' that 'Yah-weh'** is supposed to sound like breathing, with an exhale and inhale. He's our breath, the basis of

everything. **He is the source that gives life to everything else and he'll be there when all of it ends.**

**If you try to get your mind around that**, it will **implode**, and I already see sparks and smoke coming out of some of your ears, and that's ok. Your mind is finite, wired in time, for time, mathematically incapable of thinking back beyond the boundaries of time. But there has to be something beyond the beginning, because the universe can't be eternal. Even some of our famous atheist scientists acknowledge that:

- **Carl Sagan, for example**, freely acknowledged the problem of an infinite universe. It's self-evident that nothing x nobody can't = everything. He called this one of the universe's irresolvable mysteries. He famously said, "The universe is not obliged to make sense to us: (and it doesn't.)"
- **Stephen Hawking, in his *Brief History of Time***, talks about the challenge of imagining something "before" the Big Bang (what's before the Big Bang? What caused the Big Bang?), but doesn't have any resolution to it.

**Sadly, both those guys refuse to allow that what's behind it could be God, but** they leave themselves in a dilemma, claiming that nature has to be responsible for something for which there can be no natural explanation, something not mathematically possible within the finite set of materials we have to work with.

The Bible doesn't explain it all, it just recognizes that there is something nature alone can't explain, and that is "supernatural" or "above nature" (which is what 'super-natural' means). And that is the great **I AM**, the one without beginning or end, the eternal present, the one who just *is*.

- **He doesn't show up before Moses with a philosophy book and explanations of himself; Moses couldn't have grasped them if God gave them.**

- **He does expose us, occasionally, to mind-bending things for which there is no natural explanation.** Like, a burning bush. Or the life and resurrection of Jesus. Or fulfilled prophecy.
- Things about which you say, “I don’t know how to explain what’s there, but there’s something there beyond the physical world.”

Did you notice, by the way, that Moses **stopped** and turned aside. Moses stopped, and THAT’S when God spoke to him. That’s happening to some of you right now. Someone invited you here, something has been happening in your life—God is saying, “Stop! Turn aside and I have something to say to you.”

**That’s another sermon for another day. For right now, I want to show you what this encounter indicates about God’s involvement in our lives, too.** Scripture shows us **5 crucial principles** about how we encounter God.

## 1. God Takes the Initiative, Not Us (vv 7–8)

*God is the one who starts this conversation.* Moses wasn’t out on the mountain looking for God, asking God to help him with his plan to liberate Israel. No, rescue was God’s idea; God takes the initiative to come to Moses and he invites him into this plan. **Vs. 7:** “*I have seen*” and “*I have heard*” and “*I have come down.*”

In ALL the great movements in the Bible, God is the one who takes the initiative. It’s never some man or woman in Scripture who says to God: “OK, God, it’s time for deliverance, and here’s the plan, and here’s how I need you to help me.” Those kinds of situations always turn out badly--like Moses in the previous chapter killing the Egyptian. No, in all the great stories of the Bible, God takes the initiative and calls a man or woman or group of people to *his* purposes.

We laugh, but most of us don’t think like that, do we? We see ourselves as the initiator in almost everything we are doing, and, if anything, you’re trying to get God to come alongside your plans and bless them. But see, you’ve reversed the process: God is the initiator, rescue belongs to him; he merely invites us into what he’s doing. ***In the divine dance, God always takes the lead.***

BTW, when you get the order right, you don’t even have to pray about your plans as much, because God’s plans come pre-blessed, since they were his ideas to begin with.

**God takes the initiative, not us. But, there’s a balance to this point.**

## 2. God Moves In Response to Prayer

**So, it’s clear that God takes the initiative, but it’s also true that in this chapter God ties his moving to the people’s prayer.** Laced throughout this story are references to the cries of the people: **vs 7**, God says, “I have heard their cry.” (vs 7). **Or the way chapter 2 ended, “(Israel’s) cry for rescue from slavery came up to God.” (2:23)**

**So I want us to put these two things together.** We can only join God in what he’s doing--BUT, we live in a posture of crying out to God TO DO something.

- And see, that’s **why we have times like these 21 days of fasting and prayer.** We’re putting together **both sides of this equation:** We’re pleading with God to move in our midst. “God, your people need you. People in this community need you. People in MY family need you. **I NEED YOU.** O Yahweh, hear my cries of distress and come to rescue us!”
- God comes in response to his people’s cries, and that’s why we have to be serious about prayer. Over the break, I heard our friend **Jon Tyson** speak, and he drew a fascinating contrast between two villages in Jesus’ life: Nazareth and Bethany. Nazareth was the village where Jesus had grown up. His relatives

lived there; his elementary school teachers and first Sabbath instructors lived there. The first person to give him a job lived there. He had a lot of natural affection for that place. But, Jesus was consistently questioned and doubted there. And, as a result, Jesus did very few miracles in Nazareth.<sup>3</sup>

- Bethany was where he did a lot of his miracles. Bethany was where he raised Lazarus. Do you ever ask, “Why there, and not Nazareth?” Think about what else happened to Jesus in Bethany. Bethany was where Mary had sat at Jesus’ feet desperate to hear him; Bethany was where she poured out the ointment at Jesus’ feet in the week before his crucifixion. **And, get this**, after Jesus resurrected, Bethany was the place he went--Acts 1, it was where he ascended from.
- Nazareth was where Jesus was FROM, Bethany is where he went TO. Nazareth was where Jesus grew up, but Bethany was where he showed up. Because that’s where he was wanted. There were some dead people left in graves in Nazareth because Jesus wasn’t wanted there.<sup>4</sup>

**Summit, the question is**, “How much do we want Jesus *here*?” I don’t want dead people ‘left in graves’ here. Because how much we want Jesus is shown by how diligently we pray during seasons like this.

- **Jim Cymbala** always said, “*You can tell how popular the pastor is at a church by who shows up on Sundays to hear preaching. You can tell how popular Jesus is at the church by who shows up at prayer meeting.*”
- Thanks for being here this weekend, I hope to see you this coming Friday, because this Friday, we come to cry out to God... It’s not a performance. We cry out to God because we’re desperate to see him work. Or... *Are you desperate?*

**We have seasons of fasting and prayer because we want God to move**; and, we fast because we want to be sensitive to where he’s

moving. **I’ve told you**: fasting doesn’t put God in a better mood to hear us (the blood of Jesus is all we need for that). No, fasting puts us in a better posture to hear from him, so we can pray more effectively--because the prayers that start in heaven are the ones heard by heaven.

### 3. Because God is the Initiator, He is the Supplier, Too

Because God took the initiative, he was responsible to supply all the power. So, when Moses asked God, “Who am I and how am I sufficient for this task?” God didn’t respond by affirming something about Moses. He simply said, “I am with you.” *From this point on, it matters less who you are and more who I am.*”

In chapter 4, Moses again objects to God’s choice of him. Look at it: In vs 10 of chapter 4 Moses describes himself as being “slow of speech and tongue,” which scholars say mean he may have had a speech impediment.

**At this point**, God’s answers become a bit more direct, because his questions have gone from insecurity to unbelief, and eventually God says, **vs 11**, “Moses, will you shut up about your mouth? Who do you think made man’s mouth? And I’ve got way bigger things for you than giving speeches anyway. I’m going to give you the power to make hail fall from the sky and to turn the Nile to blood. I’ll be the power in all that you will do. I can handle your words.”

Vs 13: Moses persists a 4th time, **13** “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.” Verse **14**: Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he said, “Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite...” God said, “If you insist that you can’t do the speaking part, I’ll send Aaron along and he can speak in your place.” BUT, that

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 13:58

<sup>4</sup> Jon Tyson, “The Unwanted God,” Passion 2025, first session.



disbelief cost Moses pretty dearly! Because, you see, Aaron ends up being a pretty unreliable lieutenant. At one point, he leads the children of Israel to construct a golden calf in Moses' absence, and in the book of Numbers he gets really publicly critical of Moses.<sup>5</sup>

**Hear this--this is an important lesson.** *The great temptation in any divine assignment is always to try to supplement the promises of the Spirit by the power of the flesh.* To find an "Aaron" that feels more reliable than God's promise. Listen: In any divine assignment, there will come a time of testing where you feel like you can't do it, and in that moment you'll be tempted to try to accomplish by the flesh what can only be done by the Spirit.

- Abraham did this with Ishmael, remember? God promised to give him and his wife Sarah a son in their old age, but Abraham got impatient and he turned to Hagar, his younger house servant, and impregnated her to help God out with his promise. But that union produced Ishmael, and Ishmael and his descendants became a major source of strife to Abraham's descendants for many years to come.
- The Apostle Paul uses Abraham and Hagar as a metaphor in the book of Galatians to never try finishing in the flesh what God promises through the Spirit!

In any divine assignment, there will come a time of testing where you feel like you can't do it, and in that moment you'll be tempted to try to accomplish by the flesh what can only be done by the Spirit.

**Now, some of you at this point say. OK, Pastor; I get this, but practically, what does this look like?** Because I don't want to try to accomplish something in the flesh, but I also don't think God wants me to sit around and do nothing." I mean, "I'm working to provide for myself. Is that trying to help God out in the flesh." I work hard to study for sermons, using all my intelligence and skill and energy to

make them as good as possible. Am I trying to supplement the Spirit's power with my flesh?" Or, you say, "I'm doing my best trying to parent these kids. As a parent, I don't sit around and say, "Well, I'm just gonna let go and let God and not do anything because it's only a Spirit thing."

So, on the one hand, we don't want to take over in the flesh what God can only do in the Spirit, but we also know we're supposed to use the means God gave us. **Do you ever have that question?** What does it actually mean to trust God? How do I know if I'm acting in the Spirit or acting in the flesh?

**GREAT question.** Here's my answer: **There's two tell-tale signs you've taken something over in the flesh.** They are **(A) You compromise the laws of God** or **(B) You lose the peace of God.**

- **You compromise the laws of God.** That's what Abraham and Moses did. Abraham took on a mistress not his wife to obtain the heir; Moses killed a guy. For you, it might look like this: in an attempt to financially get stable, you cheat on your taxes; or you overwork and cheat your family; or you fail to tithe. You're breaking the laws of God in order to accomplish some purpose you think is good.
  - Or you're not happy in your marriage so you leave it to find happiness in another relationship. Or you aren't content to wait on God's choice for your marriage so you lower your standards and date someone you shouldn't be dating or start living with your boyfriend or girlfriend because you don't want to be single.
  - **You compromise the laws of God in an attempt to accomplish the purposes of God.**
- Here's the other *tell-tale sign*: **You lose the peace of God.** This is what more often happens to me. You can tell you've taken something over in the flesh because you start to worry about it all

<sup>5</sup> Exodus 32; Numbers 12

the time. You carry the weight of the assignment on you. It keeps you up at night and you lose sleep over it. You have this frenetic sense of panic, desperation: *I've got to fix this. I've got to take care of it.* As a parent I experience this. You start to carry all the weight. Or, "What if I don't do everything right?" You think, "My kids are making bad choices, what did I do wrong?" I'll tell you from experience, that is a crushing, shame-inducing weight.

I heard **Tim Ferris, the leadership guru**, talk about this practice that he instituted in the early days of one of his start-up companies that helped me out so much. He hired a virtual assistant in India who would take care of online tasks, pay bills, make reservations and so forth. At the end of every work day, he'd send her an email with things to do, and because the day/night is flipped over there, she'd work through the night and it would all be done and waiting for him when he got up the next morning. Well, one afternoon, on a whim, as he was writing out his list for her, he wrote down, *"and I'm worried about this problem in our company and it's keeping me up at night. So, I want you to worry about that for me tonight."* He said when he got up the next morning, he had an email from her which said, "Dear Mr. Ferris, just wanted you to know I was up all night worried sick about that thing, and now I turn it back over to you." He said, "I know it's stupid, and I don't know what it was, but just knowing she was over there worrying about these things helped me sleep at night. That if she was worrying about it, I didn't have to." I read that and I thought, "Well, that's what God tells me to do but it's not stupid. To cast my burdens on him and let carry bear the weight of these things. He stays up at night so I don't have to, and I just get up every morning and do what he tells me to do."

Listen, I get up everyday now—in fact, this is why I do my quiet time in the morning, because I know that every day, J.D. needs to hear this—I get up everyday and remind myself that all God invites me to do is join him in what he's doing because rescue belongs to him, start to finish. Whether I'm talking about reaching somebody for Jesus,

parenting my kids, providing for my family, writing a message, or producing fruit in my spiritual life—he carries the weight in those things. Rescue belongs to him. In all of these he's the Actor, I just join him. He's the I AM, I'm the I'm not, and that's why he and I are a match made in heaven. I am a big ball of helpless need; he's the endless I AM.

I've told you I love **Eph 2:10**, and I quote it to you all the time: *God has preordained good works that we should go and walk in them.* "Preordained" means God has already appointed them. It means he's already decided what they are. And that means the power to do them is already supplied. I just gotta go join God in what he's doing, because the initiator is also the supplier. I'm telling you, it's an incredibly peaceful way to live!

#### 4. God Heals Your World from the Place He Healed You

- It can't be accidental that ***Mount Horeb, aka Mt Sinai***, where God calls Moses and heals him of his shame and insecurity, is the very place God will use Moses to give the 10 Commandments and lay the plans for the tabernacle.
- This is another pattern you see over and over in the Bible: Your brokenness becomes the place from which God uses you in the lives of others!
- In 2 Corinthians, Paul said to the Corinthians: **"Blessed be the... God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."** (2 Cor 1:3–4)
- It is from the place of your brokenness, where you received comfort, that you most often become an instrument of healing. And so, for God's servants, he usually takes them through a wilderness of failure before using them.

- **You can see it with Paul. Before his conversion, Paul had seen himself as a pretty capable instrument for God.** He was “a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee of the Pharisees.” God had to take all that pride and self-confidence out of him by cutting him down. He struck him blind for a while, then made him live in obscurity for 17 years, then gave him a permanent thorn, a weakness in the flesh that Paul pleaded for God to take away and he never did. God was breaking Paul so he could use Paul.
- We can see it in the transformation of his name: Saul was Paul’s pre-Jesus name, and Saul was a strong Jewish name. It was taken from the King who stood head and shoulders above everyone else. The name “Paul,” by contrast, literally meant “small.” In order to be useful in God’s kingdom, ***Saul the mighty needed to become Paul the small.*** Because God could not use Saul. ***Saul the accomplished Pharisee couldn’t help the churches. He couldn’t write letters that would help me. Saul the perfect Pharisee might impress the churches, but he couldn’t help them, but the “Paul” that had walked through pain and failure—the Paul who believed he was the chief of sinners, who could testify that God will be faithful even in our darkest days—that’s a guy who can help me.***
- **The best parts of Jesus** you can only learn in the valley of the shadow of death. **God has to transform you** from Saul the Mighty into Paul the Small
- In fact, A.W. Tozer famously said it like this: **“It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until he has hurt him deeply.”<sup>6</sup>**
- ***It’s not that God is the one wounding you, but he’s allowing you to be wounded so you can testify to his healing and his help.***
- ***So, where has he allowed you to be wounded? That’s likely where he’ll use you because you’ll be able to minister to people***

out of the place of your woundedness. Your ***misery*** becomes your ***ministry***.

- ***One commentator says: Moses spent 40 years in Egypt becoming something. Then he spent 40 years in the desert learning he was nothing. Then he spent 40 years in the wilderness proving God was everything—and he could do that because of those 40 years in the desert. He could say, “I’ve known that fear; I’ve heard those voices; I’ve felt that shame. And I’m telling you, all that you need is the great I AM!”***

***Y’all, I look back on my life now, at 32 years old... and I recognize that the most valuable places in my life, the places I’ve grown most, the places I can now be most helpful to you, have very rarely been places I’ve done well. They almost always flow from the places I’ve failed or struggled and found God faithful anyway.***

- ***(And I know you’re like, “Ooooh, tell us all about those places, Pastor... and I do from time to time, but you know, some of it is too personal and embarrassing. But those are the places I can best help you from, because like Charles Spurgeon said: Those were the places the storm waves of my life pressed me up against the Rock of Ages.”***
- The best of what I give to you each weekend comes from those places. I’ve always loved this quote by the great missionary **Hudson Taylor: “God wants to give you something far better than riches and gold—or personal charisma or talent—and that is helpless dependence upon him.”**
- And that’s something I can pass on to you: Whatever charisma or talent I have... Whether it’s a little or a lot, I can’t pass that on to you. But what I CAN pass on to you is his faithfulness when you depend on him. I don’t know who you are or what situation you are in, but what I can give to you is a God who is always and infallibly the great I AM.

<sup>6</sup> A. W. Tozer, *The Root of the Righteous*, 144.

<sup>7</sup> My paraphrase.



- So, where is happening to you right now? Where is he letting you experience failure? Where is he letting you feel your inabilities?
- Maybe in your marriage? Your parenting? In a job failure... Maybe it's something that has happened to you! Or, even as you wrestle with an addiction.
- Count on it: *God is doing something in you there*, and if you let him, you will one day bring others to this very spot, this Mt Horeb/Mt Sinai in your life, and minister to them from there

**OK, 5th, and maybe biggest lesson:**

### 5. True, You Are Not--But You Know 'I AM'

Moses said repeatedly, "God, I can't do this!" And, let's be honest: he had good reason to say that:

- He had... personal failures: he'd killed an Egyptian
- He had... personal disabilities. He had a speech impediment—not an auspicious beginning for a preacher
- He had... personal doubts. Others had been really critical of him and their words had wounded him deeply.

But God said, "That's all true, I AM more than all those things. It's not about who you are, it's about who I am."

**You know, interestingly, Moses' insecurities kept him from seeing how God had actually specially prepared him for the task he had for him.**

- Think about it: **For 40 years now he'd** led *sheep* through this wilderness, the very wilderness that he'd lead Israel through on their way out of Egypt. He **knew** where all the water spots were and all the danger spots were. **In the Egyptian palace** he'd learned how to set up governments, write laws, organize large groups of armies... Most Hebrews couldn't read or write, at least very well. God had provided Moses special training in that.

- In many ways, this burning bush is supposed to be his **Karate Kid/Mr. Miyagi** moment (Remember, where Daniel is frustrated that Mr. Miyagi has made him do all this manual labor, and he's yelling at Mr. Miyagi, and Miyagi suddenly goes "Sand the floor" and Daniel does and realizes all this seemingly useless labor has given him the skill to be a karate champion, and somehow Mr. Miyagi has turned him into a black belt in only like 3 weeks?)

**This should have been Moses' Mr. Miyagi moment.** But Moses hadn't been able to see it because he'd failed to see the great I AM was in every single thing, the bad AND the good, overcoming his weaknesses, using them to shape him...

**I would guess that for many of you, you also are blind to where** God has been faithfully at work preparing you because of your unbelief in God's goodness toward you! You don't realize that **ALL YOUR LIFE he's been faithful!**

- There's a world of opportunity out here for you, a place of ministry, if you would just embrace that God has been working in your life, redemptively, in every moment, preparing you, through the good and the bad, through the ups and the downs, through the triumphs and the tragedies... in all of it, there's a throughline, a melody, written by a redeeming God, the great I AM, who has been calling you.

VAMP

**Moses says to God, "Who am I?"** God says to Moses, "It **doesn't matter** who you are. It matters who *I AM*."

- **Moses says, "But I am not... Eloquent. Or Polished. Or Successful."** God says, "I didn't choose you because you were any of those things. I have enough of all those things for the both of us." In fact, I'd rather not have **the guy** that says, 'Oh, pick me, God, pick me. I'm awesome,' because he's just gonna clog the

line. He'd always be so enamored with his own power he'll never experience mine. He's gonna stare at himself in the mirror, thinking of how incredible he is. He's gonna take credit for whatever I do."

- "No," God says, "You are not, but I AM. You may not be, but I ALWAYS am, and my "am-ness" overcomes your "not-ness."

Moses says, "But they say I am not very good." God says, "**It doesn't matter what they say. It matters what I say.**"

"But God I am not very consistent. I always mess things up." God says, "And yet I AM very consistent, and I don't mess things up. And my strength is made PERFECT in weakness." He that begins a good work in you, he will complete it in the day of Jesus Christ!

**Some of you are at a place where all you can think about are the deficiencies and worries and inadequacy to what's ahead of you.**

- I might imagine God saying to you this weekend, "You don't really even know the half of it! **You're so weak** and small, you can't even guarantee you'll be around tomorrow. In fact, you're so weak and small that you make some guarantee about tomorrow that's a foolish and sinful boast of pride. You are **like a wisp of smoke** that the wind wafts away, or a **blade of grass** that's here today and gone tomorrow. In the **scope of the universe you're so small and insignificant**--you're a dot on a dot on a dot in a backwoods part of a galaxy that is only one of billions and billions of galaxies. You are way more insignificant than you think.
- You say, "Well, that makes me feel insignificant and small..." Listen: *Like Louie Giglio says, I'm not trying to make you feel small. I'm telling you that you ARE small.* There's a difference. I'm trying to get you to see that YOU ARE NOT, but it doesn't matter because his name is I AM.<sup>8</sup>

And so you need to apply his name to wherever you feel broken, or insufficient:

"God, Who could possibly be smart enough to figure this all out?" **I am.**

"How am I supposed to know which way to go?" **I am.**

"Nobody is listening to me." **I am.**

"I'm not able to live the victorious Christian life." I AM. **There was only person who could ever live the Christian life, and he was so good at it, they named it after him.** *And that's why* you are crucified with Christ, nevertheless you live, and the life you now live in the life you live by faith in the Son of God."

"I'm 50 years old and I feel like I am starting all over." **I AM.**

"My marriage is crashing and I do not know where to turn." **I AM.**

"Everybody thinks I can't do it." **I AM.**

"What if I fail again?" **I AM.**

"God, I have given all I can give and it is not enough." **I AM.**

"But God, I am tired." **I AM.**

"I just feel like I need a drink or fix or a hit." **I AM**

"I need a fresh start." **I AM**

"I need a friend." **I AM**

---

<sup>8</sup> Louie Giglio, message, "I am not but I know I am."

Last summer, in our study of the Gospel of John, we saw Jesus take the name I AM, the name of God revealed to Moses here in Exodus 3, and apply it to himself at the most basic place of our weakness.

To the unrighteous, Jesus says, “**I AM** your righteous covering.” To the powerless he says, “(Yahweh) your defense.” To the empty he says, “(Yahweh) your fullness.” To the dead, he says, “(Yahweh) your resurrection,” and to the defeated he says, “(Yahweh) your hope.”

You say, “But I’m such a loser. You don’t understand. I am a terrible mom. Everybody thinks so.” But God says, “*I created the whole thing of mom-dom. Just as I was Moses’ power before Pharaoh. I’ll be your power with your kids. I’ll be your guide and your strength and your help.*”

*Whatever you’re not... Whatever you need... Whatever you lack, I AM! The grace in Jesus, listen, is greater than the sin in you. The strength of Jesus is greater than the weakness in you. The healing in Jesus is greater than the brokenness in you.*

So, when the Pharaohs in YOUR life say to you, “Who do you think you are?” “I don’t think I’m anything, but he is.” And when the hateful Israelites in our own hearts whisper, “Who are you?” we shout back, “Me? I’m nothing. But him? He’s everything, and I am in him.”

My challenge to you this weeknd: **Name your insecurity... write it out.** I’m afraid I’m not \_\_\_\_\_ enough. And fill in the blank. *Good enough. Smart enough. Pretty enough.* And then write out, “**But In Christ, I am \_\_\_\_\_.**” Then write a new adjective. *Sufficient. Fully supplied. More than a conqueror. Undefeatable. I am because HE IS and I am in him.*

### Invitation:

- ***Somebody needed to hear this today?*** *Come down here and pray for the fullness of the Holy Spirit, for you, as Paul says, to know the hope to which you’ve been called.*
- Or **maybe you just need to hear from God** so you know where he’s moving in your life and what he’s calling you to. Come down here and say to God like Moses said at the burning bush, “*Here I am, Lord. Speak, lead.*”

*I’m going to ask our prayer team members to get in place... you come right now as our worship teams come...*