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# “JUST DO IT”

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*Exodus 3:1-15*



AUGUST 31, 2014  
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Heroes of the Bible. There's no shortage of them.

Noah – a man who walked with God, and save humanity from the great flood.

Jacob – father of the twelve tribes of Israel

King David, Solomon, who can think of any others?

I could never be like those guys. And I certainly could never be like Moses. Moses...Egyptian prince, prophet, a great general who led millions of people out of slavery and oppression.

Now – how many of when you hear the story of Moses and the burning bush think of Cecil B. deMille's 1957 epic film the Ten Commandments? I mean, for years I knew exactly



what Moses looked like – He looked like Charlton Heston!



...Disney didn't do too bad a job either;

...except that they both conveniently left out the part about Moses being at least 80 years old!



He probably looked more like this...

But a more mature reading of the passage reveals not so much a timid exile's first reverent meeting with the God of his ancestors. This is more a story about a conniving, hot-tempered outlaw, raised with a silver spoon in his mouth, and a God who's determined to change and mold Moses into an instrument of salvation.

One writer says that in the story of Moses and the burning bush, we are not so much in the world of the holy and mysterious in a confrontation with the supernatural, so much as we are in the world of farce.

Farce? The only other bible story that I've heard described as farcical is that one with the talking donkey in it – Numbers 22 in case you want to check it out -- But never the story of the great Bible hero Moses.

But think about it for a second. Talking flaming bushes aren't something we see every day, but Moses, when he's confronted by this amazing sight, doesn't seem the least bit dazed

or confused – he doesn't stand awed in reverent silence, but has a quite a lot to say to the burning shrub. One pastor writes that Moses is far less Charlton Heston than he is Woody Allen! I don't know if I'd go that far, but check this out.

The scene at the burning bush is a huge turning point for Moses. His life is going to change dramatically from this point forward. Moses grew up as a prince in Egypt, but fled from Pharaoh after he broke up a fight between a Hebrew and an Egyptian, killing the Egyptian. He runs for his life to Midian, a tiny, tribal community where he meets his bride Zipporah. They soon have a son who they call Gershom, which means 'Stranger' or 'Sojourner.' This could be a clue to us that Moses, who probably thinks he's going to get to settle down with a wife and family, is in for surprise.

Moses becomes a shepherd and after many years leads his flock out "beyond the wilderness" which is a pretty scary place to begin with. After all the 'wilderness' is bad enough - But beyond the wilderness? That's where the Mountain of God is, and that's where he sees that famous blazing bush, on fire but not actually burning up. On top of that the bush talks!

Moses first response isn't one of surprise like we would expect, but a very appropriate Middle Eastern response that we've heard before, "Here I am." They always say that, don't they? "Here I am."

The bush then introduces itself and proceeds to tell Moses all about God's plan. God has heard the cries of His people about their oppression in Egyptian slavery. God wants Moses to join with Him in their deliverance, but Moses it seems has to do all the legwork. So at this point, Moses began presenting a series of excuses, some of which may sound or feel familiar to you.

**#1 – "Who am I,"** Moses asks. Fair question. He's been a shepherd for 40 years. He has a wife and family. He's 80 years old! And back then, shepherds were the lowest of the low. Moses going to Pharaoh would be like me going to talk to Barack Obama.

Maybe you've asked yourself the same question: Who am I to change the world, or even the community? I'm just a housewife, I'm just an accountant, or a realtor. I'm just an old drunk! I'm too old! I'm too young! I can't do it!

God has a simple answer, but it's an answer that's all too easy to forget: "I will be with you." God is always with us, we know that – up here, but we can't seem to remember it in here - in our everyday lives. But Moses wasn't convinced.

**Excuse #2** – What if they ask me who YOU are? “Who is this God that you say sent you?” Well, that’s a good question, too. If you’re going to send someone to deliver a million people out of oppression and slavery to foreign land they’ve never heard of, it might help to have the name of the one who sent you. “You’re going to do what? Says who?” Names were very important to the ancients. Names tell you about the character of the person. To the superstitious knowing the name of something gave you power over it.

So the bush draws itself up to its full leafy height and says – in its best James Earl Jones impression, “I am who I am,” or “I will be who I will be,” or the translation I like best, “I am who I will be.” The Hebrew is notoriously ambiguous here, and that’s probably intentional. The God who created the universe and everything in it isn’t about to reveal the whole of the divine identity to some shepherd who’s trying his best to weasel out his call. Just tell them “I am sent me.” That’ll convince them!

Clearly Moses knows that will never fly and comes up with **excuse # 3**: What if they don’t believe me? In other words, gimme some tricks –some cool magic to prove You exist. Now, I’ve gone beyond today’s reading, but how could I stop here? We have to hear the rest of the conversation. We have to find out what happens when God’s faith in us is greater than our faith in God – which is about all the time, isn’t it?

So God gives Moses a kind of toolbag full of tricks – the slithering serpent, the leprous hand, water turning to blood, -the kind of tool kit any pastor would kill to have at their disposal – not ‘kill’ exactly! “Surely that will do it,” thinks God. “Not so fast,” thinks Moses.

And here it comes -- **Excuse #4**: “I have never been eloquent; I am slow of speech and tongue.” Well, John Holbert of Perkins seminary says that given what we’ve heard from Moses up to this point, this is a bold-faced lie. Holbert argues that, in spite of all the talk about Moses having some sort of speech impediment, there’s nothing wrong with Moses’ speech. Moses simply doesn’t want to go; and God is losing patience. God is not happy about this and reminds Moses just who gave humans the power of speech in the first place, and basically tells Moses to just shut up and go already!

Finally Moses pleads, “Lord! Send someone else!” And it sounds kind of whiney in English but in the ancient Hebrew it comes across more on the side of rudeness. “Give this job to someone who’ll do it!”

But Moses didn’t leave the burning bush. Why not? He could’ve just walked away any time. Maybe, as we’re telling ourselves, “I could never be like Moses,” we’re more like Moses

than we realize. I think, like us, Moses wanted to do the work of God. He just couldn't believe that he was qualified. And he couldn't believe that God could make him good enough for the job.

What about you? Have you used any of Moses excuses in dialogue with God? Do you have trouble believing that God is capable or even willing to equip you for the work of the kingdom? I think that if God wanted perfect creatures to partner in this work God could've used angels, right? But he didn't.

Today I want to give you an assignment – some homework. If you haven't already taken copious notes on that middle page in the bulletin, write down these two questions:

Where is God calling you – what task has God set for you – into what mission are you called? You can write it however you want, but think about it and write it down.

Then the second question I want you think about is this: Where is God calling our church? What task has God set for us? Into what mission is our church being called? I'd like for you to think about the answers to these questions. If you already know you can drop them in the plate today; if you'd like to think about it for a week or two, bring them back in next few weeks, and I'll put some of your answers in the October newsletter – anonymously, of course.

While you think about your assignment – your homework, if you will, I'll finish with this: Paul wrote to the congregation of the church in Corinth, in *1 Cor 1:26-29*,

*“Consider your own call, brothers and sisters:<sup>[a]</sup> not many of you were wise by human standards,<sup>[b]</sup> not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup> God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no one<sup>[c]</sup> might boast in the presence of God.”*

In other words,  
 Noah was a drunk  
 Abraham was too old  
 Isaac was a daydreamer  
 Jacob was a liar and a con man  
 Leah was homely  
 Joseph was abused  
 Samson had long hair, and was a womanizer  
 Rahab was a prostitute  
 Jeremiah and Timothy were too young

David had an affair and was a murderer  
Elijah was depressed and suicidal  
Isaiah preached without his clothes on  
Jonah ran from God  
Naomi was a widow  
Job went bankrupt  
Peter denied Christ  
The Disciples fell asleep, and rarely understood anything Jesus said,  
Martha worried about everything  
The Samaritan woman was divorced, 4 times  
Zaccheus was too small  
Paul was too religious  
Timothy had an ulcer,  
And Lazarus was dead!

So if you think God can't – or won't! – use you for some reason, think again. Like Moses, God will eventually meet every excuse you can come up with.

But we can't just sit back and expect God to use us. Faith is a contact sport. We have to step out, get up off the couch and into the game. We have to get up out of the pews and into the community. God will meet you where you are when you step out in faith, onto the winding road where you can't see the end.

Or as Nike put it, "Just do it."