

People of Faith: Moses.

(Exodus 3:1-14 & 4:1-17)

“Moses! I know you’re the man” the Lord says. As the song goes.

And Moses responds , errrrI don’t think so Lord. After all I can’t speak well and the people won’t listen to me, and the Pharaoh certainly won’t listen to me, and... couldn’t you just send someone else ?

“Moses! I know you’re the man” the Lord said. “ Stop bellyaching and listen for a minute. I will be with you and I will give you Aaron to do the talking.

Okay Lord, but what happens when no one believes me ? Are you sure you couldn’t just ask someone else ?

“Moses! I KNOW you’re the man” the Lord said. And when I say I’m going to be with you, that’s what I mean. Now stop going on and throw your staff down. Yep, just chuck it on the ground and it’ll turn into a snake. You can use that to convince the people. Right, now put your hand inside your cloak, that’s it. Now draw it out. Euch.....leprous all over. And if those two things aren’t enough to convince them you can always do the river into blood thing.

Yes.....but Lord. Please. Send someone else.

“Moses! Get on with it”

Moses’ background

Moses, who’d had one of the most unusual starts to life (being left floating in a basket in an attempt to save him, found by an Egyptian princess, nursed by his own mother and then raised with Egyptian royalty) had a chequered history. He murdered an Egyptian before running for his life, and then met his wife-to-be while watering her sheep. It was while he was shepherding his father-in-law’s flock that God spoke to him from a burning bush. Moses, as we know, was reluctant to say the least to take up the task that God had for him, pleading poor public speaking skills as his ‘get out’.

But he did rise to the challenge, and with the help of Aaron as his spokesperson he confronted Pharaoh and led the Israelites out of Egypt, out of slavery and oppression. Undoubtedly the ‘high point’ of his career was receiving the ten commandments on Mount Sinai. There were plenty of lows too. Moaning people who criticised him pretty much every step of the way, even looking back on their lives in Egypt with nostalgia ! Angry people who got so frustrated at times he was in danger of being stoned.

As we think about Moses as a man of faith, and wonder what that can mean for us today, let's consider four things. His call, his faith, his support team and his failure.

Moses' call

God did something quite spectacular to attract Moses' attention. After all a bush that is in flames but not burning up is certainly attention grabbing. And then once he had Moses full attention, God called him to the task ahead. 'Moses! Moses!' came the voice from within the bush. God calls us by name. Not some general thing that anyone could do, but he calls each one of us personally, as he created and knows each one of us personally.

'Don't come any closer.' Moses wasn't yet ready to be close to God. That would come later, in a special closeness that no one else was permitted. I'm sure there's no coincidence here that God called Moses on the same mountain where he would later reveal the ten commandments to him.

No doubt Moses was delighted to hear God promising to lead the Israelites out of oppression. He was less than delighted to find out that the chosen agent for this momentous event was none other than himself.

Moses objects five times in total. He starts with modesty – you can't really mean me? And then each subsequent time there is a reason why he can't do it.

I feel for Moses, I really do. But by the end of the exchange I'm beginning to share God's sense of frustration. I feel myself wanting to say 'Look Moses! He's answered all your worries, He's given you signs to perform, and even a spokesperson. What more do you want?'

But as I get annoyed with Moses' reluctance, an unwelcome voice inside my head says: so you would jump up and respond immediately would you? You would fearlessly and willingly do whatever task God is calling you to would you, even if it's something you find extremely difficult. You would never offer excuses to God, or ask Him to send someone else, would you? You would never pray for something to happen but be unwilling to be part of the answer, would you?

And my anger and frustration leave me, being replaced instead by deep respect for Moses. He did do what God called him to do, despite the initial wobble. He went on to be God's right hand man, so to speak.

God continues to call people to momentous tasks, and to not quite so momentous ones too. He calls ordinary people like us. People who have doubts and failures and worries. People who feel they aren't up to the task, people whose pasts are not what they would like them to be. And He calls us by name, because he loves us and knows us individually.

Moses' faith

If we read on from the burning bush event through the book of Exodus and into Deuteronomy we find the account of Moses' leading the people out of Egypt and into the promised land. Of the giving of the ten commandments and the establishment of a community of people who will eventually enter the promised land, albeit without him.

And all through that period, we read that Moses spent time in God's presence. It seems that he regularly disappeared off to take time out with God. So much that his face glowed from being in God's presence. There doesn't appear to be a short cut to getting to know God, His thoughts and plans, His attitudes, what pleases Him and what does not. In the same way as there isn't a short cut to building human relationships. Only time spent communicating with another leads to deepening of relationship. Moses spent considerable time learning what God required.

As a student, I was really impressed to find that the president and vice president of the Christian Union got up really early on Saturday mornings to pray together. That was a huge commitment out of a student lifestyle that revolved around late nights and late mornings. 5 or 6 am just doesn't appear on most students' alarm clocks.

Moses, for all his inadequacies, was a man of faith. He sought the will of God and acted upon it. And he kept doing so in the good times, when he was full of elation, and in the bad when he was frightened and despondent and frustrated.

Moses' support team

Every now and again people hit the headlines for performing some spectacular feat like swimming the channel, or walking from John O'Groats to Land's End, or climbing the three highest peaks in the UK in twenty four hours. Their victorious faces are photographed and comments recorded for all to see and hear. What is rarely mentioned is the support teams that are needed to make the task possible. The Bob Graham Round is a mind boggling run of 70 miles, covering 42 peaks in the Lake District, and is supposed to be done in less than twenty four hours. Unsurprisingly anyone who completes it gets a fair bit of attention in the world of hill walking and fell running. It is split into five stages and for each stage the runner is expected to have a navigator and a minimum of two pace-setters. That means a support crew of at least fifteen, not counting those who drive and provide refreshment. It simply cannot be achieved alone.

Moses, although he was the 'main man', had a support team. When Jethro his father-in-law saw Moses acting as judge for the people he said 'what are you doing? You'll be worn out.' So elders were appointed to deal with the issues that Moses didn't need to get involved in.

When Joshua was fighting the Amalekites and Moses needed to keep his arms held high to secure victory, it was Aaron and Hur who supported his arms when he was too tired to hold them up any longer.

When Moses found it too difficult to speak, it was Aaron who spoke on his behalf.

And when Moses needed a deputy, and then successor, it was Joshua who was called to the role. Leaders cannot go it purely alone, and those that try are probably heading for a fall. They need a faithful support team. Trusted people who can share the load and provide backup when needed. When God calls you to a role he will call others to support you.

We had the pleasure of having Reuben and Katie Martin (our BMS link missionaries) to stay with us a few years ago when they came on home assignment from Croatia. I was really in awe of them. They're amazing people who've made such a commitment to God in the work they do. I was so encouraged to find that they're ordinary people who trust in God, and have a good support network of friends and family.

Perhaps God has called you to a role where you will be blessed with people to support you. Perhaps God is calling you to a role where you can support others. Aaron didn't get much of the glory, he didn't get the glamour, he didn't even get a mention some of the time, yet he was still vital to God's purposes.

Moses' failure.

Moses did not make it into the promised land. He died before getting there, and it was Joshua (his deputy) who led the people into the land flowing with milk and honey. Moses was disobedient to God and the consequence was severe. The nature of the offence is not very clear, but he disobeyed God whilst hitting a rock to get water out of it.

It's always seemed tough on Moses that he didn't actually make it, after enduring all those years of wandering and listening to the whining and moaning of the Israelites. But it highlights the very high standards and expectations that God has for those He calls to positions of leadership and authority.

So, Moses, a man of faith who God called, and supported and allowed to fail. A man who felt inadequate for the task, but who grew in stature and confidence as God proved faithful time and time again. A man who came into God's very presence and gave all that he could to the task in hand.

Let's pray that when God calls us we might be ready to listen and respond, ready to lead or support as appropriate, ready to take time getting to know God better, ready to serve Him with our whole lives.

Sunday 30.09.07 House Group Notes.

People of Faith: Moses. Exodus 3:1-14 & 4:1-17

Moses, who'd had one of the most unusual starts to life (being left floating in a basket in an attempt to save him, found by an Egyptian princess, nursed by his own mother and then raised with Egyptian royalty) had a chequered history. He murdered an Egyptian before running for his life, and then met his wife-to-be while watering her sheep. It was while he was shepherding his father-in-law's flock that God spoke to him from a burning bush. Moses was reluctant to say the least to take up the task that God had for him, pleading poor public speaking skills as his 'get out'.

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Moses' call.

God attracted Moses' attention before calling him to the task. To say Moses was reluctant is an understatement, however he did answer the call, and God provided the support he had promised.

Moses' faith.

Time spent in God's presence allowed Moses to know God more intimately than any other human being at that time. There is no short cut to deepening of relationships.

Moses' support team.

Although Moses was the 'main man' he had others who supported him in the role. (Aaron, Joshua, Elders etc). Even Jesus, the only one qualified to go it alone, had a support team of disciples.

Moses' failure.

Disobedience meant that Moses was prevented from entering the Promised Land. God has very high standards of conduct for those who he calls to positions of leadership and authority.

For Discussion.

- Moses was a murderer. God calls people who have made mistakes in life. Why does He do that ?
- How do you think God would attract your attention to call you to a task ? What would your burning bush be ?
- What things can you do to deepen your relationship with God ?
- Are you a supporter or supported?
- What are your thoughts on God preventing Moses from entering the Promised Land ?