

Extraordinary Call

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[0 : 00] I can't do it. I'm not the right person. I don't have the skills. Get someone else to do it. All of these thoughts ran through my head as Alyssa and I stood on the doorstep of Westmead Hospital when our son Isaac had been born and we were about to leave the hospital.

How could we be responsible for this person? Did the people in the hospital realise that we had no idea what we were doing? Now we've figured out most parts of what it means to parent, at least parent small children, and we still have many left to learn. But in that moment, Alyssa and I had a moment where we were filled with, plagued with doubts and fears. We can fear failing because we're ill-equipped. We don't have the right knowledge. We can fear failing because we think we're just the wrong person for the task. Maybe I don't want to fail, so I'll just say I'm not the right person. Alyssa, I'm not the right person to change a nappy. I don't know how to do that.

Unfortunately, she didn't let me get out of the one and I had to learn how to do that. But when somebody else asks for help, when somebody calls for help outside of our comfort zone, we can respond, I can't do that. I don't know how. I'm not the right person. And I wonder if we can do the same thing with God. God calls us to follow Jesus. He calls us into his family and he also calls us out. He sends us out to love and serve other people. But I wonder if we can hear that call of God and say, no. No, no, God, I'm not the right person to go out. I'm not equipped to share my faith. I can't help that person over there. God, send someone else. My friend needs help. They're grieving, but somebody else can comfort them with the gospel. That person over there, they're asking for help.

God, can you send someone else to fix this problem? And the reality is, we are all faced with situations like this. Moses was in a similar position, which Nolene has just read for us. Last week, we started our series in the book of Exodus. And this book shows us that we are very ordinary, but we have an extraordinary God. And Moses, he'd fled out of Egypt out of fear of Pharaoh.

[2 : 38] And he's fleeing his own people as well. And he's living in a place called Midian. He's been there for around 40 years. He's gotten married, but he's still plagued by his past failure. He's lonely and lost. So much so that he names his son Gershon. Gershon means foreigner. This is how Moses is feeling.

He's in a distant land. He's feeling like a foreigner. And into this context, God is going to call him. God's going to give him a new identity, not one based on being a prince in Egypt.

But Moses, he's still plagued by his fear to follow God's call. And so as we have a look at chapters 3 and 4 today, we're going to see how God calls ordinary people to do extraordinary things. And how he calls and prepares and sends us out. So please, let's pray as we jump in. Dear Heavenly Father, Lord, I thank you that you, as I thank you every week, that you are a good and kind and loving God. God, help us to hear this morning about your love for us and about how you want to use us, Lord, because you are extraordinary.

Amen. So today, we have three points. First of all, we're going to see an encounter with God. Then we're going to see Moses called out by God. And then what it actually means to follow God's call. An encounter with God, called out by God. And then what it actually means to follow, to follow that call of God. So Moses is tending a flock of sheep on a mountain called Horeb. Its other name is Sinai.

[4 : 29] And God appears in a burning bush. Now fire is something that we are all just instinctively drawn to. I don't know, there's just something marvelous about fire. Have you ever been camping and you just want to sit around that fire, even though it's going to make you stink with smoke?

We're just instinctively drawn to fire. But also, we don't go and sit in the fire. We keep our distance from fire. It is attractive, but it's also dangerous. It gets Moses' attention.

And perhaps God is using a fire itself to draw Moses to him, but also remind him that there is difference between God and man. Now Moses goes over thinking that this is a strange sight. This bush, it should have been burnt up by an hour. But that's not the only strange thing about this bush. The bush starts speaking. God calls to Moses through this bush. And God reveals who he is. Have a look, Exodus chapter 3, verse 5. Do not come any closer, God said. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.

Then he said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. At this, Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God. God speaks to Moses. He reveals who he is.

[6 : 01] And this God is awesome, but also terrifying to behold. The space around the bush was holy because God was speaking. And so when Moses hears it, he falls flat on the ground. He hides his face because he is terrified. And there is a rightness to this response. God is not our mate. He is not our buddy. He is not our friend. He's not even the type of God who's a vending machine that we put our prayers into and we get the things that we want out of. If we met this God face to face, we would fall in our feet just like Moses does. And look at what this God says in verse 7. The Lord said, God says he knows what has been going on for his people. His people have been enslaved in Egypt, because there was a Pharaoh who feared them. God had blessed Israel. They had grown large and they'd been enslaved. And God says, I see your misery. I've heard your crying. I'm concerned about your suffering. And God has come down to deal with this situation. It is easy for us to take for granted God being among us when we forget how above us he is. It's easy to take for granted that God would come down when we forget how far he comes down and how awesome he is. He is so far above us. He is holy and perfect. Moses couldn't even stand before God speaking through a bush, let alone God himself.

But this God who is different and holy and good and perfect and awesome, he also comes down. He is present.

And the wonderful encouragement for Moses here is, I know your condition. I know the suffering you're going through. This is a God who does not remain separate. He knows our problems. He rolls up his sleeves and he's going to get involved. He has appeared to Moses in a bush to say, I'm with you. He's going to appear to Israel in a pillar of smoke and a pillar of fire to say, I am with you. I know you're suffering.

And he ultimately appears as Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, who we get to encounter through the words of the Bible to meet. And we get to meet this God face to face.

And so God says he will do something. This God is going to get involved. He's going to deal with this situation. Verse 10, so now go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt. God is going to deal with this situation. He's encountered Moses so that Moses can be the one that God uses to deal with this situation.

[9 : 23] God is going to use Moses to bring them out of slavery. And I can imagine at this moment, Moses thinking, do you know what, God? I've tried that. I've tried to save Israel in the past.

And look where it's gotten me. I'm in exile now in Midian. I've been here for about 40 years. What Moses had done was he saw an Israelite being abused and beaten by an Egyptian.

And so Moses got involved and he killed the Egyptian. And so Moses looks at the situation and goes, I've tried to save Israel before. It didn't do so well. And so Moses has five different excuses for God.

This is our second point today, God's call to Moses. But Moses has five different excuses. He says he's unfit. He says he lacks knowledge. He's not going to be effective. He can't speak.

And do you know what? He just does not want to do it. Five different excuses of Moses. We didn't read all of these out. We're going to have a look at these now. But God answers these and his promises are wonderful.

[10 : 35] And so we're going to go through Moses' responses here. But I wonder, as we do this, have a think. Which of these responses would I give to God? If God spoke to me right now through a burning bush or spoke to me over coffee through someone at church and said, hey, can you go and do this?

Can you go and love this person? Can you go and speak the gospel to this person into their life? Which of these five excuses do we default to? How do we answer God's call?

Do we say, I'm not the right person? I lack knowledge. You know, I don't have the words. Do you know, God, I could do that, but I'm not going to be effective.

Or maybe, God, I just don't want to. As we go through this, have a think. Which of these do I default to? We'll come back to that at the end.

First of all, we're going to see Moses' fear of failure. As him being unfit. He just thinks he's unfit for the role. Verse 11. Moses said to God, Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?

[11:46] Who am I? Now, the reality is, Moses is the perfect person for it. He was raised in the Egyptian court. He knows the Egyptian situation.

He knows how to deal with them politically because he was raised in that situation. He's also an Israelite so he can speak for them. There is no one like Moses for this situation.

And yet he says, Who am I, God? Who am I? He feels inadequate for the task. He's already tried to save Israel once before. He's had to flee Egypt.

And he's saying, God, you've got the wrong person. And God responds, I love God's answers here. God's answers are just truly wonderful. And what he does, he actually doesn't answer the question, but also gives the best answer to the question.

Moses asks, Who am I? And God says in verse 12, I will be with you. Your identity is a former child of the Egyptian royal family. That's actually not important.

[12:50] Your identity as a lost son of Israel. That's not important. What is important is my identity. I am God. And I am with you. Despite God's promise that he'll be with him, Moses is not convinced.

He comes back to God with his second fear. Verse 13, effectively asks, Well, who are you? Verse 13, 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 do I tell them? Moses' first question was about his own fear of his identity. Who am I to do this? Now, in questioning God, he says, Well, who are you, God?

Who am I to explain who you are? I don't have knowledge of who you are to explain that to the Israelite leaders. And God's response is one of the most studied parts of the Old Testament.

God answers with his name. What is known as Yahweh. Verse 14, God said to Moses, I am who I am.

[14:01] That's the word Yahweh. This is what you are to say to the Israelites. I am has sent me to you. Now, this is a name that is meant to burst our definitions.

When we meet people and introduce ourselves, we define ourselves by other things. So, you know, when I met, you know, Nick, it's, Hi, Nick.

I'm James. I'm a father. I'm a husband. I'm a teacher, an accountant. We communicate who we are by the things around us.

We give ourselves titles to help other people understand us. We define ourselves by other things. But God does not do that.

His argument actually circles back on itself. I am who I am. God is not defined by anything else.

[15:07] He doesn't need to say, you know, for me, I am Alyssa's husband. I explain who I am by reference to somebody else. God doesn't do that. He says, I am who I am.

God, he's not constrained by external factors. He doesn't depend upon other people. And that means that when he makes promises, he can keep them.

I am who I am can also be translated as, I will be who I will be. And so, in four out of five of Moses' questions and objections, God actually answers, I will be with you.

The God of the universe is with you. But this God of the universe has also made himself known to a specific group of people. Verse 15, Say to the Israelites, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has sent me to you.

This God, who's not defined by other people, has come to know and love a particular people. This is not a new God. This is the God of Israel. Moses had questioned who he was, and then he had questioned who God is, and now Moses asks, well, how are you going to be with me?

[16:36] God has, and God sets out this wonderful plan. You're going to go and speak to the elders. They will listen. Pharaoh, his heart will be hardened. He won't want to let you out of Egypt, but I will work miracles through you, and you will go, and you will plunder Egypt.

You will have obstacles, but no matter how big they are, you will get through them, not because of you, but because of me, because I am is with you.

Moses has heard God's wonderful plan. He has heard about who this God is. He's heard these assurances from God, but he still isn't willing to give up.

He fears that he won't be effective. He has his third fear here, in chapter 4, verse 1. What if they don't believe me, or listen to me, and say, the Lord did not appear to you?

Moses still has a lot of issues trusting in God, and trusting in other people. But more seriously, he's just disagreed with God himself. God has said, this is the plan, this is what's going to happen, and this is how it's going to work out.

[17:48] And Moses stands back and goes, I just want to, God, I just want to clarify point 2. I don't think that one's going to work. Can you imagine Moses' audacity here to do that to God?

It appears that verbal assurances are just not good enough. And so God gives him an immediate sign. God says, Moses, throw down your staff that you've got.

Moses throws it down, and it turns into a snake. And Moses runs away out of fear of a snake. God says, go and pick the snake up by the tail, and he picks it up by the tail, and it turns back into a staff. God calls him to overcome his fear. And this shows that God is more powerful than Moses' fear, but it also validates his authority.

You are sent by God, you have my authority. God tells Moses to put his hand into his cloak, and it comes out covered in leprosy. It goes back in, and comes out clean, because this God is in control of life and death and disease.

[18:56] God promises Moses, Moses, take water out of the Nile and pour it out, and it will turn into blood because this God is in control of the Nile, which gave life to the people of Egypt.

These three signs were to give confidence to Moses that God is in control, and that God was with him. His name himself, I am, is with you.

But somehow, Moses has a fourth excuse. If you're not getting frustrated with Moses at this point, you are far more patient than I am.

I'm getting quite frustrated with Moses here. His fear comes up. His fear is that he just, I don't have the right gifting. I can't do this because I don't have the right gifting.

Chapter 4, verse 10. Moses said to the Lord, pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant.

[19:56] I am slow of speech and tongue. I don't have the gifting of words. So somehow he has the ability to speak to a burning bush, and that's been fine, but he can't go and speak to Pharaoh.

He's seen a staff turn into a snake and pick that up. He's turned his hand leprous and back, and yet he says, God, I don't have the gift to do this. And God reminds him that God is the one who made mouths and speech.

Verse 12, now go, I will help you speak. I will teach you what to say. Again, God is promising based on who he is, I am with you.

Moses' fifth and last excuse. Verse 13, send someone else. He's just unwilling.

I just don't want to do this, God. God appears to have a tone of irritation, if not rebuke, in verse 14. Then the Lord's anger burned against Moses, and he said, what about your brother, Aaron the Levite?

[21:09] Verse 15, you shall speak to him and put words in his mouth. I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. God is going to use Moses to speak.

Moses is going to be the one who speaks, but Moses is going to speak to Aaron and then Aaron will speak. And God's anger here, it's tinged with mercy. He doesn't get rid of him.

He doesn't use someone else, but he appoints a spokesperson for Moses. Moses could not shrink away from God any longer. Someone else was going to do the talking, but Moses was going to be the one leading Israel out of Egypt.

God has defeated every single one of Moses' excuses. Moses has been plagued by fear, and that's influenced his desire not to return to Egypt.

And really, this example of Moses just highlights how unimpressive people are and how God chooses to use them anyway.

[22:11] It's really wonderful here because God doesn't encourage Moses with nice words or platitudes. God doesn't say to Moses, everything will be fine.

You can do this. Moses, actually, you're a great speaker. You've just got to start doing it. You're going to be great. You're going to go there, and you're actually going to be really convincing.

Pharaoh's going to hear you, and it's going to be awesome. You can do this, Moses. I believe in you. God doesn't do that at all. God doesn't try and puff him up at all.

This is not an issue of Moses having more self-esteem. This is an issue of Moses having more God-esteem. As Moses lists his list of excuses, I imagine the burning bush just nodding. Yeah. Yeah, no, you are not gifted. Yeah, you do really suck. You are quite unimpressive. No, that's right, Moses. You can't actually do this.

[23 : 12] But none of this depends on Moses. God's answers all the way through are, I am with you. This is all about God and not Moses.

The joy of our God is that when he calls us to follow him and sends us out, he doesn't leave us on our own. God answers every single one of Moses' questions with power and strength that is from God.

When God calls someone like a prophet or Moses here in this situation or us, he gives us our resources to do what we've been called to do. And God is with us.

God uses unimpressive people to do impressive things because we are ordinary people with an extraordinary God. This is how God calls people.

He calls us to the same thing. He calls us to follow and serve him. He doesn't bring people into him without also sending them out with love and compassion and the words of the gospel.

[24 : 23] And he equips us and resources us to be on about his ministry. And most importantly, he is with us. So what does it look like to follow God's call?

When Jesus is about to ascend to heaven after the resurrection, he says in Matthew 28, Jesus sends his disciples out, just like God sent Moses out, go out against the authorities of the land because Jesus has all authority.

Jesus calls the disciples to go and promises, I am with you. This is Jesus using God's name. It's a direct reference to Exodus 3.

God said, this is who I am. This is the name of God. And Jesus said, I am with you. You can go up against rulers and nations. You can go up against the Jewish church disciples.

You will be persecuted. You will share the good news that I am alive all because Jesus was with them. Not only was he with them, he also gives them what they need.

[26 : 00] They're given the Holy Spirit so that they don't go out empty and they don't have to go out with fear like Moses was. Jesus said in Luke 12 that when they're confronted with authorities, don't worry how to respond.

Don't worry about what you have to say. The Holy Spirit will give you the words to say at the moment when you need them. Moses was given a staff. We have been given the Holy Spirit equipping us and enabling us to serve God.

He gives us the courage to speak and he gives us the words. And yet, despite God's call to us, resourcing us through the power of the Holy Spirit and promises from Jesus that he is still with us, we can be like Moses.

Out of our fear, we can say, I can't do that. I'm not the right person. And our fear of the situation can be larger than our fear of God.

Our concern, as Kel said for us before, our concern will be, oh, what happens when I speak these words about Jesus? What happens when I just drop that into a sentence?

[27 : 17] How are they going to respond? These problems we face are larger than our God in our eyes too often. I asked you earlier how you'd think you'd respond if you were in Moses' shoes.

Which one of those do you think you'd default to? Do you think you would just say, oh, I can't do this, I'm not the right person, I don't have the knowledge?

Maybe, maybe you don't. And so, do you know what, as Kel has encouraged us, we need to have information, and we need to have tactics. And so, come along to the How to Share Your Faith course starting in a couple of weeks.

Because, we will have those then. God has worked salvation through Jesus, and when we are saved, we are called to go out to serve Him.

We're called to serve each other with love, to serve the world. And God wonderfully gives us all different gifts. calls some of us to preach on the stage like this, and He calls some of us to preach over coffee, over the fence, to our neighbours.

[28 : 35] Some to go out to other nations to love and serve people, and some to go across the road to serve and love other people. He calls all of us to give out of compassion.

He calls some of us to evangelise with a capital E, to congregations of 10,000 in stadiums like has happened years ago.

But He calls us all to evangelise. And so, a question is, well, how do I know what God has called me to? I don't want to do the wrong thing.

You know, it was easy for Moses. He had God speak directly to him through a burning bush.

Where's my burning bush? God, I want to know what you want me to do. Tell me what to do.

We all have a desire to be purposeful and to make a difference. Let me encourage you, start where you are. God has placed you where you are for a reason.

[29 : 38] He wants you there and you can make a difference for God where you are. So begin where you are. If you are a parent, disciple your kids. Imagine the impact you can have through your kids and your kids' friendship group, let alone your kids' friends' parents.

If you are at school, the impact you can have on friends and teachers. If you are part of a family, if you have friends, ask God, God, you have me in this situation where I am.

It is unique to me. How can I be serving and loving these people here? God, how are you calling me right now to do this in this situation?

Even before we think, oh, God's calling me to go overseas, which is quite difficult at this moment.

God's calling me to go and serve another people. How is God calling us to serve the people he has placed around us now?

And yet, even when we know exactly what we are to do, we can still struggle.

[30 : 50] In the 2013 Superman film, Man of Steel, I'm not sure if you've seen it. It's a fine movie if you like Superman.

In this movie, Superman is confronted with a large challenge. He's got to go and fight the villains. But he's wracked with fear of what he should do.

He doesn't know what he should do. And he goes to church. It's really interesting that Superman would go to church. He goes to church and he talks to the pastor there. And he's trying to work through his doubt and his fear and to understand what he needs to do next.

What is he called to do to fight these villains? And it's quite interesting because this is a guy who has all of the skills. He can fly. He's bulletproof.

He's got laser eyes. And yet, he's still sitting in a position of, I don't know what I should do next. We can have all the gifting.

[31 : 57] We can have all of the ability. And we can just sit there like Moses' very first and last response and go, who am I? And I just don't want to do it.

We can have all the training in evangelism and discipleship and care and compassion. We can sit with Kel. We can get all the words. We can know how to evangelize.

We can have the ability to do it and we can also just pull back and say, I don't want to do it. God sends someone else.

What helps us in that situation is not more knowledge. It is not more training. It's not more self-esteem. It's not more courage. I just need to pull up my socks and do it.

It is not more self-esteem. It is more God esteem. The insurmountable, unfathomable, incalculable God encounters us in Jesus.

[33 : 00] The Jesus we see in the Bible. We can know him not because our minds can understand the infinite but because he made himself low. Bound by skin and muscles and bone which could be pierced and whipped.

This God chooses us unimpressive people to achieve his extraordinary work. He finds us I'll describe I'll talk about me because I don't want to say you're all unimpressive and ordinary even though I think I already have.

He finds people like me ordinary people and says I am with you. I have got this. It actually doesn't depend on you.

I have got this. got this. You follow me when I call you obey me. In the coming weeks we're going to see that God does some amazing things through Moses.

But he also promises to do amazing things through us. That he would first of all save us. God's plan for us is that he would sanctify us.

[34 : 12] He is making us more like Jesus today. And God also chooses to use people like us to do his amazing miraculous work of seeing people saved to come to know and love him.

When we trust him and know he is with us we can obey his call. Let me pray. dear heavenly father I thank you so much that you do choose to use unimpressive normal people like us.

Lord that is in and of itself a wonderful miracle. Lord you have done so much for us in Jesus and Lord we want to see you do wonderful miracles in our lives and through us.
Lord help us to hear your call to listen to what you have to say to us. Make it obvious so that we can obey.
Lord with our fears with our desires to pull back and avoid doing this Lord don't give us courage give us trust in you Lord.
[35 : 29] Amen.