

**“Your Purpose-Defining Encounter”
Exodus 3:1-12 Sunday AM 7/15/18**

In the eyes of God, there has never been an insignificant human being. Each person is an expression of some component of the heart of the Father. Everyone has a purpose assigned to their existence. Unfortunately, many do not believe this about themselves. Moses had once believed that he had a purpose from God. He fumbled it. He blew it. He became humiliated and afraid. Decades later, God wanted to reacquaint Moses with his life-purpose. This encounter would change everything for the man that thought he had missed his opportunity. Moses would learn that the purposes of God may come slowly to a life, but come they will. What was true for Moses is true for us today. Each of us needs to experience that personal encounter with God wherein He solidifies in our hearts what He is calling us to do. Revelation on who we are to be in God always precedes clarification on what we are to do for God. It took Moses forty years in the desert to learn who he was. Now the time arrives to understand what God had for Moses to do.

I. Divine Interruption By God (1-4)

A. Feel Moses' drudgery (1) - “Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God....”

“West side” - translated in Isaiah 38:17 as “behind His back” when it speaks of unseen, unacknowledged, unremembered sin. Moses was living out a mundane reality that may have felt like God had turned His back on Moses. This man of impressive upbringing had been working for his father-in-law for four decades. During those years, Moses likely experienced deep regrets about how he had once tried to accomplish something for God but failed. He was still a fugitive with a bounty on his head in Egypt. In all honesty, Moses probably felt that his purpose was gone, never to return. Life became a monotonous drudgery.

B. Learn from Moses' distraction (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.”

In the midst of the mundane, God inserts Himself into Moses' life. This supernatural experience came upon Moses without announcement beforehand. It was a day like every other day as Moses clocked in for his daily work and went about his business.

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What Moses could not have known was that God had appointed that day to be the day wherein Moses received his life-calling. Moses was given a big-picture purpose from God.

C. Understand Moses' detour (3) - "And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."

This is a crucial step for all of us in receiving God's purpose for our lives. It is necessary to explore events, relationships and opportunities that seemingly arise from out of nowhere. We also must occasionally turn aside. We must leave room for God to work in ways that we did not expect. We must remain surrendered for Him to interrupt the normal flow of our lives. When things occur out from the normal flow of our lives, we should learn to honor God by exploring where He might be working in these circumstances that have found us. Though most of his life was routine, boring and monotonous, Moses left room in the midst of his "have-to's" for the "might-be's". He turned aside to explore what was happening in front of him.

D. Value Moses' discovery (4) - "When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, Here I am."

It was only after Moses made time to explore what might be happening with the burning bush that he heard God's voice. The message from the bush was God's communication to Moses. This encounter for Moses had no precedent, but he did not approach it with skepticism. He did not dismiss it. He did not run from it. Moses was being encountered by God as God called Moses' name. God's calling communicates two things: "I know who you are" and "I know where you are".

II. Disturbing Introduction From God (5-6)

A. Meet the God of Holiness (5) - "Then He said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

This is the first time that the word holy is used in the English Bible; it is employed when man tries to approach God on his own terms.

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God immediately reveals to Moses that this is no casual encounter. He makes Moses consecrate the moment by removing his sandals from his feet. Any encounter we experience with God should be regarded with awe, reverence and holy fear.

B. Meet the God of Hope (6a) - “And He said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

God reintroduces Himself to Moses. By using the names of the patriarchs of Israel, God is letting Moses understand that He has not forgotten nor abandoned His promises. His covenant with Abraham is still in effect. His promises have not faded. There is hope for Israel and Moses is about to learn that their hope will be facilitated through Moses himself.

C. Meet the God of Heaven (6b) - “And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.”

Encounters with the Almighty aren't casual! True encounters with God will leave us awestricken and overwhelmed. We are wise to be somewhat skeptical of people who speak flippantly of having encounters with God. Each time He reveals Himself in truth and glory in Scripture, the normal response from people is some form of fear and trembling. The presence of God is seen in scripture to knock people out unconscious, to bring them to their knees, to leave them unable to speak. It is impossible to strut or stroll in the presence of God. Moses was completely overwhelmed and was afraid to potentially behold God in the presence of the burning bush.

III. Determined Intervention By God (7-8)

A. God had remained engaged (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.”

God, even when He is not taking clear action, sees, hears, and knows what is happening with His people. Israel had been crying out for relief in Egypt for centuries. God had not sent them deliverance. They may have been tempted to believe that He had failed them. Worse yet, they may have wrongly believed that He did not care. From divine wisdom, God waited before acting on their behalf. Interestingly, He did not defend Himself. He did not seek to

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reassure them. The hard truth is that He was silent as He waited for His own perfect timing to be enacted. That time had now arrived and He communicated to Moses that He had been watching over His Israel all along.

B. God had determined a reversal (8a) - "I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land ..."

C. God had prepared a destination (8b) - "...to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites."

God was now acting decisively on behalf of Israel. He would move toward them from heaven in strong, swift remedy. Israel's time of oppression would be broken off of them and they would be taken into the new land which God had promised to Abraham long ago. Their ashes would be exchanged for beauty. Their mourning would become dancing. Moses was informed that God had not forgotten His promises, and now God would shepherd Israel from Egypt's horror into a new territory accompanied with much bounty, but also filled with new obstacles, battles and enemies.

IV. Deliberate Invitation From God (9-12)

A. Moses, I am sharing my passion (9) - "And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them."

God was revealing that He felt towards Israel as a parent does to a crying child. He would deliver them.

B. Moses, I am sending a person (10-11) - "Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." 11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Here is the moment of revelation from this purpose-defining encounter. God was going to use Moses to be the deliverer of Israel. God had prepared Moses by sapping his pride out of him for forty years. God trained Moses how to lead in the desert. God was imparting His purpose to Moses. God, in His sovereign timing, will

connect you with your tribe and will reveal His purposes for that connection.

C. Moses, I am speaking a promise (12) - “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.”

In the revelation of all of His purposes to his children, God establishes a promise that He will accompany us in all that we are being called to accomplish for His glory.

“Encounters That Accomplish The Impossible” Ezekiel 37:1-14 Sunday PM

I. God Will Ordain Some Uncomfortable Places (1-3)

A. How God was leading Ezekiel (1a) - “The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD...”

It is essential to note that the impossible situation that Ezekiel was about to be forced to enter into was brought to him directly by God. The devil did not take Ezekiel to the dry place of death and impossibility. Other people did not force him to go there. What he was seeing was not produced by his flesh. The hand of God was upon Ezekiel and that hand sovereignly brought him into a place of impossibility.

B. Where God was leading Ezekiel (1b-2) - “...and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. 2 And He led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry.”

Ezekiel was confronted with a valley. Ezekiel saw the elements of death and decay. Ezekiel was given a tour of the valley of the dry bones in order to compound the reality that God was confronting him with an impossible situation. He was alone, with no human help and only a silent tour around a vision of gloom and death. So much for the notion that God will never lead you into something you can't handle.

C. Why God was leading Ezekiel (3) - "And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know."

Here is the moment for which God intended this place of impossibility: He intentionally led Ezekiel into a dry place, characterized by defeat and death, in order to test the level of Ezekiel's faith in God's ability to do the impossible.

II. God Will Initiate Some Unusual Processes (4-8)

A. Illogical instructions for the believer (4) - "Then He said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD."

God called Ezekiel to do something with no precedent. It would seem foolish to preach or prophesy to dead bones. Sometimes, we do not see God overcome our impossibilities because we approach them with human logic instead of unquestioning spiritual obedience. God called Ezekiel to do something strange.

B. Necessary provision from God (5-6) - "Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. 6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD."

The message that Ezekiel was called to proclaim was that God will bring life to that which was dead. God had the ability and resources to turn the awful reality around. The specific words of the assigned message included doubt-free declarations that God was going to completely reverse the situation. Ezekiel would have to allow the word that he was receiving from God become more real to him than everything that he was absorbing through his natural senses. What was the goal of God in all of this? To establish His glory as the God over both Ezekiel and all Israel.

C. Trusting response from the servant (7-8) - "So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. 8 And I looked,

and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them.”

Wisely and obediently, Ezekiel did as God commanded. As he obeyed God, things began to change. Nothing began to change until Ezekiel acted in faith and obedience. We are often prone to wanting God to do the impossible before we have obeyed or in spite of the possibility that we are living in outright disobedience. God often brings us into full obedience and deeper faith by confronting us with impossible circumstances that bring us to a place of fresh repentance and commitment to do as He says, regardless of how illogical it may seem.

III. God Will Ordain Transformational Encounters (9-14)

A. The primary essential of encounter (9) - “Then He said to me, “Prophecy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.””

An encounter with God is only validated if what is put together on the outside is empowered by the Holy Spirit on the inside. The Hebrew word for breath and wind are the same. Interestingly, the Holy Spirit is symbolized by both breath and wind in the scripture. Part of the proclamation that Ezekiel was called to share involved the need for breath to enter the dead bodies of all the slain in the valley. This pictures the Kingdom reality that nothing significant can be done apart from the indwelling and filling of the Holy Spirit.

B. The climactic moment of encounter (10) - “So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.”

Not surprisingly, God honored Ezekiel’s obedience and the bones which had become bodies now became a living force. God, through Ezekiel’s humble faith and obedience, had accomplished an impossible miracle in the vision.

C. The fresh revelation from encounter (11-13) - “Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say,

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'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.' 12 Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O My people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. 13 And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O My people.”

God had a message attached to the miracle. Israel was in danger of losing all hope that God would ever show them favor again. Their national sin had brought the judgment of national death. It was the nation of Israel that was pictured by the valley of dry bones. God gave this vision to communicate to Israel that what was impossible for them to do apart from God, He would do Himself by grace. He would allow them to reap what they sowed, but He would not leave them dead. He would restore them, raise them and release them. Though God will allow us to experience the fruits of our failures, He is a merciful and gracious Father who will abide faithful to His promises over us.

D. The enduring lesson from encounter (14) - “And I will put My Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.”

Personal encounter with God in impossible situations is the only means by which you can gain confidence that He is as great as He declares Himself to be. If we live to avoid difficulty or if we run from life's impossibilities, we never get to encounter the God who delights in accomplishing the impossible. The more you grow in relationship with Him, the more you will face recurring impossibilities. He entrusts the impossible to those who know Him best.