Series: Steps to Freedom

March 18, 2018

Message Three:

**Accept the Call**

Exodus 3:1-4:17

Guests - Growth Track - Giving

**Intro:** First message - God’s Got a Plan for Your Life!

* He’s given us to one another to help each other - and we must pursue this plan!

Second message - Time to Act on God’s plan -

* Do you know who you are?
* Do you sometimes take matters into your own hands?
* Are you crying out to God?

Today we want to talk about this step of accepting God’s call.

God has a call on your life!

Some think only the preachers are called of God - No!

**Big Idea: You are called of God!**

God has a call on your life! You can and you will influence people that I will never have the chance to influence!

God puts all kinds of people in all kinds of places so that His message will permeate our culture and our community! You are a part of that! This is an honor! This is a high and holy calling!

Now - not everyone has a burning bush experience - but that doesn’t mean our call is any less significant -

Exodus 3:1-5 - One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn’t burn up. “This is amazing,” Moses said to himself. “Why isn’t that bush burning up? I must go see it.”

 When the Lord saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, “Moses! Moses!”

 “Here I am!” Moses replied.

 “Do not come any closer,” the Lord warned. “Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground.

**> God has given us access to His presence.**

Deuteronomy 31:8 - The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.

Joshua 1:5 - As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

John 14:16-17 - And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit…

Matthew 28:20 - And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

David Jeremiah wrote: “When missionary Amy Carmichael went to India, she suffered from acute, prolonged loneliness and homesickness. The other missionaries tried to be kind to her, but they were busy and had their own interests. One day, Amy’s condition became almost intolerable, and when her mail arrived, she ran into the house, into her bedroom. Locking the door, she knelt by her bed. There she opened her letters and read them aloud, one by one, to her heavenly Father. The gloom lifted, and her loneliness vanished. She felt she now had a Friend with whom to share her news, her experiences, her thoughts, and all her feelings.”

Psalm 139:7-12 - I can never escape from your Spirit!

I can never get away from your presence!

If I go up to heaven, you are there;

if I go down to the grave, you are there.

If I ride the wings of the morning,

if I dwell by the farthest oceans,

even there your hand will guide me,

and your strength will support me.

I could ask the darkness to hide me

and the light around me to become night—

but even in darkness I cannot hide from you.

**> The Lord sees what you are going through.**

Exodus 3:7-8 - Then the Lord told him, “I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt…”

You may be going through something - hurting so bad … can’t share it with anyone … maybe you’ve even kept it from your spouse … maybe you’re a young person and you’ve kept this hurt from your parents …

Sharon and I and our family have gone through stuff - through hurts - there are times we’ve just held it all in - there are times we’ve finally found the strength and wisdom to share it with others …

But, if you think you are going through something that no one sees - that no one knows about - God sees -

Abraham promised a child … nothing was happening … Sarah said, “Take my maid, Hagar … ” - Interesting - she was an Egyptian maid …

Genesis 16 -

Hagar became pregnant - she began to treat Sarah with contempt … we can only imagine the conversations … the attitudes … and that made Sarah mad … Sarah complains to Abraham - Abraham says, “This was your idea! She’s your maid! Do with her what you want!”

Sarah begins to treat Hagar harshly … again, we can only imagine how bad it got … Hagar ran away … out in the desert, stopped by a spring of water … can you imagine the pain - the loneliness - the hurt -

Mind you - this was not part of God’s plan - this all happened because people failed to trust God and take matters into their own hands - but even in that -

By that spring, the Angel of the Lord appeared to her - assured her that she was going to be all right - that God was going to take care of her -

Genesis 16:13 - She said, “You are the God who sees me.”

He sees you. He sees what you are going through. He sees your hurt - your pain - your rejection - how you are suffering because of your own rebellion - how you are suffering because you are doing right - He sees it all!

This bit about Hagar and Ishmael was not God’s original plan …

This came about because Abraham took matters into his own hands … like Moses did when he killed the Egyptian …

Hagar & Ishmael were not Plan A - I’m not even sure you could call them Plan B - they weren’t in the plan at all.

Sometimes it seems what is happening in this life isn’t even Plan B -

We know we’re not living in Plan A -

But God can take what is not even in Plan B - and He can use it.

He sees where you are - He sees what you are going through - He cares - and He still wants to use you in His plan!

**> Don’t protest God’s plan.**

Exodus 3:10-14 - Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt.”

 But Moses protested to God, “Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?”

 God answered, “I will be with you. And this is your sign that I am the one who has sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God at this very mountain.”

 But Moses protested, “If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ they will ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what should I tell them?”

 God replied to Moses, “I Am Who I Am. Say this to the people of Israel: I Am has sent me to you.”

Exodus 4:1-17 - But Moses protested again, “What if they won’t believe me or listen to me? What if they say, ‘The Lord never appeared to you’?”

 Then the Lord asked him, “What is that in your hand?”

 “A shepherd’s staff,” Moses replied.

 “Throw it down on the ground,” the Lord told him. So Moses threw down the staff, and it turned into a snake! Moses jumped back.

 Then the Lord told him, “Reach out and grab its tail.” So Moses reached out and grabbed it, and it turned back into a shepherd’s staff in his hand.

 “Perform this sign,” the Lord told him. “Then they will believe that the Lord, the God of their ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—really has appeared to you.”

 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Now put your hand inside your cloak.” So Moses put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out again, his hand was white as snow with a severe skin disease.

 “Now put your hand back into your cloak,” the Lord said. So Moses put his hand back in, and when he took it out again, it was as healthy as the rest of his body.

 The Lord said to Moses, “If they do not believe you and are not convinced by the first miraculous sign, they will be convinced by the second sign. And if they don’t believe you or listen to you even after these two signs, then take some water from the Nile River and pour it out on the dry ground. When you do, the water from the Nile will turn to blood on the ground.”

 But Moses pleaded with the Lord, “O Lord, I’m not very good with words. I never have been, and I’m not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled.”

 Then the Lord asked Moses, “Who makes a person’s mouth? Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say.”

 But Moses again pleaded, “Lord, please! Send anyone else.”

 Then the Lord became angry with Moses. “All right,” he said. “What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he speaks well. And look! He is on his way to meet you now. He will be delighted to see you. Talk to him, and put the words in his mouth. I will be with both of you as you speak, and I will instruct you both in what to do. Aaron will be your spokesman to the people. He will be your mouthpiece, and you will stand in the place of God for him, telling him what to say. And take your shepherd’s staff with you, and use it to perform the miraculous signs I have shown you.”

Let’s think about this -

* Moses going along tending sheep … been doing this for 40 years -
* Sees a bush on fire - no big deal - but as he’s watching, he notices it doesn’t burn up! “I’m going to take a look at this!”
* Gets over there - and God speaks to him from the bush!

“Take off your shoes! This is holy ground!” Wow! What an experience!

Then, God says, “I’m going to deliver my people!”

What do you remember from 40 years ago!

You have to be close to 50 or more to remember anything from 40 years ago!

Moses mind goes back … raised in the Pharoah’s house … finds out he’s a Hebrew … knows the story of being rescued from the river …

Sees an Egyptian beat a Hebrew and in his rage, he kills the Egyptian …

That was a long time ago … that rush … that feeling … that anger … He’s a different person now - in a different family - living a totally different lifestyle …

But, he remembers the zeal he had for his people - now God says, “I’m going to deliver them from their slavery and set them free!”

Moses first thought must be - “This is great! This is awesome! That’s great, God! I’m really glad! I’ve thought that should happen for a long time now!”

Then God says, “I want you to go and tell Pharoah….”

Moses: “Wait … what? You want me? No, not me! There’s probably still a warrant out for my arrest! I can’t do that! I’m just a no good, no ‘count shepherd now! I can’t even talk good …”

Moses protested … Moses protested … Moses protested … until he angered God.

**When we think of ourselves less than God thinks of us, we anger God.**

**When we think God can’t use us, we are insulting God!**

**If we believe God can do anything, we have to believe that God can do anything through us!**

God specializes in things thought impossible!

God specializes in using ordinary people!

* Joseph - next to the youngest of 12 brothers - his brothers would mock him and ridicule him - threw him in a pit - sold him into slavery - thought they were done with him -

God’s plans can never be thwarted - He’s going to use ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things!

* David - shepherd … Every other brother was brought before Samuel before him! “Aren’t there any others?” - Ah - just David - he’s the youngest - he’s out with the sheep…
* Mary - teenage girl - found favor with God -

Luke 1:37-38 ESV - “For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

* The Apostles - the first messengers of Jesus weren’t people of much value in the way that this world estimates the value of people - fisherman, tax collectors, rebels, common people - but God used them to change the world!

Moses can protest all he wants - God is going to do this thing and He is going to use Moses to do it!

You've heard of The Power of Positive Thinking - this passage could be titled, “The Power of Negative Thinking!”

Or, How to get God mad at you!

God is going to get His job done. God is going to work His plan. God is going to complete His purpose in this world.

It doesn’t matter how many oppose Him! It doesn’t matter how much in the minority God’s people seem to be.

It doesn’t matter how much it seems like the world is going in the complete opposite direction of God’s plan - God is going to work His plan.

It seems absolutely hopeless that God could rescue the Hebrews after 300 years of slavery to the most powerful nation on the planet - God was going to do His work and get it done!

The only question is, will we be a part of it?

**Concl:** This is part of our living in freedom - being part of God’s plan - find out who we are - what gifts He has given us - what He wants us to do - and living that out -

When God calls us, He furnishes the means and ability to fulfill the call - we don’t have to let fear or feelings of inadequacy keep us from doing what God calls us to do -

2nd Corinthians 3:5-6 - It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own. Our qualification comes from God. He has enabled us to be ministers of his new covenant.

Moses was still struggling with that - are you?

What is holding you back?

What seems hopeless to you?

**Invitation -**

**Blessing -**

As you take your steps to freedom - As you realize that God has a plan for your life - and as you begin to act on that plan - May you realize and have absolute confidence that God has a call on your life.

* May you know that God has given you access to His presence -
* May you take advantage of the blessing of His personal presence in your life at all time
* May you know that the Lord sees what you are going through - He sees your hurts - He sees your pain - He sees your fears - and with this awareness of His presence and His love may you accept the plan God has for your without protest.

As you pursue God’s plan, and you do not think of yourself as less than God thinks of you, may you have the faith that God can do ANYTHING through you - and may you experience iGod can doing far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams!