

Calling out the called

Exodus 2:23-3:15, 4:1-12

Dr. Harry Keith Morris, Jr.

1 – “Therefore, come now, and I will send you . . .”

Some time ago, Pastor David sent out a call for substitute preachers for different dates during the fall, to which I responded, and David invited me to speak today. The **theme** for October is **service**. Last Sunday, in a similar fashion to the booths the Israelites construct during the Festival of Booths, *Sukkot*, the various ministries of IBC set up “BOOTHs” in the back patio for members to explore and sign up for a “Reasonable Service” to God and His church.

Today, I’m speaking on God’s call to Moses. In keeping with IBC’s October theme of service, I am Calling Out the Called —those whom God is calling to service, **like** He called **Moses**, to speak His message to others and fulfill His plans and purposes.

The phrase “**Calling Out the Called**” is not new. It was coined over 100 years ago, in October 1919, when Baptist churches across the southern part of the United States “united in inviting congregants to respond to God’s call to be ministers and saw over 10,000 people surrender their lives to Christian service.”¹ In principle, why should it be any different today?

God said to Moses, “**Therefore, come now, and I will send you . . .**” In the Bible, Moses was **the first individual** God called and commissioned to be His messenger and speak His words to others. God’s call to Moses established **a Biblical pattern** of God’s call to the prophets, preachers, and teachers of His word even down to today.

2 – This is the **pattern** established in God’s call to Moses: God **speaks**; God **initiates** communication with man; God **lays a burden** on the one He calls; God chooses and **uses** a human messenger to transmit His message and speak His Word to others; God **accompanies** His messenger; God **equips** His servant; and God **provides the words** of the message.

The story of God calling Moses and commissioning him to be His spokesman **began** in Egypt, where the sons of Israel were in captivity.

¹ Introduction to Video by Meet Cleveland Hope, accessed September 29, 2023, <https://www.clevelandhope.com/callingout-the-called>.

3 – Ex. 2:23-25 NASB – *“Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God.²⁴ So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.²⁵ God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them.”*

God, who made the ear, **heard** their groaning; God, who made the eye, **saw** the sons of Israel (Psalm 94:9). And God, who fulfills His promises, **remembered** His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Ex. 2:24-24 NASB).

4 – The **covenant** that God remembered was His promise to Abraham and his descendants of a land of their own. *“On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: . . .’”* (Gen. 15:18 NASB).

5 – Abram’s name was later changed to Abraham, father of nations. And now, after 400 years of slavery, Abraham’s descendants through Isaac and Jacob, also called Israel, had grown and multiplied into the Hebrew nation. In this **two-fold context** —the Israelites’ enslavement in Egypt, and God’s promise and covenant to the forefathers of a land of their own— God calls Moses.

Ex. 3:1 – *“Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.”*

6 – Moses had been shepherding the flock for about 40 years. We know that from Stephen’s sermon in Acts 7. According to Stephen, Moses was approaching the age of forty when he fled Egypt and settled in the land of Midian (Acts 7:23, 29). Then Stephen says, *“After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning thorn bush”* (Acts 7:30). So, Moses fled from Egypt at 40 and cared for sheep for an additional 40 years, which would make him about 80-years-old!

Moses was **an enigma!** He was a Hebrew, yet he grew up and lived 40 years in the Egyptian Palace as Pharaoh’s daughter’s adopted son. From there, he went out to visit his Hebrew brothers and saw an Egyptian mistreating a Hebrew. On impulse, he struck and killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. When the act became known by Pharaoh, he had to flee for his life to the desert and live the next 40 years as a fugitive and a shepherd of sheep.

7 – Moses was like the **turtle on a fence post** that Billy Graham spoke of many times. If you happen to see a turtle on a fence post, you know he didn’t get there by himself. Someone put him there. Moses, a prince of Egypt, was herding sheep in the desert because God put him there. **8** – And in that unlikely place, God, in His timing, called to him from the midst of the burning bush: *“Moses, Moses!”* (Ex. 3:4 NASB).

The Lord, the invisible God, spoke in an audible manner that Moses could hear, calling him by name, twice. Moses responded to God, *“Here I am.”*

V. 5 – Then God said, *“Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”* God advises Moses that in His presence, all the area around

Him is holy ground and there is a protocol for approaching Him. With good reason, Moses would later, in writing the history, call Horeb, *the mountain of God*.

V. 6 – *“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”* God introduces Himself as the God of **Moses’ father**. Moses’ father’s name was **Amram**. Along with his wife **Jocabed**, Amram feared God and hid Moses as a babe in defiance of Pharaoh’s order to throw all the Hebrew male babies into the Nile River. But Amram’s God was not one among many gods, like the Egyptians had. He was **the singular and same God** of Moses’ father and of the Hebrew’s common ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God speaking to Moses is the same God of his own family history from the time of his ancestors. *“Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.”*

9 – The Lord continued speaking, laying out **the burden** of His appearance to Moses.

V. 7 – *“I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings.”*

Nothing passes by God’s attention unnoticed. He sees and He hears and He knows it all (Prov. 15:3), and He lays out the suffering of His people before Moses.

God calls the Hebrews, **My people**, a chosen people from the time of Abraham, a people that God identifies with personally.

10 – V. 8 – *“So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, . . .”*

How do we reconcile God’s *coming down* with the fact that God, Who is spirit, is omnipresent—present at once and always in every place? *“I have come down”* expresses the concept from our human point of view that God resides in the heavens, and when He chooses, **reveals Himself personally** in the temporal affairs of His creation. We will soon remember and celebrate at Christmas **that ultimate personal revelation** and *coming down* of God. **11** – *“when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons”* (Gal. 4:4-5).

God revealed Himself personally to Moses in the burning bush, and He “came down” to personally liberate—redeem—His people, the Hebrews, from the Egyptians and carry them to their own land. That land He describes as *“a good and spacious land,”* . . . *“flowing with milk and honey”*. This grand vision of a promise fulfilled is what God is presenting now to Moses!

12 – V. 9 – God then **invites Moses** to join Him in fulfilling this grand vision.

V. 10 – *“Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.”*

I AM the God of your fathers, said the Lord. Your brothers and My people are burdened in Egypt. I’ve come down to rescue them and carry them to the land I promised to Abraham. **Therefore**—that is, with all that I have said in mind—*come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh*, and we will carry out this grand plan!

There could be no more enticing invitation from God than, *Come along with Me!*

“Come now” means: “Come on! Get in stride with Me in the grand and awesome thing that I’m going to do. Agree with me in heart and mind, and we will do this together!”

“I will send you” means: “You will represent Me, the God of your ancestors, with My authority and commission.”

God paints the grand vision in **broad brush strokes**, without many details. Henry Blackaby explains in his Bible study *Experiencing God* that the purposes and plans of God are **so much grander** than He can detail in the moment that He calls His servant. For that reason, God’s invitation to join with Him in fulfilling and carrying out His vision **requires a step of faith** —a self-abandoning confidence in the One who is calling without having to resolve all the details. Those called by God walk by faith!

13 – V. 11 – “*But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?’*” God’s speaking to Moses changes here from a monologue to a dialogue. Moses’ response is reasonable, isn’t it? He had failed years before when he killed an Egyptian slave master and hid him in the sand. He thought his brothers, the Hebrews, would understand God was granting them deliverance through him. But even they rejected him, saying, *“Who made you a prince or a judge over us?”* (Ex. 2:14a). He was a fugitive from Pharaoh, rejected by his own people, and just a shepherd. Surely God can’t be calling me now, can He? ***Who am I?***

This was **just what God wanted to hear!** God had sent Moses to the desert to humble him, to hone him, to hew out of him every vestige of pride and self-reliance. He was ready to be called. God would grant deliverance to the Hebrews through Moses, but it would be in God’s way and in God’s timing, not the way Moses had envisioned 40 years before.

Commentator MacLaren observes that **Self-confidence is not** the disposition that God looks for in choosing His instruments. It’s when a man says, “I can do nothing,” that he is apt for God to use. Paul said, ***“When I am weak, then I am strong”*** (2 Cor. 12:10).

14 – Even so, as Blackaby asserts, the invitation from God always places the invited one in a “crisis of faith.” This **crisis of faith** is like arriving at **a crossroads**, a place where the single path divides into two. And you must decide —trust in God and say, “Yes!” and then know God more and experience His power as you follow His grand plans— or you pull back and reject God’s invitation and say “No!” demonstrating a lack of faith in Him, in His wisdom in inviting you, and in His power to carry out His plans. What’s more, you miss the opportunity to know God more deeply and see His power at work in fulfilling His purposes.

15 – V. 12 – Significantly, God doesn’t mention Moses’ background, his failures, his qualifications, or his experience at all. He looks forward and says: ***“Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain.”***

God’s servant never goes alone. ***Certainly, I will be with you!*** With God, Moses could stand before Pharaoh, and he could lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

Additionally, God gave Moses **a sign of proof** that He was sending him. *“ . . . and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain”* (Ex. 3:12b NASB).

God’s plans and purposes are as good as **already done**. From God's perspective, there is no doubt that His purposes will be accomplished. Why? God is Almighty and God is eternal. He exists outside the confines of space and time. He knows it all —past, present, and future.

16 – To illustrate this reality, **imagine a timeline** represented by a meter stick. The beginning numbers of the measuring stick represent the present time God is speaking with Moses. The other end of the measuring stick, where the number indicates one meter, represents the completion of God’s plan to bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt and lead them to Mount Sinai. God, being outside the confines of space and time, sees the measuring stick of one metro as if He were above it. **At once and always**, He sees the beginning and the end **at the same time**.

17 – Moses, **on the other hand**, only sees the present moment. God plants in his mind’s eye the vision of the fulfillment, the ultimate success of this grand plan. **18** – From God’s perspective, Moses will lead the people out of Egypt, they will worship God at that very same place, and then, they will all know it was God’s hand that did it.

Jesus promised to be with us until the end of the age. His promise follows closely after His command to go and make disciples of all nations.² **A sign of proof**, we could say, that He sent us and the vision of the ultimate success of His mission, is the vision He gave John on Patmos of a multitude around the heavenly Throne, from every nation, tongue, and tribe, praising God. This **end vision** motivates mission organizations and missionaries the world over to reach all peoples with the gospel.

God’s promise to certainly be with Moses also follows closely His invitation to Moses to go.

19 – Moses begins to imagine himself answering God’s call, and his **second** response expresses a potential **obstacle** based on “What if?” You can be sure that when God calls you, an infinite number of “What if’s” and “What’s about that” will arise. Moses is thinking about it. Then Moses said to God: *“Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?”* (Ex. 3:13).

20 – *God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” God, furthermore, said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations* (Ex. 3:14-15 NASB).

“I AM” is the Hebrew **Yahweh** —the One who IS. In English Bibles, *Yahweh* is usually rendered LORD in all caps. The LORD *Yahweh* **IS** always and ever-present —eternal. He IS and **still** IS the God of those who have gone before —of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. **“That’s** my name,” God told Moses.

² J. D. Greear, *Gaining by Losing: Why the Future Belongs to Churches that Send*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 50.

21 – Jesus quoted this passage of Scripture when He refuted the Sadducees who didn't believe in the resurrection, saying God IS the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and therefore, God is not of the dead, but of the living (Matt. 22:32).

22 – Jesus affirmed His oneness with God, the Great I AM, when He said to the Jews, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am”* (John 8:58).

23 – If indeed *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever* (Heb. 13:8) as the writer of Hebrews declares, then the same I AM, the LORD, *Yahweh*, who spoke to Moses and called him from out of the burning bush is the same LORD Jesus who sent His disciples to the ends of the earth and calls men and women through His Word and by His Spirit to service today.

24 – Moses' **third response** also imagined his reception by the elders of Israel. *4 Then Moses said, “What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, ‘The Lord has not appeared to you.’”² The Lord said to him, “What is that in your hand?” And he said, “A staff.”³ Then He said, “Throw it on the ground.” So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it.⁴ But the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand and grasp it by its tail”—so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand—⁵ “that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.”*

Interestingly, Moses' difficulties had nothing to do with entering the Egyptian palace and confronting Pharaoh, but rather with garnering the support and confidence of his fellow Hebrews. **God redirects his attention** from the imaginary future to a present and tangible familiarity —the shepherd's staff he had in his hand.

25 – When God took leave of Moses from the burning bush, He made sure he was rooted in the tangible present with God's view of the future. His closing words from the burning bush were: *“You shall take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs”* (Ex. 4:17 NASB). Shortly after, when Moses took leave of his father-in-law Jethro and left Midian to return to Egypt, his staff was now called *the staff of God* (Ex. 4:20).

“What is that in your hand?” We here have a rich heritage of sitting under some of the best models of worship and the best preaching and teaching of God's word in Madrid, and I'd say anywhere. Each of us has personal experiences, talents, abilities, and giftings. Some are professionally trained. These all represent what we have in our hand. Today we are Calling Out the Called. If God asks you to dedicate what you have in your hand to Him, to throw it down before Him, as it were, it becomes **His instrument**, and He gives it back to you for His use and His purposes, and He says, *come now, and I will send you.*

26 – Moses' **fourth response** is a personal **obstacle** in his mind to accepting God's call. *“Then Moses said to the Lord, ‘Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue’”* (Ex. 4:10).

“I'm just not a good speaker,” said Moses. Apparently, however, Moses **knew the oratorical value of repetition** because he later offered the same complaint and excuse to God on two other occasions!

This time, he practically accused God saying, “Even after You have spoken with me I haven’t miraculously improved!”

27 – “The Lord said to him, ‘Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?’¹² Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say” (Ex. 4:11-12 NASB).

Actually, Moses’ lack of eloquence made him better suited to listen to and speak only God’s words. But **how difficult for Moses** to wrench his focus from himself to God! “I,” says Moses, “have never been eloquent.” “You’re looking”, says God, “at the wrong ‘I.’” *I, even I, [GOD] will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say. Now then go!*

28 – Let’s review the pattern of God’s call to Moses: God **spoke** to Moses; God **initiated** communication with him from the blazing bush; God **laid out for Moses the burden** of His people; God **chose** to **use** Moses, a human messenger, to transmit His message and communicate His Word to others and to carry out His purposes; God promised to **accompany** Moses as His messenger; God **equipped** His servant; and God Himself promised to **give** Moses the words **and teach** him what he was to say.

29 – Incredibly, Moses made **one last effort** to evade God’s call. **“Please, Lord, now send the message by whomever You will”** (Ex. 4:13). Moses’ **fifth response** was not an objection, question, or difficulty. It was a flat lack of faith, and refusal to surrender to God’s will. You may be sensing and hearing God’s call tugging at your heart today, but you are thinking as commentator Victor Hamilton put it: “Here I am, Send him!”³ “Please, Lord, call someone else!” **A word of caution here** this was just the response God **didn’t** want to hear.

30 – “Then the anger of the Lord burned against Moses, and He said, ‘Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently’” (Ex. 4:14). Commentators observe that nowhere in Scripture up to this point has God’s anger burned against anyone.

But God didn’t let Moses off the hook. His choice was Moses, and **Aaron was God’s concession** to Moses’ stubbornness.⁴ Aaron could speak fluently, but God chose Moses. God doesn’t necessarily call based on natural gifting or ability. God calls according to His sovereign will and choosing, and God’s gifting is **supernatural** by the Holy Spirit.

Aaron could speak. But he also led the Israelites to **forge the golden calf** while Moses was on the mountain (Ex. 32). His sons **offered strange fire** before the Lord in the Tabernacle (Lev. 10:1-3). And he and Miriam **grumbled against Moses** saying, **“Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us as well?”** (Num. 12:1-15). Aaron was a concession to Moses’ stubborn resistance to surrendering to God’s call.

31 – Scripture attests to Moses’ character: **“Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth”** (Num. 12:3). The Scriptures record: **“The Lord used to speak**

³ Victor Hamilton, *Exodus*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 151.

⁴ Hamilton, *Exodus*, 152.

with Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend” (Ex. 33:11; Num. 12:8); and Moses *“was faithful in all His [God’s] house as a servant”* (Heb. 3:5; Num. 12:7).

The call of God is **not necessarily to a good job**. The call of God is **to submit** to being His servant for His purposes and plans. **Surrender** is the best way to answer God’s call. Surrender your plans and ambitions for your life to God’s call and His purposes.

Moses surrendered shepherding sheep to shepherd the flock of God. **Moses stood** before Pharaoh and announced the Ten Plagues which God brought on Egypt. **Moses led** the sons of Israel to celebrate the first Passover, just as the Lord commanded. **Moses stretched out** the staff of God over the Red Sea, and God opened it up for the Israelites to pass through on dry ground. **Moses received** in his hands the Ten Commandments written by God on tablets of stone at Mount Sinai. **Moses led** the Israelites under God’s direction as they wandered in the desert for forty years. **Moses wrote** the first five books of the Scriptures which we have in our hand today. And **Moses looked over** into Canaan, the land God promised, and to which he had led the people.

How could God have told Moses all that when He called him from the burning bush? The call of God **requires the step of faith**, and usually, and only when all is said and done, can you look back and say with certainty, “God did call me, and He did all that!”

Today by faith, I am Calling Out the Called. What is that in your hand? Who among us today is willing to submit and surrender to God’s call as His servant for His purposes and plans?

We’ve seen the mission goal of 15 new evangelical churches in Spanish cities by 2030. It’s a worthy and ambitious goal. But I submit that it **falls far short**. According to Evangelical Focus Europe, 10 million Spaniards live in towns without an evangelical presence.⁵

32 – According to the most recent 2023 analysis report from the *Ferrer i Guàrdia* Foundation, **39.3%** of Spaniards, the highest record in history, are **atheists (15.2%), agnostics (11.8%) and non-religious or indifferent (12.3%)**.⁶

The 39.3% of Spaniards who do not believe reveals a growing ignorance of God’s Word, a darkening spiritual darkness, and a growing dominion of Satan. This does not go unnoticed by God. He hears the cries of hopelessness and despair, and the burden is on us today.

Who is God calling to preach the word and to pastor Spaniards with the support and encouragement of the IBC family?

33 – On the global level, according to the Joshua Project, 7,398 people groups, 42.2% of the world’s population, **still** have little or no access to the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁷

⁵ David Goodwin, “Evangelical Christian numbers on the rise in Spain,” *Christianity Today*, 20 September 2023.

⁶ “*Laicidad en cifras I Análisis 2023*,” Ferrer i Guàrdia Foundation, edition 2023, accessed October 3, 2023, https://www.ferreriguardia.org/web/content/9645?access_token=02c25095-cf71-463f-a549-04973ce15442&unique=092489124f0846d326821732305db6f035c39ada.

⁷ The Joshua Project, “Global Summary: Overview of the People Groups of the World,” accessed October 3, 2023, <https://joshuaproject.net/>.

Who is God calling to cross-cultural missions, to witness to Jesus Christ to a people who have little or no access to the Gospel, who live in perhaps a difficult and challenging place?

The burden is laid out. God has promised to be with us. He has given us the end vision. We know His name. He has and He will equip us. His Spirit will be with our mouth and teach us what to say. Our part is to surrender to His call, step out and walk with Him by faith.

34 – If you are sensing the Lord's call today, surrender your will to His invitation by faith. Step out and come forward, declare it before God and the church, and speak to Pastor David or myself.

"Therefore, come now, God said, and I will send you . . ."