



August 31 • 2008

Focus Scripture

Exodus 3:1–15

Additional Scriptures

Psalm 105:1–6, 23–26,
45c

Romans 12:9–21

Matthew 16:21–28

Compassionate,
loving God, every
day we see and
hear the misery
and suffering of
oppressed people.

Too often, we do
not know ourselves
to be your partner
in their liberation.
Call us. Empower
us. Consecrate us.
Send us. Amen.

Called by Name

God's people continue to grow through struggle. God called Moses by name in an unexpected encounter. God claimed him, and Moses responded in faith. Today, we also respond to God's call in faith. We receive God's liberation and commission to service. Following God is risky, but Jesus reveals God's saving work in such costly faithfulness.

Focus Scripture: Exodus 3:1–15

God knew the oppression and misery of the Hebrews. God acted, securing Moses' survival, safety, and education. As an adult, Moses killed an Egyptian while defending the life of a Hebrew slave, then fled to Midian. It is here that we pick up the story in the focus passage.

The biblical storyteller emphasizes God's knowledge of the Hebrews' suffering and reiterates God's promise of productive land. For the Hebrew people, God's promise, presence, and land were linked through the covenant God made with Abraham.

Moses met God at Mt. Horeb, or Mt. Sinai, a place that features repeatedly in the Exodus story. Mt. Sinai was uniquely associated with God's presence. God's presence at the site made the ground holy, giving land a spiritual significance. The site had been chosen for God's purpose and was deserving of deep respect. Later, Moses received the covenant and the Law at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19–32). Mt. Sinai was revered as the place associated with God's revelation and became a sacred site for the Hebrews.

The Hebrews were not able to initiate liberation by themselves, as Pharaoh's oppression had taken its toll. A greater power was needed, and distinguishing God from the Egyptian gods was essential. To act on God's behalf was a serious matter. God called Moses, warned him, made him a partner in the liberation of the Hebrews, and offered him a relationship with God. A reluctant Moses responded.

Moses accepts his task when God's identity is convincingly established. First, Moses discerns that the God of his ancestors has called him to liberate the people. The storyteller depicts a realistic account of Moses' struggle and God's patience. Second, a par-

ticular site, Mt. Sinai, is associated with God's revelation. Third, God gives God's name. This passage is the only place in the Hebrew Scriptures where God is identified by the holy name "I am who I am," which can also be read as "I will cause to be." This understanding fits very well with God being involved and active in the Hebrews' liberation. God is the source of salvation.

God's call changed Moses' life completely, and his response shaped the Israelite community. Moses became the model prophet – his call the model call for all prophets. Much later, the early church used imagery from Exodus and Moses' prophetic tradition to explore Jesus' life and teaching.

God's people are called to live in faith-filled ways, consistent with God's love and grace. **Psalm 105:1–6, 23–26, 45c** reinforces the link between God's name, presence, and action. Paul, in **Romans 12:9–21**, exhorts and challenges Christians to live in ways consistent with God's relationship with them. Matthew reminds his community that identity is about behaviour, rather than position in society. In **Matthew 16:21–28**, Jesus is the model disciple and followers are identified by their Jesus-like actions. To follow God can be costly and risky. As suffering shaped Jesus' faithfulness, so it will be for disciples in all times and places.



God continues to call us to faithful action. What "burning bushes" have you experienced – places and times when God's call has come clearly? In what ways have other people's stories of both the suffering and joy of following God's way encouraged and strengthened you?

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