

EXODUS 3: 1- 15

IDENTITY CRISIS

Ravi Zacharias tells the story of two Australian sailors who were on their first night of shore leave. Their pockets were full of money and eventually their bellies were full of beer. As they staggered out of the pub and down the foggy street, they got lost. Leaning on each other in their drunken stupor, they could barely make out a figure coming towards them. As it turned out, it was an English Admiral, arrayed with metals and badges of rank and honor. When he approached, one of the sailors cried, “Hey bloke, do you know where we are?”

The Admiral, incensed at their lack of a salute or any other respect for military decorum fired back, “Do you know who I am?”

With that retort, the sailor that asked the question looked at his shipmate and said, “We’re in big trouble; we don’t know where we are and he doesn’t know who he is.”

Not knowing who you are can lead to many problems and have many causes. Amnesia aside - an identity crisis – that is, not knowing who we are can be very detrimental to a Christian.

We all have a purpose in Jesus. We are all to take on His identity. But knowing who we are in Jesus doesn’t mean that we no longer have our own identity, it simply means that we understand our place in the universe.

In Exodus chapter two Moses knew he had been called to be a deliverer, but he didn't know how to accomplish that goal and he failed miserably. He then had to flee the country and eventually came to be content as a shepherd. He was content to be the steward of another man's flock. He didn't even own his own sheep. Some would say that was a lack of ambition but I say that all Christians are in that boat in some sense. We are all stewards over what God has put in our lives. Even if we "own" things, we are still just stewards over them because as Christians we recognize that all we own has been given to us by our Lord.

Moses' idea of who he was died the day he had to flee Egypt. He has repeatedly mulled over that day for the last forty years. You have plenty of time to think while watching sheep. In his mind he was a failure and had obviously misinterpreted what it was he was to do with his life.

But that is not the reality of his situation. God placed him in the desert. God has sent him to school and now it is time for him to graduate. But how do you tell that to a man that has gotten accustomed to the tedium of a shepherd's life? How do you get someone's attention when they have walked the same paths and seen the same things and done the same job for years? Well, God knows how to do that. And as we shall see He is good at getting people's attention. Maybe He will even grab yours here today.

We should also see that God calls busy people. Many of us would say that we are just too busy to act on what it is we feel God may have called us to do, but the busy people are the ones God uses. God doesn't use lazy people; He can't.

Gideon was threshing grain, Samuel was serving in the Tabernacle, David was tending sheep and Elisha was plowing. Four of the apostles were managing their fishing business and Matthew was collecting taxes. God uses busy people. So if you are a busy person, get ready. If you are not busy, then get off the couch and get busy so God can use you.

Exodus 3:1-3

1 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. 3 Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn."

Moses had been walking this same path for years now. He probably knew every bush by heart. I have even read that in that part of the world certain bushes are known to spontaneously combust. Even if that is so, this one was different. Though it caught fire it wasn't consumed. It just continued to burn and burn.

God can use something as mundane as a shrub to get your attention. I think we miss many of the things that should catch our eye just because we are in a hurry. I don't know if we think like we should. I know we all worry and mull things over, but that is different from the deep contemplation that exercises our brains and it certainly isn't meditating on scripture. (The 3 day effect)

God knows the end from the beginning. He certainly knew how

Moses was wired. And he knew that in a job like watching sheep that Moses would have plenty of time to think of things. God broke Moses from his monotony by setting a bush on fire and used it to get his attention. Now that He had his attention He could tell him what He wanted him to do.

4 So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!"

And he said, "Here I am."

5 Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." 6 Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

There are couple things to take note of here.

First of all, God used Moses' name twice. This is common. Do you recall when He called Saul of Tarsus? He said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He called Mary, Mary or even Martha, Martha. It is done for emphasis.

God told Moses to take off his shoes. This is still a custom in many cultures today. It is a sign of respect and humility. The idea of "holy ground" is something we see more than once in the Bible. (Naaman)

God told Moses not to come any further. There is something about God's otherness that we need never forget. While we can now approach God's throne boldly, that was not an option in the OT. Jesus opened up that up for us. We are now adopted and as such can call on God as a son calls on his daddy. Moses

hid his face because he was afraid. We no longer have to be afraid but we do have to be respectful and humble. Now God goes into the reason for this visit.

7 And the Lord said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. 8 So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. 9 Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. 10 Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.

The time was right. God's people were under harsh bondage, but it is just now that they have really wanted to be delivered. Many people want to cling to that thing that holds them back. That is called sin. Sin is, wanting something else more than you want God. And it doesn't have to be a "bad" thing either. It just has to be something you want more than you want God. We call it an idol. However, they, (Israel) are ready to be delivered and God has deemed that Moses is ready to be a deliverer. The problem is that Moses doesn't feel the same way.

In verse 8 we can see that God says He will deliver His people. In verses 7-9 God continually uses the word "I". It is because of His covenant that He will deliver Israel. He has heard and HE has seen their plight. He has remembered His covenant. Then in verse 10 He says that He will send Moses...

10 Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

Did you catch that? Now we see that God will deliver Israel THROUGH Moses. This the way God works. Yes, God could just sweep through the country and evacuate His people by some miraculous work, but that isn't how He wanted to do it.

God thrives in working THROUGH His people. He wants us to be involved and not just take a seat on the sidelines. A great deal of the time God accomplishes His will THROUGH ordinary people; busy people.

God wants to use you in a great way. However, many of us respond just as Moses did. We have excuses or an identity crisis or both.

Look at Moses' response.

11 But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

12 So He said, “I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

“Who am I?” Moses asked. This is entirely different behavior from what we saw in Egypt. Moses knew who he was or at least he thought he did. He knew what he had to do or at least he thought he did. Now when the time has come to get his

marching orders he questions whom he is. Hindsight is 20/20 and it is easy to be a Monday morning quarterback but Moses' response is no different than how many of us would/ have responded to God.

In Moses' mind he had already failed at liberating the Hebrews. He has a legitimate reason to question things.

Example: Winston Churchill - Gallipoli

Moses was no longer sure of his identity. God's response gave him the answer. He said, "I'll be with you." And that is really all we need to know but for most of us it isn't enough. Truth be told, many of us don't really want to be used of God if it is going to move us out of our comfort zones. **We have our daily routines just as Moses did. We have what we want and we generally have sufficient time to enjoy those things. Our lives are full, but are they fulfilled?** Moses wasn't called to be a shepherd all his life. He was called to something else and so are some of us. We just need to find our identity and purpose. Is God trying to get your attention? If so, have you asked Him who you are? If so, all you need to know is that He is with you.

Moses would eventually return to that same mountain, the one he knew so well to get the tablets on which was written the Law of God.

Since Moses didn't know his own identity, he wanted to know exactly to whom it was he was speaking. And God answered.

13 Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?"

14 And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you. "' 15 Moreover God said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'The Lord 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 to all generations.'

Moses was justified in believing that he needed credentials when speaking to the Hebrews. Last time he tried this, his credentials weren't accepted. He didn't want a repeat of the same debacle. We can also see that whenever God made Himself known to people in the times of the patriarchs, it was common for him to do so with a different name. So Moses wasn't out of place in asking for God's name.

You are probably asking why would He say "I Am that/ who I AM?" Well saying it this way shows that God has no equal. Think of it as a math equation. I AM = I AM. You can say God is love or even I AM is love but you can't turn it around and say Love is God or Love is I AM because God is more than love.

Jesus uses this name for Himself in the NT. The Pharisees knew exactly what He was saying when He said I AM. That is why they got so angry with Him.

Moses was instructed to tell the Hebrews that the "One without Equal" was the one behind him. For that reason they would follow him.

Finally, it was important for everyone including Moses to see God as the deliverer and not Moses. God's name had to be lifted up higher than that of Moses.

When we respond to the call of God it is His name that is to be glorified and not ours. His calling is His enabling and that calling is for His glory and our benefit.

Moses found his identity in God. He found his purpose in God. He found his life in God. And once he had found all these things, he was able to affect an entire nation. It is most likely that none of us will affect an entire nation, but we can affect many around us, nonetheless.

- Home, workplace.
- Ministry fair

But one of the things that ministers to me the most is that God called Moses in spite of all his failures, and his insistence that he couldn't go or even wanted to go.

God knew whom he wanted and needed for this task. He knows what He wants for us to do and what He wants for us. And, like Moses, many times we fight Him. The Apostle Paul fought Him also. But God continued working on him and in his heart. And God does the same thing with us today. He takes us in our circumstances, with our particular backgrounds and our particular quirks. He calls us and He begins to chip away at our hard, rebellious hearts until we are left with no more excuses.

God works through His people. This is His grace at work in our lives and even in the lives of others. He has found us, have we found Him and all that entails?