

After graduating from college, I was unsure of what I wanted to do with life. The pressure was on to get a job. I went to school to be a teacher and a coach, but my grades suffered due to skipping class to play beach volleyball or soccer, plus I was in a severe car accident my senior year. I got a hard “no” from the teacher credential program. The summer after I graduated, I decided to spend one more summer serving at Mt. Hermon as a high school director. During that summer, I saw a bright green flyer advertising an internship as a high school director at Peninsula Bible Church. I thought, “Wow, I could hang out with high school kids for a living.” So I applied, and as the summer wound down, I transitioned from Mount Hermon to being an intern at Peninsula Bible Church.

Now, I never thought I would go into ministry. The parents who instilled in me to serve in the church were now discouraging me from going into ministry. “Because you won’t make any money!” They thought this was a phase, one year, and then I’d get back to school and get that teaching credential. Well, one year turned into five years, and by then, I had an inkling that God was calling me to youth ministry.

I believe that God has a call on each of our lives, whether it’s in our work lives or our personal lives. As we saw with Moses last week, God called him to go and lead God’s people out of Egypt, and as we saw last week, Moses resisted the call on his life.

### **Moses was resistant to God’s call on his life.**

We pick up from last week and see Moses continuing to give God excuses. What if they don’t believe or listen to me? I have never been an eloquent speaker. Please send someone else. After each excuse, God would try to bolster Moses’ confidence with signs and wonders. We see Moses’ shepherd’s staff turn into a snake and back to a staff. Moses’ hand turned leprous and was then healed. God will tell him to take water from the Nile and pour it on the ground, which will become blood. God tells Moses he will help him speak. Finally, Moses asks, “Please send someone else!” Moses didn’t want to go, and his resistance was evident. God was calling Moses into one of the greatest leadership tasks in the history of man, and Moses didn’t want to be the leader. (Christopher Wright)

It’s interesting. I have interviewed many people who are considering stepping into leadership roles, and most are resistant. Most don’t think they are qualified. Most are like Moses, giving excuse after excuse. It’s there that God will give you anything you need to accomplish his purpose.

The other thing we see in this section that should be addressed are the signs and wonders God displays to Moses. I think it’s absolutely normal for us to ask, “Show me a sign, God! Show me a sign that I’m supposed to do this.” Signs can be a powerful confirmation of God’s word, and they can bolster our faith. But God doesn’t always provide a sign, and that can be connected to our unbelief and resistance. God provides these signs to Moses to call him to surrender, trust, and believe that Yahweh will be with him. I love what Christopher Wright says,

**...for these reasons, it seems better to me that in seeking to “live the story” of this account of the call of Moses, we concentrate not on the signs woven into it but rather on the way God simply offers himself—his word, his promise, his power, his provision—in answer to all that Moses can throw up by way of his inadequacy, uncertainty, or inability.**  
Wright

God not only meets Moses’ objections with an answer and a sign but also accommodates Moses’ desire as his anger is burning against Moses. It’s almost like when you knew you could push a parent so far before they wouldn’t let you go any farther. God accommodates Moses’ desire and involves Aaron. This compromise would cause all kinds of issues for Moses. In many ways, Aaron would end up disgracing Moses and the Lord. I don’t want to spoil the future story, but having Aaron in the picture was less than the best.

Although it took God a while to enlist Moses, if we look at his life, we see that Moses surrendered and trusted God and was steadfast and faithful to the service of the Lord and the people of Israel. We see Moses go from being reluctant to God’s call on his life to surrendering to God’s call.

### **Moses surrenders to God’s call on his life.**

**Then Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, “Let me return to my own people in Egypt to see if any of them are still alive.” Jethro said, “Go, and I wish you well.” Now the Lord had said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for all those who wanted to kill you are dead.” So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand. Exodus 4:18-20.**

We see this small encounter with Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro. Remember, it’s Jethro who gave him the job as a shepherd, and it’s Jethro’s daughter whom Moses is married to, and Jethro will provide the donkey to take the family to Egypt. Interestingly,

Moses doesn't tell Jethro the whole story, just that "he needs to go back to Egypt to see if any of his people are still alive." I've often wondered why Moses didn't tell Jethro more. Was Moses still unsure about who Yahweh was and the promises he gave? Either way, Jethro gave him his blessing and wished him well. Hearing God's call on your life is not always easy for your family. It can seem scary and frightening, especially to parents who want the best for their children.

As I said in my introduction, my parents were not thrilled when I told them I was going into youth ministry. They were very concerned about the financial piece. To this day, I still laugh at this because my parents were very intentional in reminding us who our provider was. Yes, my dad's paycheck came from United Airlines, but God provided that job and often provided in unique and unexpected ways. They built that into my life, and at the time, it was almost like they wanted me to discount all those years of teaching and trusting God. My parents finally did warm up to the idea and have been great cheerleaders since. But they were placed in a position of having to trust God's call on my life. We see in this next section of scripture that Moses will trust God's call on his life.

### **Moses trusts God's call on his life.**

And so the story of going back to Egypt begins; the story of Moses trusting God begins, and it's here that the Exodus will begin. Moses doesn't take much, but his wife, a donkey, his two sons, and he takes the staff of God. Oh, to be that light of a packer! But let's not miss what God tells Moses, "Go back to Egypt, for all those who wanted to kill you are dead."

Moses is taking his first step toward trusting God by going back, and the Lord relieves any anxiety Moses might have about those who were out to kill him.

**The Lord said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.'" Exodus 4:21-23**

Along the road, God continues to reveal his plan to Moses. Step by step, Moses learns to trust God, and God continues to reveal his plan. God continues to remind Moses that Pharaoh will have a hard heart, but God will also harden Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh's hard heart is a central theme in Exodus, mentioning it 23 times. There are times we find out in Exodus that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, and there are other times we don't know who is hardening Pharaoh's heart. There are times, as in this instance, we learn that God is hardening Pharaoh's heart.

As humans made in God's image, we make a real choice to accept or reject God. Sometimes, the experiences in our lives that God ordained either woo us to God or cause us to reject God altogether. Either way, the writer of Exodus understands that the Exodus is the result of God's sovereign decree. In God's sovereignty, we also see his fatherly affection. This is the first time God's people are described as God's son. It won't be the last.

**"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt, I called my son ...I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them. Hosea 11:1-4**

Israel is God's "firstborn" because they were the first nation to be God's people. Today, they are joined by the Gentiles through Jesus. We see this idea of sonship and adoption throughout scripture. 1 John tells us, "*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!*" (1 John 3:1). An ethnic group no longer defines the privilege of being called sons and daughters of God. Now, anyone who claims the name of Jesus is a child of God. To be in Christ is to share in the sonship that God's Spirit grants us. To share in that sonship means to have an inheritance that is eternal and glorious. Paul writes,

**The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. Romans 8:15-17**

The whole reason for Pharaoh to let God's children go was so they could worship and serve him. Then Moses is going to have to tell Pharaoh what would ultimately happen if he didn't let the Israelites go: the death of his firstborn son. Can you imagine telling Pharaoh this? Don't forget that the Egyptian Pharaohs considered themselves deities; they considered themselves God. So imagine telling a god that the one true God, Yahweh, is going to take your son's life. It's right here that we see the precursor to the Passover that will happen in Exodus 12. We get to a bizarre and interesting part of the story.

**At a lodging place on the way, the Lord met Moses and was about to kill him. But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it. "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me," she said. So the Lord let him alone. (At that time she said "bridegroom of blood," referring to circumcision.) Exodus 4:24-26**

When you have indeed decided to trust God with the whole of who you are and your life, he will start to work in those areas that we want to keep hidden from him, those areas that may be

neglected. This is where we find Moses. It's a bit shocking to see God go after Moses since it seems like Moses is in a place to trust God. Scholars call this narrative dissonance; that is the way this incident contradicts what we've been reading so far. But there is something in this piece of the story to learn from.

We know that Moses and God are in this together, so something must need to be made right. First, this part of the story is very ambiguous in Hebrew, and there are some things we simply don't know. We know that something has made God angry with Moses enough to kill him. Scholars guess that some sudden illness came upon Moses, sufficient to incapacitate Moses.

Zipporah enters the story. She is Moses's wife, Jethro's daughter, and she is from Midian. She only appears three times in scripture: Exodus 2, 4, and 18. She is also the sixth woman who has saved Moses's life. Shiphrah and Puah save his life at birth. His mother and sister protect his life from early infancy. Pharaoh's daughter rescues him from drowning or the crocodiles. And Zipporah saves his life by circumcising their son.

Moses was most likely circumcised, which would have been the custom eight days after his birth. Circumcision was a sign of God's Covenant with his people and served as proof of sonship in Israel. Yet we know that Moses was raised in the Egyptian Courts and was shaped by that. We also know that the Midianites did not practice circumcision.

Zipporah knows about circumcision, steps in, and circumcises her son, who, by the way, is estimated to be in his teen years at this time. By doing this, she saves Moses' life. If Moses intended to serve God, he was obligated to circumcise his sons. Moses had to set the example if he wanted to lead the people out of Egypt. He could not neglect his spiritual responsibility to his own family.

Zipporah then throws the foreskin at Moses' feet and says this odd phrase, "You are the bridegroom of blood." I don't know if you remember the scene in *The Lion King* where Mufasa tells his son, "Remember who you are." This is what Zipporah is saying to Moses—remember who you are. The Rev. Dr. Denise Grier says,

**"You, Moses, are of the bloodline of Abraham. As such, you should have circumcised your son soon after his birth. Remember who you are; you are a bridegroom of blood." The trappings of Pharaoh's house made it easy for Moses to forget Abel's sacrifice, the ram who saved Isaac, and the Hebrew blood that ran through his veins. These people he was going to save were his own people, God's chosen people by blood. In order to complete his assignment, Moses had to die. At least, the Egyptian in him had to die in order for the "bloody" Israelite Moses, in his truest identity, to fulfill the purpose for which he was born. Through Zipporah's quick-thinking actions, she evoked the covenant by demonstration so Moses would remember his roots. If he was going to Egypt to free his people, his identification with Egypt had to die. The flesh and blood**

### **in the hands of his wife, Zipporah, would not let Moses forget. Grier**

Zipporah urges us to remember who we are in Christ. There is a connection to this story and to us. Just as Zipporah makes things right with God and Moses through blood, we, too, are only right with God through the shedding of Jesus' blood on the cross. For us today, we would call this the circumcision of the heart. One of the best teachings I've heard on this comes from Ray Stedman. He said, "The believer's heart is totally Christ's, to use as he wills—all his emotions, mind, intellect, and will are dedicated and available, ready at the command of Jesus Christ to be used for his purposes.

Paul says to the Philippians, "*For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—*" (Philippians 3:3). We are to have no reliance upon ourselves, but rely totally upon him. Every thought, every imagination, is brought into captivity to Christ. That is the circumcised life."

We would also know this by baptism. Although we know baptism doesn't save us, God has already done the work in our hearts, and baptism is the outward sign to those we come into contact with. The cleansing blood of Jesus was shed to save each of us. As Paul writes,

**In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. Colossians 2:11-12**

Moses wanted to be a man of God. As he continues to surrender and trust God, he will also learn the lesson of obedience.

### **Moses is obedient to God's call on his life.**

I can't overlook how hard this must have been on the whole family. It was hard enough for Moses to have Zipporah pack up the boys and go back to Midian, leaving Moses alone to go back to Egypt. We don't see Zipporah and the boys again until Exodus 18, when the Israelites are camping at Mount Sinai.

The Lord said to Aaron, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses." So, he met Moses at the mountain of God and kissed him. Then Moses told Aaron everything the Lord had sent him to say and also about all the signs he had commanded him to perform. Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites, and Aaron told them everything the Lord had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people, and they believed. And when they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped. Exodus 4:27-31

Becoming a servant of God requires surrender, trust, and obedience

You have to love how God works. In the middle of the desert, Moses is alone, and God brings Aaron to the scene. Aaron and Moses are reunited. Moses tells Aaron about all God has done and will do through them. I also want us to notice how Moses has changed. As he has surrendered his life and learned to trust God, he is now being obedient to God's call on his life. He could have packed up and gone home with the family, but he obeyed the call! And none of those things are easy.

As instructed, Aaron and Moses meet with the elders. They told them that God saw them and he was going to bring them to freedom. They showed them the signs and wonders. The men of Israel witnessed these miracles and believed! Because of their belief, they bowed their heads and worshiped. God's compassion moved them.

### **To become servants of God, we must surrender, trust, and obey.**

Maybe you can relate to Moses. I know I can. It's not easy on the Peninsula to become or be a servant of God. Last week, I was in Nashville for a board I serve on, and the contrast between the Peninsula and Nashville was vast. I listened to a call to follow Jesus coming through the radio on a secular country music station. We all went out to the Listening Room one night, where emerging country artists and songwriters play their music and tell the stories behind their songs. Every country song mentioned Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Baptism, or the church. My favorite song was "I got kicked out of Bible Study." I'm in the airport in Chicago at Midway, and what comes over the speaker is an announcement for a Christian worship service at the airport chapel in 15 minutes. I had no clue airports had chapels!

But this week and through this study, I was reminded of the call on my life and personal surrender to Jesus as I sipped sweet tea on a beautiful, warm Tennessee country night on the 18th hole of a board member's backyard. Thinking to myself, I could get used to this. Surrendering our lives is a continuous reminder of being open-handed with what God has for our lives. Not only do we surrender our lives to Jesus, but it's the whole of our lives. I know the call on my life is here, serving on the Peninsula.

Living here on the Peninsula requires a lot of surrender! Although I have surrendered many hopes and dreams to the Lord, he has not disappointed me and has continually shown up in exciting and unexpected ways, providing for my needs. Just as God paid attention to the people of Israel, he pays attention to you and me. What area of your life do you need to surrender? What area in your life is God poking around, asking you to surrender that to him.

Once we surrender, God calls us to trust him. At some point, we all must take a step of faith and trust in God's promises. This is

easier said than done. I've had enough experience with the Lord to experience his faithfulness. He has proven himself over time, increasing my trust in being his servant. But trust is hard in scary times, times of significant change, and life's major challenges. Most recently, my trust has expanded as we've gone through a change in Lead Pastors.

I've been at CPC for a long time. I worked with Mark Mitchell for a long time. As I saw the ups and downs of the lead pastor hiring process, at times, it was hard to trust that God knew what he was doing. At many churches, the whole team has to go. Once the lead goes, the new lead can set up their team. That is what I experienced before I came to CPC. Thankfully, that is different from how it works here at CPC. But when there were rumblings that the new lead pastor who was in the running was not from CPC, those fears of losing my job bubbled to the surface. I had a lot of conversations with the Lord due to my fear and lack of trust in him.

Just as Moses feared the reactions of the Israelites and the elders, I feared who we might hire! For all the excuses Moses gave God about his concern about speaking to the elders, as we saw, they believed. I felt foolish when my trust in God was wavering during the Lead Pastor search. Much like the cheers the audience gave on the Sunday Kevin was announced as our new lead pastor, my heart was jumping for joy, and I was thankful that God went before us and once again had proven to me that he knew what he was doing. What are some things you are having difficulty trusting the Lord in? What is making it difficult for you to trust him? Do you have a hard time trusting that God is with you?

### **Becoming a servant of God requires surrender, trust, and obedience.**

I wish this got easier, but being obedient is hard! As we saw with Moses, he wasn't obedient to the covenant of his forefathers when it came to circumcision. God got his attention, and Zipporah made it happen. Even though Moses could have packed up and returned to Midian, he didn't. He was obedient to the call God had on his life.

Recently, as a lead team, we were talking a lot about offloading some things on Kevin's plate so he could focus on being our Lead Pastor. One of the many things he was doing was overseeing our Next-Gen Ministry. Our Lead Team felt it was time for him to offload that ministry from his plate, but the question kept arising: who will oversee this team and pour into them? I don't remember how many meetings we talked about this, but there were many. As I was praying about this situation, the Lord did it again to me; he said, "Why not you?"

"No, Lord, not me. I did that ministry for 32 years! No, Lord, I don't have time with all the things for communications department. No, Lord, please send someone else!" The Lord kept nudging; thankfully, he wasn't out to do something drastic to

me, but he kept nudging until I ran out of excuses and said, Okay, Lord." In obedience, I'm stepping out in faith that he will provide what I need to pour into the team and also do communications, but that he will also provide the many adult leaders we need for Children's Ministry by the Fall.

So please don't run away if you see me coming your way to talk about God's call on your life! But seriously, where are those places where only God knows what you are hiding in your life? Maybe the Holy Spirit has his finger on an area of neglect in your life. God wants to deal with that area before he can use you. Maybe God is calling you to serve him somewhere, and you are having difficulty saying yes to him. Will you be obedient to him and let him work in you? If you are willing to do God's will, God's way, trust me, it will be costly, but it will be worth it!

**Becoming a servant of God requires surrender, trust, and obedience.**

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail,  
please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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