

**Exodus 3-4**

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Location: MRC

Word Count: 3200

**An unfaithful man and a faithful God**

*Theme: God reveals himself & his plan to Moses, to rescue his people*

*Aim: For people to **know** the kind of God they serve  
& live obedient, lives for **him***



**Something** changes

in the people  
in these 2 chapters for this morning...

**ppt 1 - Ex 3-4 and pg number**

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See how it ends in 4v31??

The people [the family elders]

[they] bowed down & worshipped God

Which is a far cry from how we left it last time...?

Things were **just about** on the up...

**ppt - blank**

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The story so far

- is that it was a **horrible** period  
for the people of Israel...

- There's a new Pharaoh in Egypt  
& under him...

their lives are getting harder & harder & harder  
& it felt like they'd been forgotten...

They were crying out to God - but not in worship

They were crying out in pain & in suffering...

And so...

End of chapter 2...

During that long period the king of Egypt died

The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out

& their cry for help  
because of their slavery  
went up to God.

God heard their groaning  
& he remembered his covenant  
- with Abraham  
- with Isaac &  
- with Jacob

So God looked on the Israelites  
and was concerned about them.

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But *despite* the difficulties though...  
it wasn't all bad news...

... do you remember?

we saw that God **was** there -  
quietly ... at work

at work through  
**resourceful people...**

people like the midwives  
or like Moses' sisters and mum

& so HE - Moses - was  
protected  
& rescued  
& given safety in the royal palace

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& in ch's 3-4  
Something changes.

But.

What makes the difference?

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well - I take it we'll see

it's because God **reveals himself** to his people

**That's** the game changer

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He reveals himself

firstly to Moses

& then through Moses & Aaron

to the elders & the people

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God reveals...

& that's an utterly foundational idea

that as far as I read it

goes *right* through this book...

It's actually something we touched on last week

on Sunday evening in John ch 1.

**WE** can't work God out for ourselves

with our finite minds & limited understanding

with our natural post-Fall bent away from God

We need him to reveal himself to us

& so God

- in the desert -

reveals himself to Moses...

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& do you remember

**How** he finds himself in the desert - in the first place?

It's because he'd somewhat...

jumped the gun.

We've already had a *glimpse* of who Moses

will be

& what he will do...

when he sees an Egyptian

mistreating one of his fellow people

- Moses sees & he strikes & he saves

it's very deliberate language...

It's what God **will** do through Moses to the Egyptians.

He sees

He will strike

& He will save

**& yet it was too early for Moses**

It was a false start...

He didn't *really* know the God whom he was representing

George Whitfield -

the great Anglican minister from the 18<sup>th</sup> C  
studied at Oxford

he said this about his call to ministry  
...very wise words...

My friends [...] wanted me to knock my head against the pulpit too young [...] - God knows how deep a concern entering into the ministry and preaching was to me. I prayed a thousand times, till the sweat has dropped from my face like rain, that God of his infinite mercy would not let me enter the church till he called me and thrust me forth in his work.

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By the end of the chapter

Moses KNOWS the God of his people.

he KNOWS **his** God

he's ready to go...

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& It's taken time - before he's ready to get going

God's not been in a rush

in Acts 7 we read this

burning bush episode

or non - burning bush episode

was **40**... years... later

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In our culture of the NOW

where we can't cope with waiting  
for more than 10 seconds  
for an **internet page**...

where we walk out of a **coffee shop**  
because there's a queue of 5 people...

40 years sounds a lifetime.

BBuuuutttt...

God's timings and ours might not be as we expect-  
He can see the whole picture

He's not in a rush

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It strikes me that these chapters matter  
They are very contemporary & very necessary  
for our culture to hear  
& for us to hear

Lots of reasons...  
But 2 particular ones that spring to mind...

**FIRSTLY**

because people in our culture love to say

*"I like to think of God like this"*

*or "to ME God is"...*

But I'm afraid – I don't think that really works?

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Imagine I was just feeling really gushy  
really in love with my wife Zoe!!

I come in from work  
the kids are quiet

I get on my knees as she's sat in the sofa

& just gush

I say to her – honey – I love you

you're amazing!!

you're beautiful

you've got beautiful brown hair

you've got beautiful brown eyes

I love you sooooo much!

Which would be fine.....

until you know that Zoe has

blonde hair & blue eyes!!

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You see God has revealed himself

to us

to people on the earth

& so we can't just make him up

**we know what he's like**

**coz he's shown us what he's like**

& Just as me getting Zoe wrong will have severe repercussions!

I know the real Zoe ☺

So us getting God wrong has repercussions too  
we can know the real God

So

**FIRSTLY** our culture needs to hear it

**SECONDLY** we do too.

Why?

because

*we need to know who our God is  
we need to know the kind of God we're with  
as we face the uncertainties of the future.*

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Not just knowing about him

But actually **knowing** him

as he's revealed himself to be known.

Life can change very quickly

Things may not pan out

as we expected them

as we planned they would

& yet if we know our God well...

The true God of the bible

who loves to reveal himself to his people

then

whatever comes round the corner

whatever the event that's keeping us awake at night...

it will be manageable

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& I want us to split up our morning into  
2 sections

The **first** is looking at who God reveals himself to be  
*So our God is...*

&

The **second** is looking at just 2 applications from the passage

*What should our response be -  
as God reveals himself?*

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...ppt - pg 3

Our God is... [1500 words]

...ppt - pg 4

Personal – passionate – powerful

So firstly in contrast to much of  
pop  
post-modern religion.

He is a personal God.

– **Personal**

The kind of God you can actually know  
And be known by.

C.S. Lewis, Miracles

– An 'impersonal God' – well and good.

– A subjective God of beauty, truth and goodness, inside our own heads – better still.

– A formless life – force surging through us, a vast power which we can tap – best of all.

– But God himself, alive, pulling at the other end of the cord, perhaps approaching at an infinite speed, the hunter, King, husband – that is quite another matter.”

Our God is personal...

How?

We discover

as he speaks to Moses from this

un-burning-burning bush

he is the God with a people...

v6-7

<sup>6</sup> Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. <sup>7</sup> The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.

Abraham – Isaac – Jacob  
were the Fathers of Israel

& He is **their** God.  
The God who makes covenants  
The God who has a history with a people  
& He sees **his** people..... suffering

& he's a personal God too because he gives his **name**

13 Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

15 God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, '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,  
the name you shall call me  
from generation to generation.

LORD here is not a title – LORD is a name.

And names mean something.

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We get that don't we?

We live in Oxford –

It was the ford where Oxen would cross the Thames

You see something of that in previous chapters...

Moses' name – sounds like the verb to draw out  
as he was drawn out of the water

Moses' son *Gershom*  
sounds like the word for foreigner

But what does this name mean?

What does 'I AM' mean?

There's been lots of ink spilt over the years...

I think it's a deliberately multi-faceted name

It stretches our minds

'I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE'.

But here are some thoughts...

■ 'I am' has got the sense of 'I exist' -

I am the God who exists

I am self-sufficient - I'm real

*brackets unlike other so called gods who aren't -  
watch this space in weeks to come...*

*I wonder if his self-sufficiency is seen in*

*the bush that doesn't burn*

*a self maintaining God*

*represented by*

*a self-maintaining fire*

■ 'I am' has got the sense of 'I am present

'I'm here'

'I'm with you'

'I am who I am' -

'I am who I reveal myself to be':

But more than that...

■ the phrase also means

Do you want to know what God's like?

Stay tuned...

Keep listening

Keep watching

Watch as I rescue you

Watch as I work in history

You can trust me.

And this I AM - in our bibles

is shown by the capitals L-O-R-D

whenever you see that *read* LORD but *think*

personal God who is & who will be

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And when years later a man

walks onto the scene saying

I AM the bread of life

I AM the good shepherd

I AM

We should see  
why people were terrified  
why they wanted to kill him

Because here is the LORD  
walking with his people  
Jesus

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So He's a God who's personal.  
And yet.... We're not... equals.

We don't approach him on our terms.  
Moses is to remove his sandals for the ground is holy  
**for God is holy**  
We approach him on his terms  
Which is what the second half of Exodus is all about

He may be personal  
The kind of God who reveals himself and you can know  
But there's a wrong familiarity that we can have.  
☺ **all mighty not all matey** ☺

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I'm reminded of that lovely quote from The Lion the Witch &  
The Wardrobe - in the beavers' house.

'If there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their  
knees knocking, they're either braver than me or else just silly.'

'Then he isn't safe?' asked Lucy.

'Safe?' said Mr. Beaver. 'Don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells  
you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But  
he's good. He's the King, I tell you.'

Personal.  
Secondly Passionate

- **Passionate**

That is -  
the kind of God who sees & who responds.  
the kind of God who's not unmoved  
by his people's suffering

8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them.

v8

So I have come down to rescue them..."

This personal God gets his hands dirty!

You may know where it's all going... 😊

but if not..... we shouldn't be surprised...

when we read later of how God comes in Jesus –

Again – Sunday nights if you were around (John 1:14)

"The Word became flesh

& made his dwelling among us."

or from Hebrews (Hebrews 4:15)

"..we do not have a high priest

who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses."

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God is not distant & far off

He is with us.

He comes down to us...

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& when we like Moses...

say what me Lord!?

how can I do that!?!??

He say's v12: I will be with you.

Which brings us to our third P

he's **Powerful**.

Coz he uses people like Moses.

...And people like you.

...And people like me.

God's not unmoved by his people's suffering

But he's also powerful to do something about it.

Often by using other individuals

Fallen & broken & flakey individuals

**But God is the rescuer**

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It's tricky to see it in such a long text.

But Moses is a whiner & wriggler...

Trying to get out of it.

The plan is

to go to the elders of Israel

with a message from The Lord 3v16

& then

to go with them to Pharoah

& ask him to let them go...

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But throughout the encounter

Almost Jonah-like

5 times Moses questions God

& lines up his excuses & questions...

a) 3v11 - Who am I that I should go to Pharoah

God says I will be with you...

b) 3v13 - suppose I go & they say who sent you...

God says here's my name.

c) 4v1- what if they don't believe me or listen to me

God says I'll give you some evidence that I've sent you

here's a sign - 4v2-5

your staff will become a snake

and another - 4v6-7

your hand will become leprous & un-leprous

and another - 4v8-9

pour water from the Nile on the floor

& it will become blood

d) 4v10 - but I'm not a good public speaker...

God's say take Aaron

e) 4v13 - please Lord send someone else

God says - just go already!

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God doesn't just tell us to get on with the job  
but is with us in it

He's the kind of God who says

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing  
them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy  
Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have  
commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very  
end of the age."

He equips & enables & empowers  
weak people like us.

Time & time again in the bible we see that pattern.

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These are just the kind of words we need to hear.

Especially as we consider what  
the future of Magdalen Road Church might look like  
as we discuss & pray about  
buildings  
& planting

as we re-launch an evening service  
& it's frankly all a bit scary.

& they are just the kinds of words we need to hear

Especially as day by day

we try & be witnesses for him

in the mission fields that God has placed us in

Our office space

Our commuting time

Our family

At the school gates

On our streets

& it's all frankly a bit scary...

But just look at the kind of God we have...

- A God who is personal - knowable & reliable & there  
- A God who is passionate - & loves people  
&  
- A God who goes with us:  
A God who's powerful.

He doesn't need us to be

BRILLIANT & PERFECT as we represent him

He needs us

to trust him & give it a go...

to remember that he is with us

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So that's a snapshot of

the God who reveals himself in these 2 chapters

the God of the Exodus

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I want us to spend a bit of time now

in the 'so what'

what ought our response to be...?

Our response is... [1000 words]

- **to obey**

You see that throughout the 2 chapters.

Moses is to do as God tells him.

He's a personal & passionate God

But he's the boss.

he calls the shots.

He tells Moses to go.

And Moses tries to wriggle his way out of it...

Sometimes subtly...

Sometimes less so...

We shouldn't ever want to get to 4v14.

**The Lord's anger burned against Moses**

'Course he isn't safe. [Said Mr Beaver].

But he's good.

He's the King, I tell you.'

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& nowhere is that perhaps clearer than in

4v24-26.

For the preacher - ☺

these are the little accounts it's sooo tempting to leave

especially when you're racing & trying to cover  
lots of material...

Let's just sweep the confusing bits under the carpet.

No-one will notice!

Will they?!

24 At a lodging place on the way, the LORD met Moses and was about to kill him. 25 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. 26 So the LORD let him alone. (At that time she said "bridegroom of blood," referring to circumcision.)

And there **are** questions we're left with!

But it looks like – what's going on is

Moses had not circumcised his boy.

He may have been living in Midian

He may in many ways have been assimilated into

Midianite culture

taken a wife

made a home

settled down

But he still had a duty to circumcise his son  
as a sign of being part of a family  
that trusted God's promises.

I take it – *Especially* perhaps now

he had met the God of the covenant

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**Moses had not obeyed.**

& so the rescuer... needs to be rescued.

He actually requires the obedience of another

to protect and save him

from the just anger of God.

It points us forwards doesn't it?

It must point us to the one who's

blood will cover us & protect us

I guess initially to the Passover Lambs

who's blood on the doorposts

will protect the family within

& then to

the true Passover Lamb

the perfectly obedient

rescuer who doesn't need rescuing

To Jesus.

**His** blood averting

this holy God's right anger against our sin

It might be you're here

& you wouldn't call yourself a Christian.

I'd urge you TODAY

to trust that rescuer for yourself

to trust the obedient

death & resurrection of Jesus

for yourself

& so for his blood to avert God's right - loving - just anger

against your sin

Our God is personal & passionate & powerful

But utterly loving and holy

He cannot simply overlook our sin

if he did that then he wouldn't be holy would he?

Trust Jesus today

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And our final response to God revealing himself

is where we began.

With the people in slavery we worship.

- **to worship**

What changes in chapters 3 & 4?

God reveals himself

&

their response?

Remember Moses - whom they had scoffed at

at being God's rescuer in years gone by

Now... 4v29

<sup>29</sup> Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites, <sup>30</sup> and Aaron told them everything the LORD had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people, <sup>31</sup> and they believed. And when they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.

We see that they get it & they trust God.

It's likely that prior to this

they had

no knowledge of his name

no understanding as to who he was

no grasp that they were his people

& so concerned about them

& so it's remarkable

that basically they humbly

trust in this God

their God

for salvation

for rescue

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We're going to do that now

We're going to worship God

for who he is

& for his rescuer

not Moses

but the one to whom Moses pointed

To Jesus.

We'll worship him as we sing.

But before we do that.

Let's just take a moment or two of quiet.

Perhaps read over some of the passage again

Perhaps pray & worship the God who has revealed himself

in your heart

Then I'll lead us in prayer

&

The music group will lead us as we sing.