

## Who Are You #7 – Product of Random Chance or Sovereign Design? – Exodus 3-4

- Many of us would say that when we're trying to learn a new skill, it is very helpful to have a model, or an example, or a case study...
  - sure it's important to learn the principles...but then to be able to watch someone put those principles in action often is what helps us cross the line from knowledge to application...from hearing to doing...
- We've followed that approach to biblical counseling training now for over 30 years...
  - when our former pastor Bill Goode and Doc Smith originally received BC training when it was just being formulated back in the 70's...the expectation was that they had to start a counseling training center...
  - that's because their instructor, John Bettler knew that principles and theory were not enough...you have to see it in action in order to fully understand how it works...
- so when this congregation decided we wanted to try to be a blessing to other churches by emphasizing an approach to practical ministry that was focused on using God's Word all through the week to grow in Christ and solve the problems we all face – we started a biblical counseling training center...
  - that has a 2 pronged emphasis...it's a ministry to the community – so 25 of us come together each Monday to provide anywhere from 60-100 hours of biblical counseling services to our community free of charge...[so we believe that is a blessing to our town...which is why an organization like Child Protective Services would want to put a brochure in our bulletin today seeking foster families – because they believe there are families here who are armed with compassion and answers for practical family challenges based on Scripture...]
  - it's a ministry to other churches...so every Monday, people from around the Midwest travel to Lafayette for an 11 week training program where they hear lecture in the morning...but then the genius of the program has always been that those same trainees sit in with us on the live counseling sessions in the afternoon and evening...
    - and of course they are sworn to confidentiality...and the counselees view these folks as part of the counseling team...
    - but many over the years would say – that's what really sealed it for them – being able to see the principles modeled right before their eyes...
- that became a challenge when we started other models of training like our conferences in February...now that event attracts as many as 1600 persons from around the world...well, there is no way they can each sit in on a live counseling session...so Pastor Helmer and his son Luke made a series of training DVD's where our staff members sat down with other people they knew to have a mock counseling session – but the counselor did not know in advance what the person would say...
  - they're not perfect but we use them in training all over the place...[. Cf. WOL this coming week...] – we've even had some of them translated into foreign languages...
  - why?...because of the power of an example, or a model...as part of the education process...
- [if time – could also talk about how we learned that with Drew's delayed interest in/ability to walk -- what does blindness have to do with walking?...he's never seen anyone else do it...]
- so we would all agree that when we're trying to learn a new skill, it is very helpful to have a model, or an example, or a case study...
- now let's bring that around to the series we've been doing the last 6 weeks entitled... **Who Are You? – Coming to Grips with Your Identity in Christ.**

- the overall point has been-- we all have different lens, or ways we choose to think about ourselves...answers to the question, who are you?...
  - and we've been going to different places in Scripture that would help us analyze, and possibly adjust the answers we might give...
  - so in our first study, we looked at Zechariah chapter 3, and asked...are you...**Ashamed or Forgiven?**
  - then Pastor Green posed the question from Romans 6, are you **Bound or Free?**
  - next we studied Ephesians 1 along with a couple of other important parallel passages and asked, are you **Rejected or Adopted?**
  - then we looked at 1 Corinthians 15 and asked, are you **Adrift or Anchored?...**
  - next was Hebrews 13 where we asked -- are you **Deserted or Befriended?...**
  - then last week we focused on Deuteronomy 31...and asked...are you **Afraid or Courageous?...**
  
  - now I fully realize that you might say, especially because this is the last Sunday in this series...Steve, I've tried to listen carefully to what we're studying...and I've looked for ways to practically apply it throughout the week...but it would sure be helpful if we could have a case study...if we could watch someone else who was wrestling with this exact same issue...
    - would you like some good news...there is a man in Scripture, whose life we've actually touched on at several points in this study...who specifically asked the question "Who am I?"...and we have that conversation recorded and preserved for us in the Bible...
    - so that's great that we have someone who was actually asking the exact same question...
    - but would you like some even better news?...the person he was talking to was God Himself...so it's not just a matter of the right question being posed...more importantly it's that the God of heaven is the One giving the answer...
    - do you know what person I'm talking about?...it's Moses...so please open your Bible to Exodus 2 so we can study his story together...page 41 of the front section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...
  
  - this is the story of the call of Moses...we'll try to set that in its historical context as we move along...but the reason I'm glad we're ending with this passage is twofold...
    1. It really is a clear case study in which everything we've studied in this series could be modeled and illustrated...
    2. I wonder how many people here are in a similar position to Moses – where God has called you to something...but for whatever reason you have been hesitant to embrace that particular ministry assignment either in your home, or your job, with your family/friends, or at this church...
      - because you didn't have a compelling answer to the question "who are you"?
      - we'd like to organize these verses around the question – **Are You the Product of Random Choice, or Sovereign Design?**
  
  - Read selected portions of Exodus 2:15-4:17 – [explain that we touched on 2:11-14 last week – Moses' murder of an Egyptian man]
  
  - so we're asking -- **Are You the Product of Random Choice, or Sovereign Design?**
    - and with the time we have remaining, let's look for **6 truths to remember about the Person who designed you.**
- I. A Designer Who is All Knowing.**

- please think with me about a couple of other passages quickly before we focus on the life of Moses...If you are a Christian, you can say with confidence that...

**A. He knew you before the foundation of the world.**

1. **Ephesians 1:4 - just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him...**

2. **Matthew 25:34 - Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.**

- Pastor Goode used to like to say – God didn't just start thinking about you yesterday...

**B. He orchestrated the details of your conception and birth.**

- **Psalm 139:13-16 - For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.**

- now I realize you might say – but Steve, I was conceived out of wedlock...do you know what that makes me?...

- how is that a bad reflection on you?

- and if the Bible teaches anything, it teaches that God can make good out of what man meant for evil...

- now, please don't say – well, I guess Steve is saying that I should puff out my chest because I've been fearfully and wonderfully made...

- that's where the first part of verse 14 comes in – **v. 14 – I will give thanks to you...**

- and that's not just for the beautiful people...in fact, Moses' story is the perfect example of that...God can use our imperfections and our inadequacies mightily if we allow Him to...

- now, you might ask – well, where does macro-evolution fit into all of this?...here's the answer – it doesn't...we believe in taking a literal approach to the first 11 chapters of the book of Genesis for lots of reasons...including the fact that evolution makes you the product of blind chance – creation makes you the product of sovereign design...the way that impacts your view of self could not be overstated...

- by the way, if you have questions about that – I would encourage you to read the book...The Battle for the Beginning by John MacArthur...**[show pic – The Battle for the Beginning]**

- when we turn to the life of Moses, we could also add this...

**C. He protected you in ways you'll never know this side of heaven.**

- **How did He do that for Moses?...**

- you could read the whole story earlier in this chapter, but the short version is that the children of Israel were in bondage in Egypt and the Pharaoh was becoming concerned because the Israelites were multiplying so rapidly...

- so, what was his solution?...to instruct the midwives to put all of the male babies to death...but the passage says that the midwives wouldn't do it...because they feared God...

- then the Pharaoh commanded them to throw the male babies into the Nile River...

- so one Jewish mother hid her baby and when he reached three months old and she could conceal him no longer...she found a wicker basket, covered it with pitch, and placed her baby son in it...

- and you can read the rest of the story if it's unfamiliar to you...but God protected baby Moses in a way that was powerful and miraculous...
- is Moses the only baby, or the only person, God has done that for?...
- who knows how many times God has protected each of the people here this morning...some of us might meet our guardian angels in heaven some day and see them with their robes tattered, breathing heavily, saying – you wore me out, I'm taking a long vacation...
- and here's the point – all of that needs to be factored into the way we would answer the question “who are you”...are you really simply the product of random choice...or is your life and existence the result of sovereign design?

## II. A Designer Who is Holy

- we've been focusing on the question “who are you” in this series, and appropriately so...
- but a more fundamental question is, who is God?...you'll never be able to figure yourself out unless you come to certain conclusion about the nature and character of the One who made you...

### A. God's revelation.

- **Exodus 3:2 - The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.**
- a few verses later Moses would be told that he was standing on holy ground...
- you can't help but think about Isaiah 6, where the prophet was given a glimpse of the character of God...and this same central attribute was on display...
- **Isaiah 6:3 - And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.”**
- and isn't it interesting that Moses and Isaiah responded in similar ways...

### B. Moses' proper response.

- **Exodus 3:6 - ...Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.**
- **Isaiah 6:5 - Then I said, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”**
- **Proverbs 1:7 - The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.**
- we could apply this in 100 different ways to our broader series...
- why is it that some men and women struggle so much with their marital roles...answering the question “Who am I?” when it comes to my place in the home...it's not because God has not clearly revealed answers to them on that topic...it's that there's no fear of God...no right view of Him...so what He says about marital roles is discarded...
- you can't answer the question “who are you” properly without first answering the question “who is God” properly...

## III. A Designer with a Mission

- what was this whole “burning bush meeting” about?...
- it was to explain to Moses what He was planning to do...

### A. Because He is filled with compassion.

- **Exodus 3:7-8 - The LORD said, “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. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians...”**

- now, I realize that we hear words like that and we let them go over our heads pretty quickly...
- can you imagine how this news would have impacted Moses – he had been watching the oppression of God’s people his entire life...that’s why the book of Hebrews would later say...
- **Hebrews 11:24-26 - By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.**
- and now God is telling Him that that ill-treatment is about to come to an end...and He explains why...

#### **B. Because He keeps His promises.**

- the Lord takes this conversation all the way back to a promise made to Abraham...hundreds of years before Moses...
- **Exodus 3:8 - 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, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.**
- **Genesis 12:1-2 - Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing;**
- the point is – we can either view ourselves as the product of random chance and evolutionary forces...or we can believe that we were designed by a sovereign God who is in the process of glorifying Himself through the redemption of man...and of course we have so many more reasons to be fired up about that mission because much of what Moses’ eventual ministry pointed to was fulfilled in the Person and work of Christ...and we could say of this same compassionate God today that...
- **2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.**
- **2 Corinthians 5:18-19 - Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.**
- so the One who designed us is in the process of carrying out a mission based on the redemptive work of His Son...

- now, the really amazing news came next...when God looked at Moses and said...
- **Exodus 3:10 - Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.**
- what’s that tell us?...

#### **IV. A Designer Who Uses Imperfect People**

- and what is Moses’ response to this news?...Who am I?...
- would it be fair to say that Moses possessed a view of self and a view of God that was something less than theologically robust?...
- now...it would have been at least as bad if Moses had something like – no sweat, I’m your man, I can “get er done”...so there has to be some balance here...

- but it a pretty short hop from “Who am I?” to “Do you know who it is you’re asking to do this job?”...and that’s a fairly ridiculous question to ever ask the Person who designed you...I’m pretty sure He already knows the answer to that question...God uses imperfect people...in fact...

#### **A. He uses individuals.**

- here’s why I mention that...last week I encouraged you to consider following along in the read through the Bible in a year plan because we saw in Deuteronomy 31 that there is a direct relationship between courage and an understanding of Scripture...
- and if you took me up on that, you would have read the latter chapters of 1 Chronicles this week...
- do you know what those chapters are filled with – individual names, and individual responsibilities God gave them to fulfill...
- and you might have thought – how is any of this even remotely applicable to where I’m living today?...the answer in part is – verses like that are screaming the message that God cares about us as individuals...
- He called Moses because He wanted to use Moses...and that’s true...

#### **B. Regardless of your past.**

- if you say, well, the reason I would ask “Who am I” is because of some of the bad things in my past...
- did you remember that Moses was a murderer?...
- do you think God forgot that in His rush to assemble the plan?...

#### **C. Regardless of what He knows about your future.**

- here’s a question – did God know on the day He called Moses that eventually He would strike the rock instead of speaking to it and therefore would only be able to lead the children of Israel up to the brink of the promised land?...
- absolutely – and God called him anyway...
- and here’s one of the take-aways...some people are afraid to step up and accomplish what God wants them to accomplish in their families now because they failed in some way in days gone by...
  - I’m a failure in the past therefore God can’t use me today...that is an affront to the integrity of the designer...
- or, I’m not going to do what God has called me to do today because I might fail in the days ahead...
  - yes, you may....and at that time God will either be glorified by your repentance or by His judgment on you for your lack of repentance...

- so who are you?...the answer is that you have been sovereignly designed for the mission that God has given you today...and my question for you is, have you identified that mission and are you joyfully fulfilling it?

- now, how did God respond to Moses’ question?...

#### **V. A Designer Who Provides for Our Weakness**

- God’s patience in this conversation is incredible...many of us would have said---look forget it, I’ll find someone who can connect the dots a little bit faster than you...
- but that’s not the way this interchange goes...Moses asks His question in verse 11...and God responds with...

#### **A. Precious promises.**

- **Exodus 3:12 - And He said, “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.”**

- Moses probably would have fainted if he would have known everything that would transpire from the day that promise was made to the day it was fulfilled...
  - how in the world will the Israelites ever be free to worship together at this mountain?...[sometimes it's better not to know all the details...]...put this promise was literally fulfilled...
- **Exodus 19:2 - When they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain.**
- and hasn't our Designer made a similar provision for us...**2 Peter 1:3-4 - seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.**
- so then Moses said – well, OK – but what if they ask who you are?...as if God hadn't anticipated that possible challenge...but He patiently gives...
  - B. Compelling truth.**
    - **Exodus 3:14 - 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.' "**
    - Jesus told His disciples -- **John 16:13 - But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.**
    - we have the product of that process in our hands – the completed Word of God...
    - sure we're weak...but we have the strength of the Scriptures on which to minister...
- something else the Provider offered was...
  - C. Full disclosure.**
    - **Exodus 3:19 - But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under compulsion.**
    - if you're following along in our Bible reading plan, you saw evidence of that in Acts 9 and the calling of the apostle Paul...this is when the Lord told a man named Ananias to go to the apostle Paul, who had been a persecutor of the church, to now prepare Paul for ministry...
    - **Acts 9:13-16 - But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."**
    - some of the ministry we've been designed for may not be particularly easy...but remember this – those aren't just random events any more than you are a random servant...all of that falls under the heading of God's sovereign plan to glorify Himself...
- then Moses says in chapter 4 verse 1...what if the people believe won't believe me or listen to me?...
- aren't you glad God doesn't ever say – you know, you're getting on my last nerve?...

**D. Powerful resources.**

- **Exodus 4:2** - The LORD said to him, “What is that in your hand?” And he said, “a staff.”

- **1 Thessalonians 5:24** - Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

- now, you might be thinking right about now...OK, let me tell you all the reasons I can't do what God has called me to do...

- Here's why I can't be God's kind of spouse...
- Here's why I can't be God's kind of parent...
- Here's why I can't confront that person...
- Here's why I can't witness to that co-worker...
- Here's why I can't take that service position over at the church house...

- I'm not very articulate...I don't have enough experience...
- I have some skeletons in my closet...I'm not very attractive...
- I don't speak well...blah, blah, blah...

- what did Moses say?... **Exodus 4:10** - 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.”

- and what was God's response?...

- **Exodus 4:11-12** - 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? “Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say.”

- and it's amazing that by time this interchange is over, the Lord agrees to let Aaron assist Moses on the public speaking piece...

- but here's the point...

## VI. A Designer Who Wants Us to Rejoice in the Design

[wrap up]