

Called to Serve
Exodus 2:23–3:12
Sunday, August 30, 2026

Let us pray: Speak to us, Lord, as you spoke to Moses. Tell us who you are calling us to be and what you are calling us to do, so that we might serve you and bear your light in this world, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Twenty-four years ago, I went on a mission trip with the church I was working for to the mountains of western North Carolina, just outside of Asheville. Our group was split up among several different projects – a Habitat for Humanity site, a shelter for abused women, and a log cabin that was being renovated. I was assigned to the log cabin. On the first day, we had to go underneath the cabin to put insulation up under the floor. It was hot, it was cramped, and if you have ever worked with insulation, you know that it can get all over you and itch like crazy.

After we had finished on that first day, we were driving back to the place where we were staying, and my legs were really itchy. I thought, “It’s just the insulation. It will get better after I clean up.” But as the night went on, it only got worse. When I woke up in the morning, both of my ankles were red and swollen and itching worse than anything I have ever experienced in my life. It turns out that when I was working underneath that cabin, I had accidentally stumbled into a nest of chiggers. Any of you know what a chigger is? It’s a tiny little microscopic bug that bites you and injects some kind of fluid into your skin that causes irritation. I had around 20–30 bites *on each ankle*. They were so swollen that it hurt to walk – it hurt to *stand up* – so all I could do for the next few days was lie in bed. Twenty-four years later, there are still people who call me, “Chigger.”

For some reason, I went back the next year and brought Jen with me. That year, I was assigned to work at the shelter for abused women. Instead of being *under* a house, I had to go up on the roof to clean out gutters and do some other things. No chiggers up there! But there *were* bees. To get up there, I had to go

through the house, upstairs, and climb out a dormer window onto the roof. When we got up there, the woman who was showing me the way said, “Oh, there’s a beehive outside the window. Let me just knock it down for you.” Before I could say, “No,” she knocked it down. So then I had to climb out the window and work on a roof with angry bees flying around. I got stung multiple times and almost fell off of the roof (but I got the gutters cleaned!).

For some reason, we went back again the next year! They had us hanging drywall inside of a Habitat house. Inside, so no chiggers and no bees! I made it through the whole week unscathed, until the last day. We had to hang drywall on the ceiling, but we didn’t exactly have the necessary tools to do that. We had a couple of sawhorses with some boards across them to stand on (not exactly OSHA approved). A couple of people would stand on the floor, holding the piece of drywall up with broom handles (also not OSHA approved), while two or three others stood on the makeshift scaffolding, screwing the drywall in.

It went well for a little while. Until the boards they were standing on started to give. I was standing there holding up a piece of drywall with a broom, when they all started to fall. I was directly behind a man named Fran Seeley. Fran was around 6’3”, maybe 230 pounds. And for some reason *he* was standing on the scaffolding, while *I* was on the floor. When I saw him falling backwards onto me, something in my brain said, “Catch him.” Not, “Move!” but, “Catch him!” In a sense, I *did* catch him. I at least broke his fall as he landed on top of me. In the process, I dropped my broom (which was holding up the drywall), leaving only two other people holding the very heavy piece of drywall up, keeping it from falling down on top of us. Jen was one of the people on the scaffolding, and when she fell, the board she was standing on somehow came down on top of her leg with so much force that you could see an imprint of the grain of the wood on her skin. Fortunately, I had to go back to finish seminary after that, so we did not go back the next year.

What in the world would possess us to keep going back year after year, subjecting ourselves to such physical torment? We felt called by God. We had relationships with some people down there, they needed help, and we could help them. Despite our reservations and discomfort, we were called to serve.

Moses was called to serve. We heard last week how the people of Israel were suffering under slavery in Egypt. Pharaoh made them work harder and harder, and then Pharaoh ordered the midwives to kill every male child born to the Israelites. During all of that, Moses was born. His parents hid him until they could not hide him anymore. Then they put him in a basket in the Nile River, where he was found by Pharaoh's daughter and taken into Pharaoh's house, where he was raised as a part of Pharaoh's family.

But one day Moses saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite slave. Moses *killed* the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand. When Pharaoh found out about it, he wanted to kill Moses, so Moses ran away to a place called Midian, around 300 miles away, on foot. Things went well there for Moses. He got married, had a couple of children, and had a job taking care of his father-in-law's sheep. He could have made a good life for himself there, and Pharaoh probably never would have found him.

But one day, as he was out tending the sheep, he came to a mountain. And on the mountain, he saw a bush that was on fire. He went up to check it out, and *God spoke to him*. God told Moses that God had seen the misery of the people of Israel. God had heard their cries, and God knew their sufferings. And God said, "I will send *you* to Pharaoh to lead my people out of Egypt."

There is a quote by pastor and author Frederick Buechner, who says, "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." That *sounds* great. But do you want to ask Moses about his *deep gladness*? Do you think he was *glad* when he heard God tell him to go back to Pharaoh. He had *reservations* to say the least. He says to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh

and bring the Israelites out of Egypt.” To which God says, “I will be with you.” But then Moses says, “Suppose I go and say that God sent me, and they say, ‘Oh yeah? What’s God’s *name*?’” To which God tells him God’s name. But then Moses says, “Suppose they don’t believe me or listen to me.” To which God gives him a staff that demonstrates the power of God. But then Moses says, “I don’t talk so good. How am *I* going to convince Pharaoh?” To which God says, “I will give you the words to speak.” But then Moses straight up says, “Send someone else.” To which God says, “Okay. I will send your brother Aaron...*with you*.” After that Moses realized that he was not getting out of this, so he went. Because Moses was called by God. The people of Israel – *his people* – needed help, and he could help them. Despite his reservations and discomfort, Moses was called to serve.

We are called to serve. As followers of Jesus Christ, who said, “I came not to *be* served but *to* serve,” service is an essential part of our faith. We show the love of Jesus Christ by giving ourselves in service to others as he did. We serve *God* by serving *God’s people*, particularly the poor, the oppressed, and those who are suffering. We do not just serve *ourselves*. And we don’t just serve the people who are *easy* to serve; service that doesn’t *cost* us anything. We serve the people who *need* it; people who cannot necessarily help themselves.

Jesus says, “I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothing. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.” And we say, “When, Lord? When did we see you? When did we do that?” And Jesus says, “Just as you did it to the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Then Jesus says, “I was hungry and you gave me no food. I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger and you did not welcome me. I was naked and you did not give me clothing. I was sick and you did not take care of me. I was in prison and you did not visit

me.” And we say, “When, Lord? When did we see you and fail to do that?” And Jesus says, “Just as you did *not* do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.”

We are called to serve, even when we don’t feel like we *can*. Moses listed off all these reasons why he did not feel capable to serve in the way that God was calling him to serve. And for each one of those reasons, God had a response. God said, “I will be *with* you, and I will give you everything you need to do what I am calling you to do.” We all have reasons why we don’t feel capable to serve. “I have work and family obligations. I just don’t have enough *time*!” And God says, “You *do*, you’re just choosing to spend it in other ways. I will give you all the time you need to do what I am calling you to do.” We say, “I don’t have enough *money* to help those in need. Things are tight as it is!” And God says, “You have more than *they* do. You’re just choosing to spend it in other ways.” We say, “I don’t know *how*. I don’t know how to build a house or dig a well or whatever. I don’t have the *ability* to do that.” And God says, “I will put people around you who can teach you.” We say, “I’m too old. I’ve put in my time. I don’t have the strength or the energy to do this anymore.” And God says, “Moses was 80 when I called him. There is *something* you can do.” We say, “I’m scared. This is outside of my comfort zone.” And God says, “Do not be afraid. I will be with you. Trust me. This is how you grow in your faith.”

On one of those mission trips I went on, there was a man named Jim. Jim was a 50-year-old husband and father of three teenage boys who did not have a *lick* of ability when it came to construction, home improvement, working with his hands. I remember one time, we were working at a senior center, and he was up on a ladder doing something with a staple gun, and the next thing I know, I hear, *pow*, “Ow! Ow! Ow!” I look up and see Jim shaking his hand around, because he has somehow managed to staple his work glove to his hand. Another time, Jim was up on the roof of that women’s shelter, laying down new shingles. When he finished, he got off of the roof and looked back up to see his work, and instead of being *straight*, the shingles were *slanted* across the roof. And Jim’s response was, “Well, you get what

you pay for!” But then I also remember how, at the end of the week, Jim was presented with the honorary tool belt award because of how hard he had worked and how much he had learned and grown in just a matter of days. To this day I say, “If *Jim* could do it, absolutely any one of you could do it!

There is a saying that God does not *call* those who are *equipped*, God *equips* those who are *called*. God gives us everything we need to do what God is calling us to do. And God will give *you* everything you need to serve in the way that God is calling you to serve.

It’s not always *big* things like building houses or setting people free from slavery. Sometimes it’s packing hygiene kits or sandwiches for the homeless after worship. Sometimes it’s sewing a pillowcase that brings joy to a sick child in the hospital. Sometimes it’s packing 10,000 meals with *Rise Against Hunger* (which is in two weeks, by the way). Sometimes it’s volunteering with Surrey Services to give people rides who can’t drive themselves anymore. Sometimes it’s serving meals at a soup kitchen. Sometimes it’s volunteering to visit people in the hospital. Sometimes it’s mentoring a student at Cornerstone Christian Academy or teaching English as a Second Language. As Mother Teresa said, “There are no great things, only small things done with great love.”

It’s not always about where the world’s deep hunger and your deep gladness meet. Sometimes it’s about where the world’s deep hunger and your ability to *trust God* meet.

And it’s not because of what it does for *us*; how it makes *us* feel or what *we* get out of it. It’s about what it does for *them*; how it makes *them* feel, and what *they* get out of it. Sure, we might feel good and fulfilled as a by-product. But that’s not *why* we serve. We serve to help others feel the love of Jesus Christ in their lives. Even if we never see them or meet them in person, even if they never thank us, they know that there is *someone* out there who cares about them. We serve because it is *what Jesus calls us to*

do as his followers, as his hands and feet in the world today. For Christ has no body but yours; no hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.¹ May you use it in whatever way you can to glorify him by serving his people, even when you don't think you can. He will give you everything you need. Amen.

¹ Teresa of Avila, 1515–1582