**Turn the Page Week 4 – Fear to Faith**

**Message Big Idea**: “Turn the Page” by letting go of fear and stepping out to do what God wants to do through you.

**Scripture:** Exodus 3-4:17 (Moses and the Burning Bush), John 14:16-20, Ephesians 3:16-21

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**Turn the Page Series**

Here we are in week 4 of our 11-week journey through the Bible in our series called, “Turn the Page.” The Bible consists of 66 books from Genesis to Revelation making one, beautifully connected story. We know that it is God’s word written for us, and because of that, it is vital to read and understand. In fact, research shows that regularly reflecting on Scripture is the most catalytic practice for spiritual growth no matter where a person is on their journey.

However, when we look at the Bible, so many of us feel intimidated, maybe even puzzled on where to begin. How do we engage with Scripture? What is the over-arching story in the Bible? What does it say about me and my relationship with God?

We hope that this series will help answer those questions. Not only are we gaining an overview of the Bible, but we’re seeing how God’s power can move through his Word. We’re engaging the Bible to come to know God, his ways, and to allow him, through the work of his Holy Spirit, to use the pages of this book to transform our lives.

I hope that all of you are engaged in our Monday thru Friday (Graphic) Turn the Page Bible Experience. If you’re not, it’s not too late to jump in… go to our app to sign up for either an email version or a podcast version of the experience.

So this morning, let’s turn the page and continue the story.

**Introduction to Moses**

First, let’s catch up with what we covered last week. As the book of Genesis concludes, the people of God, the Israelites, have moved to Egypt to escape a famine. Remember, the people in this large family are Abraham’s descendants.

As we turn the page to the second book in the Bible, Exodus, several hundred years have gone by and the Israelites have become a large community. The Pharaoh of Egypt fears they might gain too much power so he turns them into slaves. Day after day, the Israelites are forced to work under brutal conditions. Yet, they continue to increase in number so Pharaoh takes another drastic action: He commands that all Israelite baby boys be slaughtered.

A courageous mother defies Pharaoh’s command by hiding her baby boy in a basket among the reeds of the River Nile. Pharaoh’s daughter discovers the child and takes him back to the palace where she raises him as her own son. This baby boy becomes a man God would use to change the course of history. We know him as Moses.

Tighten this up…needs to be quicker. Or cut. Let me pause here in our story and ask: Have you ever met one of your heroes? Have you ever met someone who has literally changed the course of history? Maybe you have a family member or friend who has made a powerful impact in their community? Or maybe you’ve met a famous person or even sports figure that has accomplished so much in their careers?

I (Nate) had the chance of a lifetime to meet Peyton Manning! He was an incredible quarterback for my favorite football team, taking them almost overnight from being consistently bad to having sustained success. I was that kid (and even still as a grown adult) to have his posters, jersey, and bobble heads all over my room. The day I met him to get his autograph will forever live in my memory. He carried this aura of greatness that left me intimated and speechless. I vowed to never wash my hand again after I shook his. Its ok, I have washed up since then ☺

When it comes to football, I think of Peyton Manning as a giant. But that’s nothing compared to Moses and what we read about him in the Bible. Moses was a hero, a central figure in the Old Testament who God used to do amazing things!

This is Moses… the “Let my people Go!” guy. You know, that Moses? The guy who stands up to Pharaoh and promises the 10 plagues if he doesn’t let the Israelites, God’s chosen people, out of slavery. The one who dramatically leads the Israelites out of Egypt and parts the Red Sea in half as they are being chased by Pharaoh’s army, only for that army to be swallowed back up by the sea to allow a safe escape. The one who leads them for 40 years in the desert and then gets them to the doorstep of the Promised Land that they’ve been waiting for so long. Yeah, that Moses!

Yet before Moses became the guy many of us learned about in Sunday School, he was just a regular guy. In fact, you could even call him an outcast. He was a guy full of fear who likely doubted his life would be used for anything significant. Who could blame him considering how his life began?

As we mentioned before, Moses is rescued by Pharaoh’s daughter and grows up in Pharaoh’s house. One day he sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew man and becomes so enraged that he murders the Egyptian and buries him in the sand. When what he’s done becomes known, Moses becomes a fugitive and spends the next 40 years in obscurity tending sheep in the desert. It’s here in the desert where we’ll pick up his story.

**Moses’ Call**

*(Exodus 3:1)* As we turn the page to Exodus chapter 3, we find Moses tending sheep when he comes to Mount Horeb. This location is significant for this mountain also has another name…Mount Sinai. I don’t want to get too far ahead of ourselves, but this is the exact mountain, not too far in the future, where Moses will receive the 10 Commandments.

Yet for now, while he is out in the middle of nowhere literally counting sheep, a strange thing happens.

*(Exodus 3:2-3)* Moses looks over and notices a bush on fire. What is so peculiar about this sight is that while the bush is consumed with flames, it doesn’t burn up. It just keeps burning and burning and burning. So Moses goes over to investigate.

Now, if I were in Moses’ shoes, I’d probably go over to see this sight too, but I think I’d have a very different reaction to what happens next. *(Exodus 3:4)* As Moses approaches this burning bush, he hears a voice from the bush calling, “Moses, Moses.” And when you read the text it’s like Moses just casual says, “Oh, hello there, voice coming from a burning bush, here I am.” What?! I’m sorry, but if a burning bush started talking to me, I’m afraid I might hightail it out of there as quickly as possible! If I heard, “Tammy, Tammy,” my response would be more like, *(mimic running away)* “Here I go!”

It makes me wonder… If God wants to show up in an unexpected way in our lives, would we be ready to hear him? Are we expecting the unexpected?

Somehow Moses recognizes that this voice speaking through the flames is God. This wouldn’t be the last time God would appear to Moses this way. Fire is a frequent sign of God’s presence in Exodus.

* *(Exodus 13:21)* As the people of God traveled in the desert, God was present in a pillar of fire that would provide light and guide them at night.
* *(Add Exodus 19:18a)* When God met Moses on Mount Sinai to give him the 10 Commandments, the mountain was covered with smoke because God descended on it with fire.

God is present in the fire. And as he calls out to Moses from the flames, he initiates a call on Moses’ life. He tells Moses he has heard the cries of his people as they suffer in slavery at the hand of the Egyptians, and then he says:

**“So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.” –Exodus 3:10**

God is ready to take action, to move the story of his relationship with his people forward, and he calls on Moses to join him. Yet how does Moses respond?

I’m afraid not as a conquering Bible hero. No, Moses is afraid.

He looks at himself, standing in worn out sandals, holding a weathered staff, tending sheep in the middle of the desert and asks, **“Who am I?”** *(heading with verse below)*

**“But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?’” –Exodus 3:11**

Moses is full of self-doubt. He carries the shame of his past. He has no credentials, no special abilities, no list of accomplishments. “Who am I that I would be able to do *that*?” he protests.

*(Exodus 3:12)* Yet, God responds, “All that matters, Moses, is that I will be with you. You just watch! I am going to do this mighty work through you and you’ll find yourself right back here at the mountain with all of my people and you’ll worship me.”

But Moses’ fear isn’t quelled. “Well,” he replies, **“Who are you?”** *(heading with verse below)*

**“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?” –Exodus 3:13**

Not only does Moses doubt himself, he doubts God. It’s like he’s saying, “If I’m going to stick my neck out here, how are you going to back me up, God? Tell me more about yourself. What is your name?”

To which God replies:

**“I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you.’” –Exodus 3:14**

This is the first time in Scripture that God reveals his name as “I am.” In English we write this as Yahweh or Jehovah. In the Bible, this is the name God uses to refer to himself thousands of times.

Of course, the irony about this name, “I am,” is that it is not really a name at all; it is a verb. In essence, God is saying to Moses, “Whatever you are not, I will be for you and through you.”

* When we come to God and say, “I am not good enough.” God says, “I am.”
* When we cry out to God saying, “I am not strong enough.” God says, “I am.”
* When we question God saying, “I am not gifted enough.” God says, “I am.”

“Everything you are not,” God tells Moses, “I will be for you and through you.”

Still, Moses is afraid. “OK, God,” he says, But… **“What about them?”** *(heading with verse below)*

**“What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, ‘The Lord did not appear to you’?” –Exodus 4:1**

Moses is afraid of looking like a fool, afraid he won’t have the charisma to pull this off. He doubts other people will believe him. We don’t have time to go into it, but God reassures him that he will display his power when the time is right ~~giving him some pretty cool party tricks~~ to demonstrate that God’s power was with him.

Yet here’s what I want us to understand this morning… Moses, this man that we know as a great Bible hero, was afraid. And that fear didn’t magically disappear even after all God revealed to him. In fact, as we come to the end of this encounter, this is what we read:

**“But Moses said, ‘Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else.’” –Exodus 4:13**

Isn’t that hilarious? Can’t you relate? Drive this question home. “It’s just stinking easier when someone else go.” “A lot of us have experienced the power of God, and yet are full of fear.”

Yet in the end, Moses had the one thing he needed: **A willingness to trust God and step forward in faith.** Despite his fear, Moses took the next step, and then the next step, and then the next step. And God used him to play a vital role in moving the story of God and his people forward.

**Our Call**

Here is the truth, friends. We all have a calling on our life to move the story of God and his people forward. Every one of us is called to contribute to the story God’s writing by playing a role in the Jesus mission.

Yet, oftentimes, fear can get the best of us too.

Maybe, like Moses, we feel **Inadequate** and so we reject the idea that we’re called. We might carry the guilt or shame of our past, all the times we know we messed up. Our mistakes haunt us whispering to us of our shortcomings.

Maybe we feel *(add)* **Incapable**. We fear failure. God has planted a dream in our heart, he has called us to something that seems too big for our abilities and so we shrink back. We ignore the call, but it never goes away. We allow our fear to keep us stationary, unmoving.

Maybe we fear being *(add)* **Uncomfortable**. This might not seem like as big a fear as being inadequate or incapable, but I think this is a huge one for many of us…I know it is for me. I like being comfortable. It is much easier to live life only being concerned about me and mine. To step out and embrace the call to contribute to the Jesus mission means committing my time, my energy, my resources, my heart. I may find myself in situations that are inconvenient or even hard. And so too many times, I play it safe. Maybe you do too?



Recently, a friend told me an interesting insight about a swift and beautiful animal called an *(picture)* African Impala. It’s a medium-sized antelope found in eastern and southern Africa. This creature can jump as high as 10 feet and if up to speed can cover a distance of more than 30 feet in one leap!

But do you want to know what is strange?

These amazing animals can be kept in an enclosure in a zoo with just a 3-foot wall. They can jump 10 feet up in the air, but a 3-foot wall will stop them from escaping. Do you want to know why?

Because they won’t jump if they can’t see where their feet will land. They stay put because they refuse to go where they cannot see safe ground. Fear traps them.

Too often, we let our fears do the same thing.

Imagine if Moses had stayed stuck in fear in the middle of the desert. Could God have raised up someone else for the mission? Of course. But Moses would have missed out on the adventure he was meant to live.

Fear robs us of the adventure that God intends for us to live. So let me challenge all of us, including myself today. God has called every one of us to move the story of God and his people forward. Every one of us is called to contribute to the story God’s writing by playing a role in the Jesus mission. So let me ask: **Will you have the willingness to trust God and step forward in faith?**

**Bring Moses Back.**

**Challenge: Contribute**

This is our opportunity to respond to the great “I AM”. Will you trust him and take a step forward in faith today? Maybe it’s a step to trusting God for the very first time, or maybe it’s time to take that next step to reignite your relationship with God. Of all the great things that God did through Moses, he never would have experienced the next great thing without his willingness to continually step forward in faith.

I want to challenge us in two ways to take a step this week.

First, **Take a Step** **In Here**. We believe God has given each of us gifts to contribute to this mission we are on. Nothing happens here without the volunteer teams and leaders contributing to this mission. From Kids’ City, StuCo, the Arts, 1st Impressions, Restore, and everything in between, there is a place for you to serve and contribute to this mission.

Would you take a step forward in faith and respond to this call to serve on this mission? You can take out your communication cards right now and fill out your information, drop the card in the Giving Back to God buckets, and we’ll follow up with you this week. Or, join us right after the service in the lobby for a Contribute Party to learn more. If you aren’t exactly sure where you could serve, we can help you find just the right team! You can never know how God is going to use you until you take that step in here.

Does this need to have broader examples? Add prayer. Secondly, would you take a step **Take a Step** **Out There**. Is there something God has been calling you to do? Is there a person in your daily life that God has placed for a specific reason? Maybe you have felt his Spirit nudge you to invite them to church or to serve a specific need and it’s required a step forward in faith to do so. There are people in our communities that need to experience Jesus’ love. Would you respond in faith by trusting God to take a step out there the way that Moses did?

When we are faithful with a small step, we will be entrusted with next step.

**Conclusion**

Give other examples or possibility of sharing Nate’s story. I (Nate) remember the day that my wife Amy came up to me and told me she knew it was time to take the step “out there” towards adoption. I looked her square in the eyes and said “No Way!” Fear crept over me and I was overwhelmed with how much work it would be. What if we failed? How would our family adjust? Those were just some of the many questions and doubts I had.

But there was something different in Amy. Sure, she still had questions, but I saw this undeniable faith to step out and trust that God had this. Sure, there were ups and downs in the process of getting our daughters home from China, but God called Amy to take a step forward in faith. In the year that followed, we both felt the presence of the “I am” with us like never before.

And as I look at Faith and Hadley, both home as our daughters, I regularly think: What if I had let fear robs our family of the adventure that God has intended for us to live? What would I have missed out on if not for Amy’s faithful response?

Let me remind us today that as we step out, none of us goes alone. The presence of the “I am” is with us.

When Jesus left this earth and returned to the Father, he promised that he would send the Holy Spirit, the presence of God, to live with us and inside of us. His disciples gathered together and waited for this promised Spirit, and when he came…

**“They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.” –Acts 2:3**

Did you catch what the presence of God looked like? Fire. If you are a Christ-follower, the fire of God lives inside of you… Our burning bush is inside of us!

Maybe mention, “Fear not.” It is God himself that lives inside of us, who is with us as we step forward in faith, and who has an incredible adventure planned for each of us. Let’s trust him and take the next step.

**Communion Idea**

Moses was called to lead his people out of slavery and bondage that held them back. Like a shepherd, he then led them to safety through the desert, doing what was necessary to project them from danger. However, Moses fell short of the ultimate goal of leading the people into the promised land.

However, we can celebrate that we have a Savior who accomplished what no one else could. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus paved the way to our true promised land, an eternity with Him. It was through his sacrifice that he freed us from the bondage and slavery of our sin.

Jesus says in John 10:11:

"**I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep**.”

Jesus uses this same phrase we talked about earlier, “I AM” to declare that he is our Good Shepherd. We can step forward in faith because our Good Shepherd is with us every step of the way, calming any fear of being insufficient. It is through his power that we can experience a very real relationship with him. As great as eternity will be with him, he also has so much for us to experience on mission with him.

Through the bread and the juice, let’s remember how he lay down his life for us, and how we can step forward in faith in relationship with him.