**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**

*(Series Graphic) (Holding Bible)* We are in week 4 of our 11-week journey through the Bible in our series called, **“Turn the Page.”** For so many of us, the Bible can be confusing, overwhelming, or even intimidating. Yet time and time again many of us have heard people say that this is God’s Word, written for us, and because of that, it is vital to read and understand.

Yet, where do we even start? How do we even begin to comprehend the pages of this book?

Our hope is that this series can help with that. The Bible consists of 66 books from Genesis to Revelation that tell one, beautifully connected story. During this series, we’re trying to help one another grasp that overall story. Not only are we learning about the Bible here on Sundays, we also have a Monday through Friday *(Graphic)* **Turn the Page Bible Experience**. If you haven’t yet jumped in with that, it’s not too late! Go to our app or our website and sign up to receive either a podcast or email version.

However, let me remind you that we don’t engage Scripture just to fill our heads full of all kinds of Biblical knowledge. No, we read and reflect on the pages of this book to come to know God, his ways, and to allow him, through the work of his Holy Spirit, to use these words to transform our lives.

So this morning, let’s turn the page to where we left off and continue the story.

**Introduction to Moses**

During the first three weeks of this series, we’ve been in the first book of the Bible, Genesis. As the book of Genesis concludes, the people of God, the Israelites, have moved to Egypt to escape a famine.

As we turn the page to Exodus, the second book, 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.

Alarmed, Pharaoh decides to take another drastic action: He commands that all Israelite baby boys be slaughtered. But a courageous mother defies Pharaoh’s command and hides her baby boy in a basket among the reeds of the river. In a surprising plot twist, Pharaoh’s own daughter discovers the child and takes him back to the palace where she raises him as her son. This baby boy becomes a man God would use to change the course of history. We know him as Moses.

Whether you are familiar with the Bible or not, you’ve likely heard of Moses.

He’s the “Let my people go!” guy featured in the classic (picture) **Charleston Heston film** and the modern animated movie (add picture) **“The Prince of Egypt.”**

He’s the guy who stretches his staff out across the Red Sea and watches as God parts the water.

He’s the guy who receives the 10 Commandments and leads the people of God to the Promised Land.

* Even if you’ve never watched basketball, you’ve likely heard of Lebron James.
* Even if you’ve never gone to the theater, you’ve likely heard of the musical “Hamilton.”
* Even if you’ve never had a cup of coffee, you’ve…wait. What’s wrong with you? How do you even get through the day?

Regardless, even if you have never read the Bible, you’ve likely heard of Moses.

Yet before Moses became the Bible hero 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?

You see, after Moses is rescued by Pharaoh’s daughter and grows up in Pharaoh’s palace, one day he sees an Egyptian beating an Israelite man and becomes so enraged that he murders the Egyptian and buries him in the sand. When what he’s done becomes known, Moses has to run away and he spends the next 40 years living in obscurity out 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, Moses is tending sheep out in the wilderness when he comes to the base of a mountain that was known as the mountain of God. There, in the middle of nowhere, 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 the flames, he hears a voice from the bush calling, “Moses, Moses.” And when you read the text it’s like Moses just casually 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, “Here I go!”

It makes me wonder… If God wants to show up in an unexpected way in my life, would I be ready to hear him?

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 the Old Testament.

* *(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. He calls out to Moses from the flames and initiates a call on Moses’ life. He tells Moses he has heard the cries of his people as they suffer 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 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 this 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.” 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 whole thing off. He doubts other people will believe him. We don’t have time to go into it, but God reassures him saying he will display his power when the time is right.

Through all of Moses’ questions, 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? I’ve felt that way before. It’s just stinking easier when someone else goes…when someone else sticks his or her neck out. *“Please God, send someone else to do it.”*

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.

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.

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 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.

**Challenge: Contribute**

Fear robs us of the adventure that God intends for us to live. So let me challenge all of us, including myself today. In the same way God called Moses, God calls 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 is writing by playing a role in his mission. So let me ask: **Are you willing to trust God and step forward in faith?**

This is *our* opportunity to respond to the great “I AM.”

It’s *our* opportunity to take the next step in our relationship with God.

It’s *our* opportunity to help further the Jesus mission.

So I want to challenge us today, to take two kinds of steps.

First, **Take a Step** **In Here**. We believe God has given each of us gifts to contribute to the mission of helping people find their way back to God. Nothing happens here without the ministry teams that move the mission forward. From Kids’ City to StuCo to the Arts to First Impressions to our Restore team and everything in between…there is a place for you to serve and contribute to the mission.

*(Graphic)* Even if you aren’t yet sure which team might be the best fit for you, take a step to contribute today. Simply text **CONTRIBUTE to 313131**, follow the link to the form, and send it in. Someone will follow up with you to help you take your next step.

God calls every one of us to commit our time, talents, and treasures to further his mission. Don’t let whatever fears you might have hold you back from the adventure God intends you to live. You will never discover what God can do through your life until you take a step!

I also want to challenge every one of us to **Take a Step** **Out There**. Is there something God has been calling you to do? Is there a person in your life you know God has put in your path for a reason? Maybe you have felt his Spirit nudge you to invite someone to church? Maybe God has put a dream on your heart to start something new? Maybe God is prompting you to serve in the community in a practical way?

When we feel that call, our minds can be flooded with all kinds of fears. That’s ok. What matters is our willingness to trust God and step forward in faith. Like Moses, when we take the first step, God will help us with the next step and the next step and the next step so that all that he wants to do through us will come true.

**Story: Nate Braun**

Let’s never let our fears keep us from the adventure God has called us to live. I want to close by sharing a story from my friend *(Picture of Nate and Amy)* Nate, who is our COMMUNITY Pastor at our Yorkville location. We were talking about this idea of fear and adventure and this is the story Nate shared with me. He says:

I 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.

*(Family picture)* And as I look at Faith and Hadley, both home as our daughters, I regularly think: What if I had let fear rob 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?

**Conclusion**

Let’s remember 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 be 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… The burning bush is inside of you!

God is with us. He has an adventure planned for each one of us. So let’s trust him and step forward in faith.

**Overview Video: The Exodus** (Recommended post-message this week)

**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.