

**MAKING FRIENDS WITH THE BIBLE #3**  
**MEETING MOSES**  
**By David Carlson**

Perhaps the most dominant figure in the Old Testament is Moses. And, for those of us who have seen the film “The Ten Commandments” on the big screen, we will always associate Moses with the actor Charlton Heston. From that association, we might picture Moses as a larger-than-life figure, especially when he led the people out of Egypt or when he came down from Mount Sinai with the Divine Commandments in his arms.

In short, Moses can easily strike us as one of those rare individuals especially equipped by God to do something extraordinary. Perhaps no one has ever read the stories about Moses and thought, “that could have been me.” No, Moses seems very much unlike we who have more modest gifts and abilities.

But this view of Moses as an awe-inspiring figure with supernatural gifts comes from the latter years of his life. As we learn from one of the early stories of Moses, his call from God found in Exodus chapters 3 and 4, Moses was very human and struggled with faith much as we do.

1. Exodus 3 contains the story of the Burning Bush, but this miracle can overshadow the conversation Moses and God have immediately after that strange sight. In Exodus 3:7-9, Moses learns that God has paid attention to the suffering of the Israelite slaves in Egypt. God also shares that He intends to rescue the Israelites and bring them to the promised land of Canaan. Moses’ first reaction to such a message was quite likely one of joy. In verse 10, however, God adds something unexpected that worries Moses. God has decided not to accomplish this feat on His own, but with Moses as His chosen leader.
2. Look how Moses reacts in Exodus 3:11. His first thought is “who am I to do this?” or, as we might express it in our day, “Who, me?” In an instant, Moses imagines himself standing alone before the Egyptian Pharaoh, and he is overcome with fear. This is no Charlton Heston moment, but a typical human moment of fear.
3. God responds to Moses’ fear in Exodus 3:12. Moses will not be alone for God will be with him, and that should be enough for Moses to say “yes” to the call.
4. But in Exodus 3:13, Moses’ imagination presents another scenario that frightens him. Now he pictures himself in front of the Israelite slaves and imagines the Israelites not believing that he has been chosen by God. Again, we hear the “who, me?” from Moses.
5. God is patient with Moses. In Exodus 3:14-22, God explains how Moses should trust that God would never ask Moses to do anything that God will not bring about. God doesn’t expect Moses to accomplish this on his own, but rather God expects Moses to trust that God will accomplish this through him.
6. But Moses, being human like us, finds himself still afraid. In Exodus 4:1, Moses imagines that the Israelites will listen to him but then reject his claim that God is working through him. Someone recently observed that what humans fear the most is being humiliated. In our story to this point, Moses has imagined himself being humiliated in three different ways.

7. Again, God is patient with Moses. In Exodus 4:2-9, God demonstrates how Moses will be given signs proving that God's power is with him.
8. What would we say if we were Moses at this point of the story? Would we say, "Lord, I believe" or would we still in fear say "Please, Lord, not me." In Exodus 4:10, Moses plays his trump card. He informs God that he cannot possibly be the right person for the task, as public speaking terrifies him! How can God call a person to lead a nation out of slavery who gets tongue-tied before others?
9. We would not be wrong to sense God's frustration with Moses in Exodus 4:11-12. God reminds Moses Who Moses is talking to—the very Creator Who gave Moses life, vocal cords, and the ability to speak.
10. In Exodus 4:13, Moses finally utters the prayer that humans have uttered throughout the centuries—"Please, God, choose someone else." And, as the text states, God is now angry with Moses but still does not give up on him. Moses will have his brother Aaron to be his spokesperson.
11. In reflecting on Exodus 3 and 4, we might well see ourselves in this story. Moses' fear is stronger than his faith, and so he keeps saying "no" to God. We might well ask why God, Who knows that brother Aaron is a gifted speaker, does not choose Aaron in the first place. Why does God choose Moses, a man who is a poor public speaker and who has so many fears? That is the same question as "why does God ask this of me? I'm nothing special."
12. And that is the point of the story. Given that brother Aaron has leadership qualities, Aaron will end up being proud of himself if he leads the people out of slavery. Yet God chooses Moses, a man who is not special. In fact, God chooses a man plagued by fear. But if Moses will trust in God to be with him, Moses will learn that God is more powerful than all his fears.
13. In this story, we learn an eternally valid lesson: that God chooses ordinary people to do extraordinary things through faith. Moses eventually learns this lesson and becomes the man of God that we remember and revere. And is that not God's wish for each of us?