

How often have you seen this quote
standing on its own? It's lovely, but
confusing, probably because it is a three-line
grab Holy Ground in Ordinary Places

Exodus 3:1–15 & John 6:35-41

Grace and peace to you in the name of the God
who sees, the God who hears, the God who knows,
and the God who comes down to deliver.

Have you ever been doing something like work,
watching TV, reading or on your computer? Then
someone or something interrupts whatever you're
doing. To me that's so irritating. "Can't you see I'm
busy? That's what happened to an 80 year old
shepherd who was busy tending his sheep.

Exodus 3 begins in a place that looks, at first
glance, like nowhere special. Moses is not standing
in Pharaoh's court. He is not leading a movement.
He is not preaching to a crowd. He is doing ordinary
work in an out-of-the-way place, tending the flock of
Jethro, his father-in-law, on the far side of the
wilderness. And there, in that ordinary place, God
interrupts him with holiness.

1. God Meets Moses in the Ordinary

The story says Moses was keeping the flock when
he came to Horeb, the mountain of God. He was
simply doing the work in front of him, tending . his
sheep, maybe looking for some strays Yet the
Almighty God chose that moment to reveal himself.

This is good news for any of us who wonders
whether God can be found in the middle of ordinary

routines. God can meet us while we are driving to work, washing dishes, caring for family, sitting in a hospital waiting room, or trying to make it through another long day. Holy ground is not created by impressive surroundings. Holy ground is **wherever** God makes himself known.

I may have told you this before, but I know firsthand about God meeting us in ordinary places. One wintery day my granddaughter and I were driving from Grand Rapids, Michigan to Chicago. The roads were getting slippery. We were talking and my granddaughter said that she felt so depressed that she was in such a dark pit that even God couldn't see her. A little later, a minivan swerves into our lane, I swerved and overcompensated so I lost control and wound up with upside down in the ditch. We miraculously went between a guard rail and a bridge abutment. We crawled out of the car and waited on the side of the road for help to come. The first responders were amazed that we came out of the car without injury! After we got picked up and were on our way again. I said to my granddaughter that if God tries to get her attention again, I don't want to be anywhere around. If you are looking you will see God in ordinary places.

Moses sees a bush on fire, but the bush is not burnt up. I'm sure Moses walked all around it, scratching his head. It burns, yet it is not destroyed. It blazes, yet it remains. The mystery draws Moses closer. Sometimes God gets our attention not by removing us from life, but by placing a sign of grace right in the middle of it.

2. God Calls Moses by Name

In verse 4, when the Lord sees that Moses turns aside, God calls to him from the bush: “Moses, Moses!” And Moses answers, “Here I am.” Before God gives Moses an assignment, God calls him personally. The God of Exodus is not vague, distant, or anonymous. God knows Moses’ name.

Then God says, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” Moses must learn that the nearness of God is not casual. God is graciously present, but God is also holy. The call of God begins with wonder, humility, and reverence.

We often want God’s direction before we give God our attention. We want the mission before the worship, the answer before the awe. But Moses first has to stop, listen, and take off his sandals as a sign of humanness compared to God’s holiness. He must recognize that he is standing before the Holy One, the Lord God Almighty,

3. God Sees, Hears, Knows, and Comes Down

God tells Moses, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them.” Notice the verbs: God sees. God hears. God knows. God comes down.

For generations, Israel had suffered under oppression. It may have seemed as though heaven was silent. But silence is not absence. Delay is not

indifference. God has seen every burden, heard every cry, known every wound, and now God acts for deliverance.

This is a word for every person who has wondered whether their pain matters to God. The Lord does not look away from suffering. The Lord is not numb to injustice. The Lord does not forget the people who cry out in the night. The God of the burning bush is the God who sees, hears, knows, and comes down.

4. God Sends the One Who Feels Unqualified

Then comes the surprising turn in verse 10: “So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” Moses might have expected God to say, “I will deliver them.” God does say that. But God also says, “I will send you.” Divine compassion becomes human vocation.

Moses responds the way many of us respond: “Who am I?” Who am I to speak? Who am I to lead? Who am I to confront Pharaoh? Who am I to carry such a calling? But God does not answer Moses by listing Moses’ qualifications. God answers, “I will be with you.”

That is the heart of calling. God’s answer to our inadequacy is not always a bigger résumé, a louder confidence, or a clearer strategy. God’s answer is presence. The mission is not carried by Moses’ strength; it is carried by the promise of God.

5. God Reveals His Name: I AM

Moses asks, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God answers, "I AM WHO I AM." Tell them, "I AM has sent me to you."

God's name is not a slogan to control or a formula to manage. God reveals himself as the One who is, the One who will be, the faithful and living One who cannot be reduced to our categories. Before Moses faces Pharaoh, he must know that the God who sends him is not dependent on Pharaoh's power, Moses' confidence, or Egypt's permission.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus uses the specific, profound declaration "**I am**" with a descriptive metaphor **seven times**.

The 7 Metaphorical "I Am" Statements (Gospel of John)

- **Bread of Life:** "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger" (John 6:35).
- **Light of the World:** "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness" (John 8:12).
- **Door of the Sheep:** "I am the door of the sheep... If anyone enters by me, he will be saved" (John 10:7).
- **Good Shepherd:** "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).
- **Resurrection and the Life:** "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in

me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

- **Way, Truth, and Life:** "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).
- **True Vine:** "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser" (John 15:1). [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)]

Absolute Divine Claims ("I Am" without a predicate)

- **Before Abraham was born:** "Very truly I tell you, Jesus answered, 'before Abraham was born, I am!'" (John 8:58).
- **I am he:** Several times, such as when confronting the crowd in the garden or speaking to the Samaritan woman, Jesus uses absolute statements like "I am he" (*ego eimi*) to echo the divine name from Exodus.

The name "I AM" declares that God is present, faithful, and free. God is not becoming trustworthy; God is trustworthy. God is not waiting to become enough; God is enough. God is not absent from the suffering of his people; God is present with power to save.

He is present. He is present in every breath you take. When we breathe, we can say his name Yahweh Breathe in "Yah", breathe out "weh". Every time we need to stop and take a deep breath, say his name.

Conclusion: Turn Aside

I would like to close with a passage from a larger work by Elizabeth Barrett Browning titled *Aurora Leigh*, and is often simply offered without meaning.

**"Earth's crammed with heaven,
and every common bush afire with God
But only he who sees takes off his shoes.**

And the next time you travel to a place that makes you say, "Ahhh. How good is God to create this?" may you (figuratively) take off your shoes and recognize that the ground you are standing on is holy indeed.

The turning point in this passage begins with a small act: Moses turns aside to see. He pays attention. He stops long enough to notice that the ordinary has become holy. Perhaps that is the invitation for us today.

Turn aside from hurry. Turn aside from despair. Turn aside from the assumption that God is absent. Turn aside and listen for the God who calls your name, the God who sees suffering, the God who sends servants, the God whose presence is enough.

And when we ask, "Who am I?" may we hear again the promise that changed Moses' life: "I will be with you." The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is still the God who meets us on holy ground. The great I AM is still present, still faithful, still calling, and still delivering. Amen.

