

# ***Seeing Providence: Adulthood***

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November 13, 2022

## **INTRODUCTION**

Today, we'll be studying the call of Moses.

It's a powerful illustration of how the Lord leads us as adults

- **the primary use of our "adult" years**

- 40 years (from our 20th-60th year)

Moses has left Egypt, his birthplace and the land of his childhood and youth

And escaped to the land of Midian.

He marries and has children and settles into the quiet, rural life of a shepherd.

One day he leads his father-in-law's flock to the back of the desert, and comes to Mt. Horeb.

And it is on this mountain that he receives a call from God.

### **1. QUICK RECAP/EXPOSITION**

The *details* of EXODUS Chapter 3 show us the workings of providence, how the Lord leads us in our adult years:

1. Moses says, "*I will now turn aside and see this great sight...*"

= reflection, make it a habit (a practice), be curious about our spiritual life

= this is how the Lord speaks to us

2. Once the Lord sees Moses "turn aside," He calls out to him

= influx/Lord stirs the inner levels of our mind

= the Lord stands at the door of our mind and knocks and comes in when we respond, open the door

3. Moses, "Here I am."  
= listen/heed the voice of the Lord
4. Lord, "Do not draw near..."  
= can't see/understand the workings of providence w/physical senses
5. "Take off your sandals"  
= create a mental space that is removed/detached from physical longings/wants because on "holy ground"
6. The call, plus objections (*Exodus* Chapter 4)  
= who am I to do this, suppose they don't believe me, I'm not eloquent, send someone else  
= our doubts, worries, uncertainties (40 years of struggle, trying to figure things out)

## 2. ADULTHOOD DEFINED (MAKING FAITH OUR OWN)

We're taught that "adulthood" goes from our 20th to 60th year (AC 10225)

The hallmark of adulthood, from a *spiritual* perspective, is learning how to think and draw conclusions on our own.

Our reading today:

At this time belief begins; for belief is not our own until we have confirmed what we believe with ideas that are the product of our own thinking. Until then the belief is not ours but another's within us; for up until then we put our trust in what we've heard others say, and not in the belief itself. This state of understanding begins when...the inner levels of our mind are opened towards heaven (AC 10225:5).

This stage of life is markedly different from our youth which was a time of intense, "heady" information gathering.

The schooling of our youth teaches us a lot, but it's borrowed knowledge, based on the say-so of parents, teachers, professionals.

As adults, we are truly on our own, making our own decisions, just as Moses was on his own, in the wilderness, left to his own thoughts.

### **3. THE CALL**

The Lord chose to call Moses from the midst of a bramble bush.  
Why a bramble bush?

We're taught that *"when the Lord appears to people, He does so in a way suited to the kind of people they are, for a person cannot receive the Divine in any other way"* (AC 6832).

**The issues and challenges of adulthood can feel like a prickly bramble bush.**

(Vegetation in the Word has a good correspondence, and the bramble bush is no different).

It represents all the important knowledge, important truths we've acquired over the years, but...

rather than lining up in our mind in an organized, logical sequence,

...they appear tangled, prickly, unconnected.

[PAUSE] Let's recall the distinguishing feature of adulthood?

**"...a state in which understanding exists...of thinking for ourselves, drawing distinctions and arriving at conclusions" (AC 10225:5)**

In other words, we spend 40 years, from 20-60 years of age...

**TRYING TO FIGURE STUFF OUT**

**BUT THE LORD DOESN'T LEAVE US TO OUR OWN DEVICES**

His love is constantly burning towards us  
- pressing to be received

- seeking to conjoin

This is why there is "fire" burning in the midst of the bush.

The fire is the Lord's love, an intense love that *"fills a person's inner levels with warmth"* (AC 6832).

In our reading this morning:

The fire or flame of this sun is what supplies each individual person with the being of their life; it is that life-giving fire which fills a person's inner levels with warmth, as we may recognize from what happens with love. To the extent that love increases in us we warm up; but to the extent that it diminishes we cool off. This explains why, when the Lord appeared in this vision, He appeared as fire and flame. —*Secrets of Heaven 6832.3*

The decision-making of our adult years is about finding our fire, our passion.

It's about choosing *what* to love since love, heavenly love,

is a decision,  
not a feeling.

#### **4. OBJECTIONS TO THE LORD'S CALL**

Moses has been living in the land of Midian = time of simple good (AC 6773)

- likely hasn't been thinking about his old life in Egypt...

Moses' heart is stirred to face life back in Egypt...

Moses's call:

*"Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt"*

Battle (objections) begin...

**Who am I (that I should do this)?  
Suppose they don't believe me?**

**I'm not eloquent  
Send someone else**

### **What do we want?**

We are "slaves" to unhealthy thoughts and feelings.

Lord says, *"I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows*

### **A battle, a fight, for good loves (don't fall in our lap automatically).**

When people who are governed by good [loves] are plunged into falsities, they experience feelings of anguish and anxiety. They suffer torment, for they love truth and loathe falsity, and are thinking all the time about salvation and about how unhappy they will be if those falsities get the better of them (AC 6853).

Falsities are lies,

...lies about the Lord - *"He doesn't care about you"*  
 ...lies about other people - *"they're not worth it"*  
 ...lies about us - *"you're not worth it, good enough"*

And we can be tormented, enslaved, by these lies.

Spiritual temptations - 40 years in the wilderness (40 yr. period from 20-60)

- = attack on good loves
  - attack marriage
  - family
  - our sense of usefulness
  - our desire to do better, learn from our mistakes

That's the only reason why there's a battle...

- something we love, something we know is worth fighting for, is being attacked

**An adult responsibility...**

Like Moses...

1st "turn aside" to see this "great sight" - as-of-self reflection

*"The [stage of adulthood] is called a state in which understanding exists because people now think for themselves, drawing distinctions and arriving at conclusions; and the conclusions are theirs, not another's" (AC 10225:5).*

2nd "remove our sandals"

*"The powers of the senses are meant by 'sandals,' and those powers, which form the external levels of the natural, are by nature such that they [need to be put aside] when one thinks with reverence about the Divine" (AC 6844).*

*"The state of understanding [adulthood] begins when...the inner levels of our mind are opened towards heaven" (AC 10225:5)*

In our adult years...

there's a desperate need to rise above our senses...

- to re-think our lives
- re-think our priorities

The relentless "pursuit of happiness" (indulge selfish, material wants & needs)

- cancels out higher purposes
- common good
- focus on self instead of our neighbor

## **5. FINDING OUR FIRE**

We have all the knowledge we need: now we must decide who and what to love for this will determine our future happiness (or unhappiness).

**What do you love?  
What do you want in life?  
What makes you "tick"?  
What are you "all about?"**

How do you *show* and *receive* love?

Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages*

1. *Quality time*
2. *Words of affirmation*
3. *Gifts*
4. *Acts of service*
5. *Physical touch*

Like Moses, the Lord calls us to do a job.

Our "call" is not a one-time event.

It's not a call to discover our "eternal use..."

**It's a call to help us figure out what we truly want in life!**

**That's it**

**(What a relief!)**

AND...it's not that easy...

Because our loves are ever changing

- shifting
- stretching
- morphing

(Peeling back the layers - what do we want our ruling love to be - it's our choice).

It's an ongoing call,

a daily call to love/serve other people in wise and loving ways...  
**to love one another as the Lord loves us.**

*"The Lord's presence with us first becomes possible when we love our neighbor. Within love is the Lord, and so far as we have love, the Lord is present. Moreover, so far as the Lord is present, He talks to us" (AC 904).*

## **CONCLUSION - SEEING PROVIDENCE**

1. Moses says, *"I will now turn aside and see this great sight..."*
2. Once the Lord sees Moses "turn aside," He calls out to him
3. Moses, "Here I am."
4. Lord, "Do not draw near..." (on holy ground)
5. "Take off your sandals"
6. The call, plus objections (*Exodus* Chapter 4) - think of everything Moses faced in leading the Israelites out of Egypt and in the wilderness 40 years!

### **And yet...**

Lord's answer:

*"I will certainly be with you" (Ex 3:12)*

*"I will be with your mouth and teach you what to say..." (Ex 4:12)*

*"I will teach you what to do" (Ex 4:15)*

**AMEN.**

Lessons: Exodus 3:1-12; AC 904, 6844, AC 10225