

# Exodus 4:1-31 // Moses' Main Character Syndrome

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Preacher: Robbie Laidlaw

[ 0 : 0 0 ] tonight's reading is from exodus 4 and you can find that on page 60 of the bibles in front of you moses answered what if they do not believe me or listen to me and say the lord did not appear to you then the lord said to him what is that in your hand a staff he replied the lord said throw it down on the ground moses threw it down on the ground and it became a snake and he ran from it then the lord said to him reach out your hand and take it by the tail so moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand this said the lord is so that they may believe that the lord the god of their fathers the god of abraham the god of isaac and the god of jacob has appeared to you then the lord said put your hand inside your cloak so moses put his hand into his cloak and when he took it out the skin was leprous it had become white as snow now put it back into your cloak he said so moses put his hand back into his cloak and when he took it out it was restored like the rest of his flesh then the lord said if they do not believe you or pay attention to the first sign they may believe the second but if they do not believe these two signs or listen to you take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground the water you take from the river will become blood on the ground moses said to the lord pardon your servant lord i have never been eloquent neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant i'm slow of speech and tongue the lord said to him who gave human beings their mouths who made them deaf or mute who gives them sight or makes them blind is it not i the lord now go i will help you speak and will teach you what to say but moses said pardon your servant lord please send someone else then the lord's anger burned against moses and he said what about your brother aaron the levite i know he can speak well he is already on his way to meet you and he will be glad to see you you shall speak to him and put words in his mouth i will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do he will speak to the people for you and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were god to him but take this staff in your hand so that you may perform the signs with it then moses went back to jethro his father-in-law and said to him let me return to my own people in egypt to see if any of them are still alive jethro said go and i wish you well now the lord had said to moses in midian go back to egypt for all those who wanted to kill you are dead so moses took his wife and sons put them on a donkey and started back to egypt and he took the staff of god in his hand the lord said to moses when you return to egypt see that you perform before pharaoh all the wonders i have given you the power to do but i will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go then say to pharaoh this is what the lord says israel is my firstborn son and i told you let my son go so that he may worship me but you refuse to let him go so i will kill your firstborn son at a lodging place along the way the lord met moses and was about to kill him but zipporah took a flint knife cut off her son's foreskin and touched moses's feet with it surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me she said so the lord let him alone at the time she said bridegroom of blood referring to circumcision the lord said to aaron go into the wilderness to meet moses so he met moses at the mountain of god and kissed him then moses told aaron everything the lord had said to him said sent him to say and also about all the signs he had commanded him to perform moses and aaron brought together all the elders of the israelites and aaron told them everything the lord had said to moses he also performed the signs before the people and they believed and when they heard that the lord was concerned about them and had seen their

misery they bowed down and worshipped thanks very much nicola for reading um as jonathan earlier said my name's robbie it's a privilege to be up here in preaching from exodus uh this evening let me just turn to it myself um i wonder i'm sure none of you saw this but on friday i was shown an article published by the guardian called we're living in the era of main character syndrome now main character syndrome is basically when someone thinks about themselves far too much now the writer says it's a result of too many years of therapy speak where we're all trying to um you know

that kind of idea that knowing yourself is the best way of loving yourself all this kind of stuff but the problem that this article is kind of highlighting is that the more we've tried to know ourselves the more we've just started to think about ourselves a lot and the more we think about ourselves the more actually our problems magnify at times for a few of us we might have seen these on online somewhere main character syndrome can look massively narcissistic think of those videos you see of people at the gym who are like filming their own like the whole workout and then someone else walks in to use the machine behind them and they're they give them side eye and they cut the cap she's like this person's ruined my whole life and workout because they've just used a machine beside them that kind of person you know if you're in my space in the gym you're ruining my life main character syndrome and some of you some of you freshers have maybe met some students who you're like main character syndrome over here but that's just what's going to happen at university and most of us that isn't what main character syndrome looks like for most of us actually what the writer of this article talks about and rachin lanagan she uses the example of unconfident young women who are asking this kind of agony aunt for advice about their insecurities and their struggles with overthinking they don't think they're the main character because everything revolves around them but the advice is that they need to just start thinking about themselves less now overthinking insecurities is not specifically just young women in fact i'm sure everyone here will have struggled with overthinking about what we've said what we wear how other people view us and we all have our own insecurities but the solution the answer to main character syndrome according to this article in the guardian is that we think of ourselves less because no one else out there is thinking about you as much as you are so maybe we should just relax a bit when it comes to these kind of worries now thinking of ourselves less is actually a very good bit of advice as we kind of dig into exodus 4 and we see that moses is struggling in this conversation with god we jump in verse 1 of chapter 4 jumps in halfway through the conversation so we're going to be looking at chapter 3 a little bit and but basically moses's insecurities and problems with god's call show that he's suffering a little bit from main character syndrome he thinks that his issues are going to get in the way of god so he wants to step back and god spends most of this chapter showing moses that he needs to think of himself less and think of god way more and that will give him confidence in the work that he has been called towards so there's there's two main points tonight they're in your sheets and the first point that we're going to look at is that moses's eye problem needs an i am solution there are like five subheadings of that point those are kind of alec motcher's who's a commentator on exodus he kind of highlights the five questions so i've just put them in there to help you follow along and summarize um so before we dig into this before we dig into exodus 4 and the solution to the main character syndrome let me pray um that the lord would speak to us tonight father god open our eyes that we may see the wonders of your words reveal your goodness to us as we see your character and works in exodus and may that point us to your greatness glory and grace in the lord jesus christ amen now exodus as a whole the whole book of exodus is a story of revelation and redemption in it we see god revealing who he is in a way he has not done so far in the bible and the way he reveals himself is by rescuing and redeeming god's people israel from egypt so last week as we look to chapter 3 we see moses meeting god at a burning bush that it is not burnt up moses approaches the holy place and was told that god has heard the cries of his people and is going to rescue israel from their captivity and he's going to use moses to do it now this is a monumental moment in biblical history yet moses is really unsure about how to respond and how he is to respond to that call moses comes down with a mild case of main character syndrome we're going to call an eye problem right not an eye problem but an eye problem because moses keeps saying eye eye eye me me me me me eye eye right so it's his eye problem all moses can think about is how moses is going to fear or struggle or mess up let's jump back right if you could keep your bibles open look to chapter 3 with me this will really help us to see the first two and look with me at verse 11 we see the first question that moses asked god's who am i that i should go to pharaoh and bring the israelites out of egypt problem one is insecurity why me is what moses asks and the second eye problem is in verse 13 so again look down with me um 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's his name then what shall i tell them moses is asking these reasonable questions right on one level they're reasonable he is a shepherd who's been living in the middle of nowhere for 40 years he ran away from egypt because he murdered an egyptian so why him who is going to believe this man moses keeps having his eye problem why me now the answer to these two questions reveals a little bit about god and his graciousness and god hears the worries

of moses and he answers them with two incredible facts first in verse 12 god redirects moses attention from moses to the god who will be with him you see that where god says i will be with you that's verse 13 that's verse 12 and god said i will be with you and then secondly and this is a bigger answer right this is the big thing we looked at last week it's worth going back and listening to jonathan on this because this is one of the biggest things that happens after the second question god reveals his covenant name to moses who shall i say has sent me well god says the lord yahweh that's when you see lord in kind of small capitals that's the english version of saying the god's name it means i am who i am the god of abraham isaac and jacob has sent moses moses doesn't realize that it doesn't matter who he is at this point because it is the great god of their forefathers who is sending him moses might feel insecure and insignificant but he has the authority of the great i am behind him like a little first year in high school being sent with a head teacher's message to one of the older classes it doesn't matter that they're 12 years old speaking to 18 year olds they're speaking the authority of the head teacher the question moses has in chapter three highlight just a fraction of his main character syndrome but god kindly and firmly reminds moses that the god who is calling him to do this is the great i am but for moses that isn't enough and this is where we dig into chapter four and the third question moses asks in this conversation there's three more symptoms of moses's main character syndrome look with me at verse one verse one of chapter four what if they don't believe me or listen to me and they say the lord did not appear to you there's that i problem you know what if they don't listen to me what if i'm not believable once more god answers in a kind and gracious manner and in this case he shows himself to be a god who is very believable because god this the lord the great i am gives moses three signs yes three signs to convince the people of israel that he is really there on behalf of the god of their fathers the first sign is that god gives moses the ability to turn his staff into a snake and to take it back again the second sign is that he can turn moses's hand leprous if he puts in his cloak and i was leprous put it back in and it's clean again he restores the flesh and the third sign god tells moses that if they don't believe those first two signs he will take water of the Nile and turn it into blood in front of everyone now these are big signs god is giving moses miraculous power to prove that he's really a messenger of the great i am but it's worth briefly thinking about what those messages at what those signs also say now first right we see the staff turning into a snake in egypt the snake is a symbol of power one of the main gods of the egyptians had a head at a snake's head every king of egypt had a great crown there was a snake notice when moses first casts that snake onto the grounds he runs away a little bit of an example of how in chapter two he ran away out of fear from egypt but here in chapter four at god's command he grabs the snake and god turns it back into a staff god renders the snake powerless because moses has obeyed the lord so sign one is a message to moses that god can overcome the power of egypt and the snake is nothing to this great gods i just think about sign three as well i think it does the same thing right the Nile the river Nile one of the greatest rivers in the whole world it's the heart of the economic and wealth of egypt it is what made them so powerful and yet god tells moses that he will turn that water to blood the life-giving region the life-giving river of egypt turns to death and blood at the hands of god god is showing moses that the great i am is so much greater than egypt he does not have to worry he will prove who moses is to the people who question him even though moses is absolutely terrified these signs will convince the people moses is speaking to and god in his kindness gave three not just one to really prove the point to moses these three signs say to moses and to the people moses this is not about you this is about the god of israel sadly you'd think at this point moses might just get the message he's been given three miraculous signs but even these three signs cannot stop moses thinking about himself look down with me to verse 10 moses said to the lord pardon your servant lord i have never been eloquent neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant i am slow of speech and tongue once more we see moses's eye problem stop him obeying god's this time his excuse is i don't speak no good he's too incompetent to do what god is asking moses is worrying here that his actions or his lack will get in the way of god's commands this is really a case of main character syndrome moses is like this is this is going to all be on me i can't do this but god responds i think this time a little more firmly because this is the fourth time moses has responded to god and not me the lord's not me this is what he says look at verse 14 this is the great i am speaking who gave human beings their mouths who makes them deaf or mute who gives them sight or makes them blind is it not i the lord god's response is nice and simple moses you're forgetting who i am i am the gods who gave you your mouth who gave the listeners their ears the god who has sent moses is the god who created every human mouth and every human ear god

hears moses eye problem and gives him a great i am solution because did you notice it's one of our all capital lords who gives them sight or makes them blind is it not i the i am this is a god who can only be described in relation to himself moses needs to stop putting himself at the center of the issue and start realizing that it is this great i am who's at the center of the mission he's been called to do the solution to moses's eye problem is to lift his eyes up to the great god who's calling him at this point it gets almost like you get mad reading through this that moses hasn't got it yet like god is really giving him reason after reason in his graciousness and kindness he's responding and responding in kindness but moses's main character syndrome is blinding him to the reality that the god of all creation is standing before him in a bush that is burning that should not still be burning who has spoken to him called him given a miraculous signs and a promise that he will take his people out of egypt moses fear overtakes him and raises all these questions and issues and even after that fourth response we still see moses say i can't do this verse 13 of chapter 4 but moses said pardon your servant lord please send someone else even after all the proof moses's eye problems are still rearing their heads and this time god gets angry the lord's anger burns against moses at his disobedience and his unwillingness to do as he's told moses cannot stop god's call he's been called for a reason he's not getting out of it because moses is a great biblical character he's one of a one-of-a-kind leader of israel notice how even in moses fear and almost rejection of god's plans god has made a way for moses to go on and confront pharaoh look at verse 14 what about your brother aaron the levite i know he can speak well he's already on his way to meet you and he will be glad to see you nothing can stop god's plan nothing is going to stop moses being the face of egypt of israel before pharaoh and egypt even as he complains again and again about how i am not good enough god has made a way before this conversation started it seems like aaron is already on his way moses does not come off well in this story but he needs to learn that the rescue that is about to happen is not because of him but because of the god who calls him this is a mission that comes from gods and so the power to rescue will come from gods moses couldn't do it on his own if he tried instead we see in his weakness a god who is really in charge moses is not inherently the leader that israel needs the great i am is moses's eye problem needs a great i am solution [ 20 : 22 ] the second moses stops looking inwards his insecurities and adequate inadequacies incompetencies and looks up to see who is talking to him who is calling him well i think then he starts to say okay lord if you're there i'll go now this strain of main character syndrome is not moses specific he's not the only person in history who's dealt with this the power of eye problems can feel overwhelming what we feel about ourselves can seem like the strongest motivation but the reality is when the great i am is with his people nothing will stop them this eye problem keeps it does actually raise its head again for israel in about 40 ish years time after exodus 4 after the great rescue of egypt they stand on the edge of the promised land all of israel all million and a half people who god has taken out of egypt and what happens is the israelites hear that in the promised lands there are some very very powerful armies and god has said i've promised you this land go in obey me and it will be yours but israel look at it and go no i can't do that i can't i'm not going to get away with that they are way bigger than i am and so what israel do is they disobey god and they wander for 40 years they don't remember who the god is who has promised them the land who has rescued them from egypt in a miraculous way that we'll see in a few weeks time so for the first the first readers of exodus who are reading this 40 years after that was the first generation a few months later 40 years after that the first readers of exodus when moses wrote all this down to give to them on his as he dies and passes over leadership they are standing once more on the edge of the promised land and they are looking in and seeing that there are great powerful armies still waiting there 40 years later and there's a challenge for them will israel succumb to main character syndrome and turn around once more because they think i am not strong enough we are not good enough to go and fight those people or will they look upwards and trust in the great i am who has promised them victory will they trust the great i am over their weak i problems and it's not just israel who struggle we struggle with today i wonder what your i problem might be where do you feel your inadequacy your incompetency or your inability where do you feel your lack of confidence when it comes to the christian life where do you struggle most by looking inwards instead of looking upwards do we see that for moses the answer needs to be luke to the great i am trust in him because he has called you when we lift our eyes to him we see that he will give us all we need and even more than that we see that this god of all greatness is glorified in our weakness as god uses moses for his grand purposes right we've seen that in this chapter before moses is he is weak he's questioning he's doubting he's inconfident he's slow of speech and tongue there is no way this moses in his own power can do

what he's about to go and do there is no way this moses could go and rescue egypt through him through his own strength instead when we realize that even this brilliant moses when we get to that red sea and all the things that's to come and we see that weak moses doing wonderful things we say that is a god who

is powerful because if a god that big can use moses who is that weak wow 2 corinthians chapter 12 verse 9 paul who's writing it says this my grace is made sufficient for you my power is made perfect in weakness therefore paul says i will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that christ power may rest on me our weaknesses the things that become our eye problems that can stop us obeying god's are just a chance to boast in his greatness and glory and power and grace because when god uses the weak for his goods he is glorified much more than we could ever if we did it alone moses is not the main character in the story we are not the main character in our story so let's lift our eyes up to the one who is the main character let's look to the great i am and take confidence in his power and strength trusting that he will be glorified when we put ourselves out there in a way that seems terrifying our eye problems are so small when we have this great i am solution now our second point is a bit briefer so don't worry and but it equally shows us that moses is not the main character of his story instead what we see right is that moses himself needs rescues just as much as israel need rescues so after their conversation at the burning bush wraps up moses grabs his staff grabs his family says goodbye to his father-in-law and heads back towards egypt and just before he goes god says one last thing that one last thing to him in midi and he tells him exactly what's going to happen so spoiler alert if you've not read exodus yet but it's a bible spoiler alert so i'm not that sorry um moses will stand before pharaoh and he will demand that he let that pharaoh lets god people go but a bit surprisingly maybe pharaoh will refuse because god will harden his heart and pharaoh will lose his firstborn because he has kept god's firstborn child firstborn son israel in captivity there's a lot going on there right and that is a pre a teaser for the rest of exodus that i'm mostly going to park until we get there in the story ourselves but when we ever think about these things of heart hardening and the deaths that are to come we need to just remember briefly who god is the great i am is a god of perfect justice and goodness and this is a story where he rescues his people from great injustice and slavery this is the god who hears his people and sets them free from evil so if these are things the ideas you struggle with please come back to hear how exodus deals with them itself now after the spoiler alert right moses heads off to egypt and he's on his way and then one of the weirdest stories in the bible happens i wonder what your reaction was as nicola read it for us i'm going to read it again look with me to verse 24 we're going to try and figure this out at a lodging place on the way the lord met moses and was about to kill him but zipporah took a flint knife cut off her son's foreskin and touched moses his feet with it surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me she said so the lord let him alone at that time she said bridegroom of blood referring to the circumcision what the heck i mean what the heck is going on here this is a weird story and it can be hard to see what's actually going on and the reality is no one's fully sure what's going on but i i think from reading some wiser people who have written about this and trying to get against the text let me try and explain why think is happening right and here's a broad overview of

exodus 2 to 4 right exodus is chapter 2 to 4 we follow moses from his birth up until this point and we see moses go through basically a mini exodus he was saved for uh from death at the hands of the egyptians by going through the waters to be rescued from that death he then goes on to encounter god at mount horeb or as we might know at mount sinai to speak to god and where god appears to him in flames this is what i'm unsure about but i even think it might be possible that all of moses and struggles and questions are representing the grumbling we're going to see going forward i don't i'm not sure on that but i think what we're seeing basically in this little section is moses having to go through everything that israel are going to go through in the rest of exodus so if that's right what we are seeing is moses being rescued once more because the thing about exodus is that again this always feel like spoilers but it's important and we're going to get there in exodus god rescues his people twice once from the hands of his enemies and once from the wrath and punishment of their sin and we're going to see that as we get to chapters 12 and 15 we'll see those two rescues happening and in exodus is two to four we've seen one rescue happen through the water from the egyptians and i think what's happening at the lodging place is moses is being rescued from the wrath of god which is a sin thing now if you're new to church or exodus this might all sound like gobbledygook but what i want us to see as simplest and some of us will understand this better

when we get to the end of our exodus series and look back it's hard doing it forwards but but Moses is going through in these chapters everything that Israel are about to go through Israel will need save from God's wrath through the blood of the lamb in Passover in chapter 12 and so here Moses needs save from God's wrath through blood in this case it is the blood of the circumcision Zipporah moves swiftly and sensibly here she sees this is maybe uh well she sees a way that Moses has potentially been disobedient to God's ways and that he has not circumcised his son like all Israelites were called to do and so there and then she does it she's obey obeys God and in touching the blood to Moses the Lord leaves him be it seems like the blood being shed takes away God's anger and saves Moses and so in being saved from God's anger through blood Moses has experienced everything that Israel will in the next 36 chapters 40 46 chapters um and that is what makes him the leader they need as Moses faces this quite shocking turn of events he doesn't get to think that he's inherently special he's not the main character Moses needs a way for his disobedience to be dealt with sin is the Bible's term for that disobedience that rejection of God's and from Genesis chapter 3 sin is the major problem of the Bible and it needs a blood price to be paid for it I think we're gonna connect back to that promise of what's going to happen to Pharaoh Pharaoh will disobey and reject God and so a blood price is owed and so Moses too needs that blood price to redeem and rescue him from his disobedience and sin that has affected everyone since Genesis 3 and now that has happened now Moses has been rescued from God's enemies in the Nile and from the blood price he owes to save him from God's wrath in chapter 4 now this blood price is something that everyone who is disobedient to God must pay because rejecting God's ways has consequences for all of us today just as much for Moses we still struggle with sin that disobedience for some of us tonight our eye problem will not look like oh I'm not good enough to do this some of us our eye problem might look like but I live quite a good life I don't need to be saved from sin Moses who's God's chosen leader he needed rescuing all of God's chosen people needed rescuing and you too need rescuing there is no life that is good enough to take away the needs of that blood price according to God's wrath all of us need to pay the price for disobedience we cannot redeem ourselves through circumcision we cannot touch blood to our feet and be okay instead what the Bible reveals to us as we work through biblical history is that God has made another way for that blood price to be paid God sent his son Jesus Jesus was perfect in a way Moses never was he never doubted or questioned in a way that rejected or disobeyed God's he lived a fully human life experiencing everything we might go through just like Moses experienced everything the Israelites were going to go through but rather than needing rescues Jesus went to the cross and died a death he didn't deserve to pay our blood price Moses needed to see that he needed rescuing he relied on God's grace to save him from that punishment and so do we we cannot be good enough but also none of us are bad enough that God will not pay that price that Jesus blood cannot cover us there is no part of ourselves that we can look to that will help us deal with our sin instead rather than looking inwards we need to look upwards to the Great I Am who's made a way for us the Great I Am who came to earth and died for us Moses will never be able to look back on his life and say he was chosen because he was good enough he's not the main character he was filled with doubts and insecurities but he also can't think he isn't good enough that he was too bad at these things because he's been chosen and redeemed by God whatever side our eye problem falls I'm not good enough or I'm pretty good the reality is in Exodus chapter 4 we see that if we look inwards we have an eye problem but if you look upwards our God will help us he will redeem us rescue us strengthen us and most comforting he will be glorified in our many weaknesses when we stop and look up to the Great I Am we stop wanting to look inwards when we see that he sent his son to redeem us and rescue us we see that he is the main character of this story we have been freed by the Great I Am and we've been freed to follow him to follow his call to live for him in obedience to the Jesus who came died for us he is the Great I Am and he solves our eye problem let me pray Father God we thank you that you have sent your son to redeem us Lord thank you that Exodus 4 shows us your strength your grace your power and your willingness to rescue your people Lord thank you that as we look at Moses we see that he is not the main character and instead you are so let us rejoice in your greatness and not in our weakness let us rejoice in your graciousness and not in our goodness and Lord I pray this week we would be reminded that you are the main character and so obeying and following you is the best way to live Lord thank you for the Lord Jesus and he has taken away our eye problem pray these things in your son's precious name Amen um please