

The Year of The Story
Chapter 4: God's Unlikely Reveal
Exodus 1-7; 10-17
2/1/15

- Everyone loves an underdog, right? Underdogs are the people who manage to make something out of nothing by transforming themselves, and the world, along the way. It's the underdogs and their uncompromising internal will that we remember in the history books, not the people who gave up or left the work to someone else.
 - o Even though the pages of history might give the account of the immensely powerful or wealthy or talented, still their stories are less likely to be remembered than the one of a good underdog who came from behind and made something out of nothing. It doesn't matter if the battle is over a trophy or if it's life-or-death struggle—we always want the underdog to emerge victorious.

- I came across an underdog story about someone who went up against the Hindu Caste System in India. If you don't know, there exists a very definite social status / ranking system in India. *Dalits* are the lowest of the low in the Hindu caste system. While there are laws to prevent discrimination against these so-called untouchables, they only go so far. Men are still refused haircuts, women are forbidden from using the public tap, and children are ostracized at school.
 - o It was even worse when Kalpana Saroj, who was a Dalit, was growing up. As a child, she was forbidden from drinking out of the wells of Brahmins (the highest caste), and many people wouldn't let her inside their homes. Upper-caste kids beat her up, and teachers wouldn't let her take part in school activities. People treated her like dirt.
 - o Things got worse when she was married at age 12. Her husband was a ten years older and lived in a Mumbai slum. He savagely beat her, as did her alcoholic in-laws. It got so bad that her father rescued her six months later, but that didn't end the problems. Back in her village, neighbors despised her for leaving her husband, and the poor girl drank poison to escape the pressure and emotional pain.

- Fortunately, Kalpana survived and went back to Mumbai to make a new life, working as a tailor and earning less than a dollar a month. Eventually, she took out a \$1,000 government loan and opened her own furniture and blouse-making business.
 - o As money started coming in, Kalpana got into real estate, buying and selling property and even building a small shopping mall. And when the mob put a contract on her head, ticked off that this woman was muscling into the real estate business, she learned their names and handed them over to the cops.
 - o As her business grew, Kalpana was asked to save a metal engineering company from financial collapse. When she became chairwoman of Kamani Tubes, the company was bankrupt. After she was done, it was worth over \$100 million.

- Since then, she's become the owner of a sugar factory, done some incredible charity work, and has become an awesome mother. Not only did she send her daughter to study hotel management, she bought the kid her very own hotel.
- Doesn't it make you want to cheer, "Way to go, Kalpana! You go girl! You fight against that wrong ranking system and make them eat their words and see you as a human being, worthy of dignity, value and respect!"
 - Maybe a big part of the reason we like underdogs is because most all of us can relate. Maybe you have, like I have, dreamed about yourself going up against some oppressive force, some incredible odds that are stacked against us and coming out victorious! Doesn't it sound great?
 - Well, actually, that's not something we have to merely dream about. It can be a reality for each of us.
 - Because, here's the big application point for this chapter in The Story that we have been reading is that God loves underdogs and that includes you and me! And he is going to show us, the unlikely underdogs, his plan for giving us victory!
- God loves to use underdogs. In chapter four of The Story, which is a condensed chronological reading of the Bible that we are going through this year, we find some underdogs: the people of Israel.
 - If you remember from last week, the people of Israel who God was going to build into a mighty nation through whom all would know that he is the one true God, this nation-to-be was once just a growing family. But, they were relocated to Egypt by their brother, Joseph, who, after a series of miraculous events and roller coaster rides of life, ended up as the second in command only after the main guy, the king, Pharaoh.
 - This family is given some land in Egypt to farm and tend to their sheep and chapter 4 tells us that they multiply greatly. However, it also tells us that Joseph and all his generation die. Later, a new Pharaoh comes into power who doesn't know Joseph and Joseph means nothing to him.
- This new pharaoh makes the people of Israel, also known as Israelites or Hebrews, he makes them slaves in Egypt in order to control this growing population of people and because the Egyptians had a social ranking system as well. To them, shepherds were the lowest of all people. The Israelites were shepherds. As slaves, they were responsible for building many structures in Egypt. In fact, many of the pyramids and structures that still exist today may have been built by Israelite slaves.
 - Yet, even though they were oppressed and enslaved, the Israelites continued to multiply even more than before. So, the Pharaoh decides to do something drastic. He gave orders that all Hebrew boys born must be thrown in the Nile River.
 - One mother couldn't do it and she hid her baby until she could no longer. Then, she put him in a basket and sent him down the river where the pharaoh's daughter found him, had pity on him and raised Moses as her own.

- Let's fast forward. Moses grows up, but he knows he is really an Israelite. He sees an Egyptian slave master beating one of the Israelite slaves and kills the Egyptian. This enrages the pharaoh who orders Moses to be killed. Moses flees to Midian, meets a man and his family, marries this man's daughter, has a family and is out one day tending to his father-in-law's sheep. Life is good. Life is comfortable. He hasn't thought about Egypt in a long time and he doesn't want to.
 - o But, God has been thinking about Egypt and his chosen people who are still groaning under the harsh life of slavery. And even after being in slavery for over 400 years, God still has a plan for his people and he still has a plan to deliver his underdogs from slavery and make them into a great nation.
 - o Now, did these 400 years of slavery take God by surprise? No. God had revealed to Abraham that this would happen back in Genesis 15:12-14.
 - o Since God predicted the slavery, did God cause the slavery? No. It resulted from the fear and the sin nature of the Egyptian people.
 - o But, God was going to use the slavery and the sinfulness of the Egyptians as an opportunity to reveal himself by delivering his people to freedom.
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- This deliverance is going to be as unlikely as any underdog story only even more unlikely. In fact, the deliverance story of Exodus in the Bible is an opportunity for God to show up, use the unlikely and do the unlikely to reveal three things:
 - o His Name
 - o His Power
 - o His Plan
 - o Let's see how he does just that...
- God is going to reveal his name first to the leader he is going to select to lead the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land God was going to give them.
 - o The leader God chooses is Moses. But, as we will see, he is the unlikely leader.
 - o One of the first reasons that Moses is an unlikely leader is that he is wanted in Egypt. He's as good as dead if he shows up in Egypt. Sure, time has passed, but when the Pharaoh gives an order, it is expected to be carried out, no matter how much time has passed.
 - o But, that's not the only reason that makes him an unlikely candidate for leading the people to deliverance. And, Moses is going to tell God all of those reasons.
- Exodus chapter three gives us the encounter between God and Moses about Moses becoming the leader for the Israelites. God got Moses' attention through a burning bush in the wilderness. Though the bush was burning, it was not consumed.
 - o God laid out his plan and Moses' questioning begins. In fact, Exodus 3:11 - 4:17 gives us the details of Moses' questioning and God's answers. Moses just goes on and on with questions and reasons that he can't do what God is telling him to do.
 - o To the point that we learn in 4:14 that God starts to get really ticked with Moses. You're a pretty unlikely candidate when you badger God with your relentless questioning to the point that he gets mad at you.

- Do you know, if you ask someone to do something and they come back with a zillion questions, that means they really don't want to do it and are trying to find some way to get out of it. When I encounter someone like that, I just say, "You know what, never mind." And, I usually end up doing it myself.
 - But, God just shuts down his excuses.
- In Exodus 3:11-14, Moses tells God, "I have No leadership experience. No one is going to listen to me." God tells Moses, "I will be with you." Now, that should have been a good enough answer. But, Moses further says, "What if they ask me what your name is." So, God gives Moses his name. We are going to get to that in a couple of minutes. For now let's continue with Moses' excuses.
- Exodus 3 continues with God's response to Moses and chapter 4 begins with more questions from Moses and responses from God.
 - So when those questions didn't work, we get to Exodus 4:10-12 where Moses goes on to tell God that he is slow of speech which probably means he's a Stutterer (as if the Lord didn't already know this about Moses. God tells Moses that he will help Moses speak
 - When all of Moses' questions and excuses fail to change God's mind, Moses point blank asks God in Exodus 4:13, "Please send someone else." Moses is Reluctant and a reluctant leader isn't going to be a very good leader. He doesn't want to go, he doesn't trust, he doesn't get how his lower story of human experience can ever line up with God's upper story.
- Yet, God still wants to use Moses and agrees to send Aaron, Moses' brother who is back working as a slave in Egypt to go with him. Regardless of how unlikely of a leader Moses is, God wants to use him and wants Moses to truly see all that God is.
- This brings us back to how God answered Moses' question about what if the people ask what God's name is. Let's check out Exodus 3:14 for God's response. It says, "God said to Moses, I AM who I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites. I AM has sent me to you.
- In this Scripture, God is establishing all that he is by revealing his name. "Moses, you tell the people that I AM has sent you that should be good enough. I AM the self-existent one who always has been and always will be and upon whom everything is dependent upon. I AM the beginning and the end. I AM the way, the truth and the life. I AM the one and the only true God. I AM the one who is in all, and above all and below all and around all and through all. I AM who I AM."
- Now, the Hebrew phrase for I AM who I AM is eyweh asher eyweh. Does that sound familiar at all? From this encounter, the Hebrew people used a derivative of that phrase to make Yahweh. God is revealing all that he is through this most powerful and holy name.
 - And, God is telling Moses, "Listen, I have a plan and I have a purpose for your life. This is what I want you to do. You might ask "who am I?" and you're right, who are you? You are but dust compared to me. You might be nothing in the eyes of

everyone else, but I AM everything and when the I AM goes with you and has sent you, you are now most definitely something! You just tell them I AM sent me!"

- Listen, church, God, the great I AM, still has a plan today in our lower story. He is ready and more than able to use us, some underdogs, to do some incredible things for his kingdom and his glory so that people will know his name. We might feel like nothing. We might have tons of questions that we don't have answers for. We might feel inadequate, unable and unlikely.
 - o But, God is still saying today, "You might feel like nothing, but I AM everything. And, if you would just trust me, if you would just align your life with my Upper Story, if you would just put your questions aside and carry out my plan, I'm going to show you just how able and powerful I AM! I am the Lord!
 - o See, we can't really roll our eyes too much at Moses, can we? Because we've questioned in the same way, we've doubted in the same way, we've made excuses in the same way! And, God is telling us, "You're right – you can't do it on your own, but I can because I AM! I will do it, I will accomplish it, I will make a way, I will establish it. You just need to believe and do what I have planned for you to do!
 - o Do you believe that his morning? Do you really believe that this morning? Do you believe in the power of the Lord? Do you truly see all that God is? Do you believe that he is the I AM? Maybe some of us need a wake up call like the Egyptians and Israelites and even Moses did about who God really is.

- See, because after revealing his name, God is going to reveal his power to deliver his people in unlikely ways. No one would have thought to do it this way. God systematically displayed his power in such a way that it could be undeniable that the I AM had shown up and showed out. It would most certainly be a wake-up call.
 - o See, in Moses' time there were no atheists. People believed in god or multiple gods. The key question was "Who is the most powerful god?"
 - o They are about to find out.

- God begins by telling Moses and Aaron to go to Pharaoh and say, "Let my people go." That doesn't work very well. Pharaoh just makes their labor even more difficult. Moses goes before the Lord and cries out to him, asking the age old question that we all ask when difficulty hits, what is it? WHY? Why, Lord, did you do this?
 - o Check out God's reply on page 48 in The Story or Exodus 6:1-8. You might want to underline every time God says "I am the Lord" and every time God says what he has done or what he is going to do. For instance, "I have established" or "I will bring." Check out the power in these verses.
 - o Do you notice who is going to do all of this? The Lord. All that Moses and the Israelites have to do is watch the Lord work.
 - o Sometimes, friends, that's all we have to do as well. We just have to get out of God's way, stop asking why and watch the great I AM work!

- And he is about to work! Remember when I said God systematically is going to display his

power? He's going to do just that through a series of unlikely plagues. We can find these in Exodus chapters 7 – 13. God starts with the replicable plagues.

- God tells Moses and Aaron to go to Pharaoh again and to show him a miracle. Aaron's threw down his staff and it became a snake. Well, Pharaoh's sorcerers and magicians threw down their staffs and they became snakes. But, Aaron's snake swallowed up their snakes.
 - I Corinthians 15:54 says, "Death is swallowed up in victory!" Those magicians were able to do magic through the power of Satan who wants nothing more than our death, which is eternal separation from God, but through the I AM, death will be swallowed up just like God's snake swallowed up Satan's snakes.
- Pharaoh, though, didn't care. So, the plagues started. There were 10 of them. There was the plague of blood which turned the Nile River into blood and the plague of frogs. Yet, the Egyptian magicians were able to replicate those plagues as well. They could turn water into blood and they caused even more frogs to hop around Egypt.
- I want to just pause here for a moment and share with you the power that is available through the things of Satan. These magicians and sorcerers were able to perform miracles because Satan is powerful. That's why people are drawn to magic, witchcraft and the occult – because they provide a sense of power and they produce some visible, powerful results.
 - All of these things, though, are satanic at their very root, even if they are used for "good" or it is termed as "white magic." If it is not of God, it is of Satan. And they are all used for one purpose: to take people away from God and keep them enslaved.
- And while these puppets of Satan could replicate these plagues, God was about to up the ante with the non-replicable plagues. You want to see whose God is more powerful, let I AM show you what Satan can't even touch! Satan's power is only so powerful. God's power is limitless.
- The plague of gnats started the longer list of plagues the magicians couldn't replicate. Then came the plague of the flies, the plague of the disease that killed off the livestock, the plague of boils, the plague of the storms that produced horrific hail, the plague of locusts and the plague of darkness.
 - None of those sound very appealing to live through do they? Yet each time, Pharaoh promised to let the people go if the plague would stop, Moses prayed, God answered and Pharaoh lied.
- And, then there was the final plague - the reversal plague. This was the plague that was the game changer.
- Let's read about this plague straight from the Story. We're going to start with the last paragraph on page 50.
 - Ironically, the edict that Pharaoh unleashed on the Hebrew sons at the beginning of the story is reversed and unleashed on Pharaoh's people at the end of the story.
- After each plague and even after this one when he finally let the people go and then decided

to go after them, there was the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Scripture tells us that God hardens the heart of Pharaoh. Why would God do that?

- God is using Pharaoh's disobedience to accomplish his overall plan. He looks into the heart of Pharaoh and says, "Pharaoh has determined in his heart a direction in his life. He will not follow my upper story. Now, I'm going to use his disobedience to finish my overall plan."
 - And God used his stubbornness to unleash not just one plague but ten, so that over and over again God has an opportunity to display his undeniable power.
- Yet, there was one more - the rescue through the Red Sea. After the people left, Pharaoh, again, changes his mind and starts out after them. The Lord takes them right up to the banks of the Red Sea. They had nowhere to go. Scholars estimate that over a million Israelites marched out of Egypt. Now, they are trapped between the sea and Pharaoh's army coming to get them.
- But, the most powerful I AM shows up and shows out again! He parts the sea and makes a clear, dry path for this huge amount of people to cross through to the other side all while keeping the army at bay until the very last moment.
 - Then, keeping the sea parted for the army to begin crossing, God ensured that Pharaoh would never get to change his mind again and come after God's people by closing up the water with all the army in it to drown in the same way they had sent Hebrew children to drown at the beginning of the story.
 - At the beginning of the story, the mighty Pharaoh who thought he was a god, would have never thought it would end this way. God took unlikely people, an unlikely leader using unlikely miracles to reveal his great name and his consuming power.
 - God fought for the underdog and God's deliverance of his people is complete. **FREEDOM!!**
- Even deeper, though, than the deliverance of just the people of Israel, throughout this whole story, God Reveals His Plan and his Upper Story at work. From the beginning story of creation, now to this story of freedom and deliverance and we will see through the whole Old Testament, God is revealing his plan of salvation through Jesus.
- See, just like the Israelites, we, too, are enslaved. We are enslaved by sin. Maybe we have been enslaved so long to our sin that our hearts have become hard, like Pharaoh's heart. Maybe you know someone whose heart is just so hard toward God. It's painful to live in such slavery. We are in need of deliverance.
 - Yet, God's master plan, his upper story is to get us back and to remove the sin nature and to set us free before the destroyer – death – comes to separate us from God without any hope of turning back forever. There's only one thing that can make death and Satan pass over us and be powerless over us and that is the shedding of blood.
- We need the blood of a Passover Lamb on the door posts of our souls.
- That tenth plague not only reveals God's power but it reveals his plan for the shedding of blood to deliver us from sin and restore his relationship with us. Where

- do we get that kind of blood? The I AM will provide it.
- He sent his only son, Jesus. Jesus is the lamb, without defect. It is his blood that was poured out on the cross that becomes the blood we need to apply to the doorframe of our soul.
 - John 1:29 confirms this when it tells of John the Baptist, seeing Jesus come to him, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”
 - And 1 Corinthians 5:7 clearly states, “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”
 - When the blood of the Lamb is on the doorpost of your soul, you are saved, you are forgiven, you are right with God. Death cannot take you out. You are no longer a slave. You don't have to fear the power of Satan any longer because the most powerful I AM goes with you. The underdogs, you and I, can stand in confidence before death, sin and Satan, knowing that WE WIN!!!
 - But, it is your decision. It is your decision to cover the doorpost of your soul with the blood of Jesus. It is your decision to accept him as your Lord and Savior. It is your decision to give him full control of your life and to live as a fully surrendered disciple of Jesus Christ. It is your decision to align your life with God's story so that his story is your story.
 - Deliverance is your decision.

Prayer

Altar Call:

- Maybe you need deliverance today. You are enslaved by sin and you need the blood of the Lamb on the doorpost of your soul. The altar is open for you to come and receive deliverance today. I know of pastors who, during a time of commitment, have asked people to raise hands or sign a card and they say things like “No one will see you. No one needs to know.” I just don't get that. If you are going to make a commitment to mark your life with the blood of the Lamb – a decision that will change your whole life – then, step up to it and step forward for it.
- Maybe you need to make a decision to truly surrender because something is holding you back and keeping your heart hard.
- Maybe you want to take this time to pray for someone who needs salvation, they need the blood of the Lamb on the doorpost of their life so they might experience deliverance.