

The Burning Bush–Dependence
Bethany Chapel
September 2, 2012

¹Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ²There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ³So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.”

⁴When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.”

⁵“Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”

⁶Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ⁹And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. ¹⁰So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

¹¹But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

¹²And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”

I. Intro—

- A. September 2, 1945. Japan formally surrendered to the United States, signing documents on the deck of the battleship Missouri anchored in Tokyo Bay, thus ending what we know as World War 2. For the next several years, Japan would be governed, not by their emperor, but by a United States military occupation led by General Douglas MacArthur. They were almost completely dependent on the U.S. To the great credit of the United States, this was not an occupation of oppression, but one of empowerment. Indeed, Japan thrived and a foundation was laid for an economic revival of unprecedented proportion that continues today and illustrated by each of us here whose lives have been influenced by names such as Toyota, Honda, Nissan, Sony, Seiko. Fine, I drive a Buick, but my watch is a Citizen, and I really like sushi!
- B. Yet, what happened in Japan in only a faint echo of another occupation that occurred several thousand years earlier. This was an occupation, not of one country by another, but God—occupying a bush—and the message that God was sending both to Moses, and to us. You see, as a direct result of this encounter,
1. God took Moses, a man who had one time been a prince of Egypt but emptied from arrogance to dependence, and energized him to the point of delivering the Hebrews from the clutches of the world’s most feared empire.
 2. But how? By turning Moses into a combination Superman, Spider Man, Batman, and, just to be fair, Cat Woman? No. We are not speaking of super acts from super men and women, but supernatural acts from normal men and women—because indwelt by an amazing God—who are willing to take the Test of Dependence—a foundational test for every Christian.

C. 5 Sundays in September: Tests of the Christian Life. But why tests? Word used 56 times in NIV Bible. It doesn't sound appealing. Too bad. I'm just the messenger. Like it or not, tests happen.

1. **God tests us for our good.** Ex 20:20 Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." NIV
2. **We ask God to test us.** Ps 26:2 Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; NIV
3. **We test ourselves.** 2 Cor 13:5-7 Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you — unless, of course, you fail the test? 6 And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test. NIV
4. **Passing the tests is a good thing.** James 1:12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. NIV
5. **Even failing tests presents opportunities for redemption—and discipline.** Heb 12:11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. NIV

Rev 3:19-22 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. 20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. 21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." NIV

D. Map: OT Sandwich. A healthy slab of Hezekiah between two slices of Moses

1. Today— **test of Dependence**, as illustrated by Moses at the Burning Bush
2. 9/9 — **test of Relationship**, as illustrated by Hezekiah's early kingship
3. 9/16— **test of Adversity**, as illustrated by Hezekiah's middle kingship
4. 9/23— **test of Success**, as illustrated by Hezekiah's late kingship
5. 9/30— **test of Deliverance**, as illustrated by Moses and the Bronze Snake

E. Why these tests? Not comprehensive, only suggestive—and illustrated in ways that we can understand—seen in the lives of real people.

F. Speaking of which, let's now turn our collective attention to our man in the Spotlight: Moses.

G. Background—Moses in Three Phases

1. 40 years in Pharaoh's Palace
2. 40 years in the back side of the desert
3. 40 years making history

H. Map—Getting Moses and us from Phase #2 to Phase #3 (**test of dependence**) via the **Burning Bush**.

1. The **Attraction** of the bush
2. The **Qualifications** of the bush

II. The **Attraction** of the Bush—On fire, yet leaves remain green.

A. Intro—Ever seen something ordinary doing something extraordinary? Nik Wallenda. Looks like he would make a fine neighbor. Neat, well spoken. Kinda ordinary. But eyes were riveted on him when he did something extraordinary—tightrope walk across Niagara Falls. Moses saw something ordinary doing something rather extraordinary.

B. Bible Background—What drew Moses to the Bush?

1. Fire, Leaves

2. The bush was on fire, not by itself. The fire was God—the bush was not consumed.
- C. Principle: **On Fire with God, not for God.**
- D. Illustration:
1. Seminary speaker: “I want to *burn out for Jesus*” Pile of smoldering ashes: “Worst case of pastoral burnout I’ve ever seen!” Burn out, don’t rust out. But—are those my only choices?
 2. Light bulb—intelligently designed. Just add electricity. (But read the directions!) Doing what it was designed to do.
 3. Designed to be dependent!
- E. Application: Reality check. Struggling with spiritual basics? How do our leaves look? Running from church to prayer meeting to bible study to conference. Or maybe you are not even running at all—which could be worse.
1. Singed?
 2. Yellowed?
 3. Green?
 4. “Lord Jesus, I want you to be my fire.” I am no good to you burned out. Be my attractiveness! Draw others to me—because of you!
 5. 1st Test of Dependence? Accepting the wisdom of our design!
- F. Summary—What was the **attraction** of the bush? **On Fire with God, not for God**
1. Moses was drawn to the bush. Little did he realize that God was giving him an object lesson. **Moses was the bush—but God is the fire.**
 2. But that was Moses. What about us? Will God really fill us with His fire?
- III. The **Qualifications** for the Bush—“Any Old Bush will Do” (Major Thomas)
- A. Intro: Job search (illus. The Apprentice).
1. Human Hiring—looking for human skills
 - a. Presidential elections. Last week, Republicans. Next week, Democrats. Strong Leader. Can get his agenda across, yet unite the country. He is supposed to reach across party lines, yet insure the dominance of his own. Being born in a log cabin is plus. Create jobs, provide health care, medicare, military superiority, reduce the trade deficit, create energy independence, save the planet, save the whales, save the polar bears, cool the oceans, save the spotted owl, save the lumber industry, save the car industry, protect us from cyber attacks, provide a safety net for the poor, appeal to men, women, children, rich, middle class, poor, Asians, Europeans, Africans, Latin Americans, Rastafarians, Antarcticans, dogs, cats, parakeets and other independent voters, safeguard our borders, yet solve the immigration problem, raise the quality of life without sacrificing the sanctity of life—and do all of this and more while eliminating the national deficit, revealing tax returns, various birth certificates and being a really down to earth kind of guy who doesn’t mind shopping at Costco and eating at Diners, drive-ins and dives. This person should be as ruthless as an attack dog—especially on the other party,

yet maintain the integrity of Caesar's wife. The ability to trash and viciously slander the other candidate in a manner consistent with the dignity and respect of the President, or future President of the United States should not be overlooked.

- b. Bottom line—ability. This is as it should be.
2. What if God were hiring? What would he look for?
 - a. Human skills? Perhaps. Paul was educated. Moses knew the Egyptian court. Paul, however said it best:

Phil 3:7-9 NIV But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ

- b. If not human ability, then what?

B. Bible Background

1. 40 years “I’m really something.” The Prince of Egypt. Moses was filled with himself.
2. 40 years “I’m really nothing.” ¹¹*But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt? Moses was emptied of himself.*
3. Now he was prepared to be filled with God!

C. Principle: **We look for ability. God looks for availability.**

D. Illustration. Acts 12

1. Peter in Prison: What were his qualifications to bust out?
 - a. Lock pick? Big muscles? Bribes? Fast talking lawyer?
 - b. God does the **impossible**— he leaves us the **possible**.
 - c. God wanted to use Peter outside of jail and beyond.
2. God wanted to use Moses in Egypt and beyond.

E. Application—Where does God want to use you? Are you **available** to be His miracle? Are you a normal person, available for super-normal purposes?

1. **Qualifications—any** old bush will do!

- a. What have you got in *your* wallet? Timid or bold? Professional or blue collar? Woman or man? All of that is fine. However here are the real qualifications:
- b. Christian. Saved by grace. (John 15:1-5--the vine and the branches)
 - (1) Empty—not full of yourself.
 - (2) Available—not too busy for God.
 - (3) Willing—focused on God, not on circumstances.

2. Possible Assignments

- a. Deliberately reaching out to visitors here at Bethany—not just the Wheaton College students, but anyone you don’t happen to know.
- b. Befriending someone at work.
- c. Simply following God where you know He is leading—down the block, or across the world.
- d. God does the impossible—if we are willing, we get to do the possible.

- F. Summary: **We look for ability. God looks for availability.** This is not Donald Trump's Board room. It's more important. Trump just thinks he's God. He's not. God is God, and this is God's time to say "You're Hired"

²⁰I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

²⁷To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27)

IV. Conclusion—the test of Dependence.

- A. God can use even me, God can use even you. Two Principles:
1. "On Fire with Christ, not for Christ." Accept that you are designed to be dependent. His power, not yours.
 2. God wants **not** your ability, **but** your availability.

Illus. Capernwray girl who froze at doorstep.

- B. God used D.L. Moody—a shoe salesman. God used a scared, lonely Bible School student. God used Peter the fisherman. We do the possible—God does the impossible. We do the ordinary, God does the Extraordinary. This is the test of Dependence.
- C. What extraordinary deed will God accomplish through us? Are we available?
- D. Next week—the Test of Relationship.