

Today, we meet Moses when he finds God in a burning bush. It's a wild story – a pretty ordinary guy, just shepherding sheep. Wandering around, doing his 9-5, when God bursts into his life with a dramatic miracle.

How many of us would love to be in Moses' shoes in this snapshot? Whether it's in the silly video or in the actual story in the Scriptures, it'd be nice to have such a concrete experience of God. A phone call from Yahweh, a miraculous bush that's burning but not consumed. In a world that seems so devoid of miracles, a world where people just don't see burning bushes, we'd love for God to break into our ordinary lives. To assault us at work or school (or summer vacation) and tell us his will. It'd make things so much... easier. We imagine ourselves to be just like Moses: we're just sort of living life, waiting for a miracle. Waiting for our own burning bush, our own call from God.



But the reality is: we know God's will for our lives. Each of us has already been called to participate in God's rescue mission. We might secretly wish for a giant flashing neon sign telling us God's will, or a burning bush that would appear to give us a calling, give us a mission. But we already have it.

We know that God is calling us to be like Jesus, to join in Jesus' mission of proclaiming rescue and redemption to those still trapped in slavery to the kingdoms of this world. People still living lives characterized by sin and death. We know that God calls us to live like Jesus. To live lives that bear the Spirit's fruit.



We let all sorts of excuses come between us and what God calls us to. We have lots of excuses why Tuesday when we crawl out of bed we're not participating in God's mission, why we're not imitating Jesus. We're too busy. We're too embarrassed. We're afraid of what people will think. We don't know enough. We're not good enough.

Actually, those're the same excuses Moses had. And just like then, God isn't going to let excuses stand in the way of the Rescue Mission. It wasn't Moses' mission; it was God's. It's not our mission today; it's God's.

So let's quit making excuses for why we can't live more like Jesus. Let's quit making excuses for all our shortcomings and start trusting in God's power and provision.

Let's quit making excuses and start saying Yes to God's mission. Or as I like to say at rockshows: More rock. Less talk.

What does this look like?

When I was a youth pastor, my youth and I went once monthly to a low-income nursing home. The first couple of times we went, we were all really nervous. Nursing homes are scary places, especially the low-income places like where we went. The residents are there because their families either don't want to or can't take care of them. Many of them have debilitating diseases or handicaps. Suffice to say, we were all nervous. Way out of our comfort zones. We had tons of excuses why we shouldn't go.

But we went anyway. And the relationships we developed there were amazing. I remember one particular man named Charles. He could no longer walk or speak. He communicated by scribbling barely legible phrases in a small notebook he kept with him. Two of my guys - both totally normal, every day high school guys, spent every visit with Charles. They asked him about his story, learned who he was and apparently told him jokes. One of the most beautiful sounds I've ever heard was the sharp cackle of laughter that erupted from Charles one of the first weeks, when the guys made him laugh. The joy in his eyes, the laughter of a man who quit laughing a long time ago, will always stay with me. All the way home the first night, those two guys couldn't shut up about their new friend Charles, recounting for us his life story, the conversation they'd shared. This new friend with whom communication is a chore to say the least. But for these two guys, there wasn't any more fear. They just said Yes to God's call to love Charles.

Another woman, also in a wheelchair, was one of the grumpiest people I'd ever met. The first week we visited, she glared at us from her game table where her and a couple of other residents played cards. The youth and I were terrified of her that first week.

But the next time we went, one of those kids crept up and asked to join her game. I don't remember if it was Spades or Pinochle or what, but the kid didn't know how to play. When the woman heard this, she huffed indignantly and exclaimed, What do you mean you don't know how to play? Sit down.

The next time we visited, she taught a whole table-full of kids how to play cards, and every time thereafter, she was waiting with an empty table, a deck of cards and a game to teach her new friends. Because they didn't let her grumpiness scare them away from God's call to love her.

Or maybe saying Yes to God's mission looks like a friend of mine - he and I meet with a few other guys on Monday nights - works a job where he does tech support for some horribly complicated piece of machinery his company sells. He's told me what it does half a dozen times and I still don't have the faintest idea.

If there's a more thankless job than tech support, I'm not sure what it'd be. All day he fields calls from frustrated people. You can image how negative that work environment can be. But my buddy has made a conscious choice to be Jesus in his office. To enter every day into that negative environment and not participate, but instead bring kindness and hope to his coworkers and customers.

What about you? Where's your calling? What's your place? With your friends, family? Your job? Your school?

You don't have to wait for a burning bush to know what your calling is. You know your calling. Love God. Love people. Be Jesus in those places where you already are. Announce the freedom

Jesus offers to all those around you still trapped in the slavery of Sin and Death. *That's* God's call on your life. *That* is your mission.

We've got it all backwards. We're not waiting for a burning bush; we're called to *be* a burning bush.

Moses was just a shepherd out doing his 9-5 grind until he came upon a bush that was burning with a holy fire, but wasn't burned up. And that encounter changed his life.

Throughout the New Testament, fire the symbol of the Holy Spirit. That's why (if you've been around Church very long), you've heard people talk about being "on fire" for God.

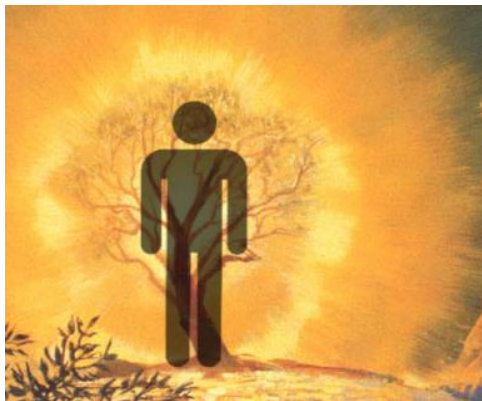
Jesus describes us as a fire, too:

You are the light of the world-- like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. Matthew 5:14-16 (NLT)



Remember this was long before electricity. Any light that came from that city was fire! Lamps were burning oil lamps.

When you follow Jesus, when you really seek in your everyday life to live like him, you will burn with the power of God. Your life can be a light in darkness that points people to God's rescue in Jesus.



That's the switch: we think of ourselves as Moses, out in our day-to-day lives looking for a burning bush, some miraculous moment when God breaks into our world.

But when we surrender ourselves to God, when we embrace the salvation Jesus offers us, we're on God's team. We're on God's mission.

So we're not looking for burning bushes anymore. We *are* the burning bushes. We are aflame with the power of the Holy Spirit, bringing the light of Jesus' freedom to those around us. We are the miracle of God's presence in the lives of those around us.

We want to push back on that. We want to say, Yeah right. I'm not miraculous. There's nothing *that* special about my ordinary, everyday life.

But I say Wrong!

To that person slowly dying in a nursing home, two young men who take the time to join you in your brokenness will seem miraculous. To that person who feels washed up and useless, forgotten by everyone, the chance to teach someone else, to be of use again, even in a simple game of cards is a wonder that can't be manufactured.

To the person working a soul-crushing job, your decision to show up ready to inject kindness and peace into your workspace is a bright, beautiful miracle.

In families that know more anger, pain and darkness than forgiveness and kindness, your commitment to live like Jesus is a brilliant light.

Brothers and sisters, we are the burning bushes. God sends us into the world - to our families, our schools, our jobs - aflame with the power of the Holy Spirit. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead.

We are the city on the hill. We are the lamp, burning on the stand, that gives light to everyone we see.



You don't have to be some sort of biblical superstar. You don't have to wait for a miracle.

You *are* the miracle. You're the guy or the girl on fire who calls those around you living in the darkness of slavery to sin and death to the freedom you have found in Jesus.

The question we leave with today is: will you choose to burn brightly? Or will you hide your light behind your excuses?

Examine

1. Where in the last week have you brought darkness more than light into your world?
2. Where in the last week have you brought more light than darkness?
3. Where in the coming week will you be tempted to bring darkness?
4. How during the coming week can you be a light for those around you?

Benediction

Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, **shining like stars** in a world full of crooked and perverse people. – Philippians 2:12-15

