



## A Burning Bush Experience

As the story goes, Moses saw on the mountain a bush that was burning, but not consumed. The sight intrigued him. It represented a rift in his cosmic worldview, it was a contradiction from the way things he believe should be and he felt compelled to investigate. The rest of the story is his encounter with God which was deeply personal and profound in its implications. He did not initiate the event, but responded to the invitation.

Like every invitation we might receive to a wedding, a dinner party or to a gathering of friends, God's invitation is an opportunity to participate. Most of the time, however, we simply don't recognize them!

The details of Moses' encounter are unique, but the pattern is not. Centuries later, blinded and hearing a heavenly voice in his head, Paul also recorded an encounter with God, which he did not initiate. Peter was fishing on the Sea of Galilee when he encountered a carpenter from Nazareth which he did not initiate. Such stories are countless, and are interwoven throughout history. The vast majority of humanity does not experience such dramatic events, but we all have burning bush experiences of one kind or another.. Most of us are too skeptical and suspicious to follow up on them. The impulse is to reject the phenomenon and look for the man behind the curtain, the corporeal "Oz" figure, pulling levers of deception, and guessing at motives.

**My question is:** Would you follow up on a Burning Bush Encounter like Moses or do you like to play it safe like the rich young ruler? What kind of RISK have you taken for God lately?

Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God;  
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,  
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries. (Eliz. Browning)



**Defining Moment** – *changes the future and the path we're on*

## ▶ We live in a stream of **Ordinary Life**

*“Understand the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.” Romans 13:11*

## ▶ We need a **Distracting or Disrupting Event**

I will go over [turn aside] to see it

The Lord saw he turned aside

The Lord spoke ...

## ▶ Encountering God **ALWAYS Disrupts Life**

*“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:8-9*

## BURNING BUSH EXPERIENCES

**Inexplicable People** – The Jailer encounters Paul & Silas [Acts 16:29-30]

**Inexplicable Question** – *Whole city was stirred, “Who is this?”* Mt 21:10

**Inexplicable Trouble** – Canaanite Woman (Mt 15:21), Sick Woman (Mk 5:25)

**Inexplicable Emptiness** – Rich Young Ruler [Matthew 19:16]

# NEW BEGINNINGS

## Exodus 3:1-15

<sup>1</sup> Now 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 wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup> There 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. <sup>3</sup> So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.”

<sup>4</sup> When 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.”

<sup>5</sup> “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” <sup>6</sup> Then he said, “I am the God of your father,<sup>[a]</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> The 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. <sup>8</sup> So 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. <sup>9</sup> And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. <sup>10</sup> So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

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

<sup>12</sup> And 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<sup>[b]</sup> will worship God on this mountain.”

<sup>13</sup> Moses said to God, “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 is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”

<sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.<sup>[c]</sup> This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

<sup>15</sup> God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD,<sup>[d]</sup> the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’

“This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation.

## What is a 'defining moment'?

By simple definition, a defining moment would be ‘moments in our lives that define who we are’. Lately, I have been thinking a lot about such moments in my own life. Partly because, as I am getting older I am facing the realization that I have fewer of those ‘moments’ than I once had.

Greg Laurie, in his book *Lost Boy*, said,

*“Someone has calibrated the years of one’s life to the hours of the day. If you are 15, the time is 10:25 A.M. If you are 20, it’s 11:34; 30, it’s 1:51 P.M. If you are 40 years old, your time is 4:08; at 50, it’s 6:25; and so on.”* What was so funny (maybe not so funny after all) is that Greg and I are the same age (55) and he went on to say, *“So for me, the time is about 7:30 P.M-which is sad, because I’ve been going to bed by about 9:30 these days.”* This has been precise time that I start yawning and thinking it might be time to turn in...to bed that is.

Another reason I have been thinking about such ‘defining moments’

is as a result of an introductory study I recently did in teaching through 1 Peter. I entitled the study, "*Defining Moments of a Fisherman*", in which I took a look at 7 defining moments in Peter's life. Moments that transformed him from the fisherman he was...to the man whom God wanted him to be. Each of those moments contained a wide variety of emotions to include excitement, confusion, shame and forgiveness. And, each of those moments...built one upon the other to ultimately mold Peter into the man we read about, the man whom most everyone knows something about.

### From the *Screwtape Letters* by CS Lewis

By the very act of arguing, you awake the patient's reason; and once it is awake, who can foresee the result? Even if a particular train of thought can be twisted so as to end in our favor, you will find that you have been strengthening your patient the fatal habit of attending to universal issues withdrawing his attention on the stream of immediate sense experiences.

Your business is to fix his attention on the stream. Teach him to call it "real life" and don't let him ask what he means by "real."

Remember, he is not, like you, a pure spirit. Never having been a human (Oh that abominable advantage of the Enemy's!) you don't realize how enslaved they are to the pressure of the ordinary. I once had a patient, a sound atheist, who used to read in the British Museum. One day, as he sat reading, I saw a train of thought in his mind beginning to go the wrong way. The Enemy, of course, was at his elbow in a moment. Before I knew where I was I saw my 20 years' work beginning to totter. If I had lost my head and begun to attempt a defence by argument I should have been undone.

But I was not such a fool. I struck instantly at the part of the man which I had best under my control and suggested that it was just about time he had some lunch. The Enemy presumably made the counter-suggestion (you know how one can never quite overhear what He says to them?) that this was more important than lunch. At least I think that must have

been His line for when I said "Quite. In fact much too important to tackle at the end of a morning," the patient brightened up considerably; and by the time I had added "Much better come back after lunch and go into it with a fresh mind," he was already half way to the door.

Once he was in the street the battle was won. I showed him a newsboy shouting the midday paper, and a No. 73 bus going past, and before he reached the bottom of the steps I had got into him an unalterable conviction that, whatever odd ideas might come into a man's head when he was shut up alone with his books, a healthy dose of "real life" (by which he meant the bus and the newsboy) was enough to show him that all "that sort of thing" just couldn't be true. He knew he'd had a narrow escape and in later years was fond of talking about "that inarticulate sense for actuality which is our ultimate safeguard against the aberrations of mere logic." He is now safe in Our Father's house.

You begin to see the point? Thanks to processes which we set at work in them centuries ago, they find it all but impossible to believe in the unfamiliar while the familiar is before their eyes. Keep pressing home on him the ordinariness of things. [CS Lewis the *Screwtape Letters*]