

Exodus 3:1-

*Listen, God is Speaking*

Do you ever struggle with communication? You know what you mean but somehow the other person isn't hearing you? "I know you think you understand what I said but I'm not sure if what you heard was what I was thinking when I said what I said."

My apologies to those of you who already heard this at the Sweethearts Banquet, but it's too good not to use again.

A guy named Fred is attracted to a woman named Martha. He asks her out to a movie; she accepts; they have a pretty good time. A few nights later he asks her out to dinner, and again they enjoy themselves. They continue to see each other regularly, and after a while neither one of them is seeing anybody else.

And then, one evening when they're driving home, a thought occurs to Martha, and, without really thinking, she says it aloud: "Do you realize that, as of tonight, we've been seeing each other for exactly six months?"

And then, there is silence in the car.

To Martha, it seems like a very loud silence. She thinks to herself: I wonder if it bothers him that I said that. Maybe he's been feeling confined by our relationship;

maybe he thinks I'm trying to push him into some kind of obligation that he doesn't want, or isn't sure of.

And Fred is thinking: Gosh. Six months.

And Martha is thinking: But, hey, I'm not so sure I want this kind of relationship either. Sometimes I wish I had a little more space, so I'd have time to think about whether I really want us to keep going the way we are, moving steadily towards, I mean, where are we going? Are we just going to keep seeing each other at this level of intimacy? Are we heading toward marriage? Toward children? Toward a lifetime together?

Am I ready for that level of commitment? Do I really even know this person?

And Fred is thinking: ...so that means it was...let's see...February when we started going out, which was right after I had the car at the dealer's, which means...lemme check the odometer...Whoa! I am way overdue for an oil change here.

And Martha is thinking: He's upset. I can see it on his face. Maybe I'm reading this completely wrong. Maybe he wants more from our relationship, more intimacy, more commitment; maybe he has sensed - even before I sensed it - that I was feeling some reservations. Yes, I bet that's it. That's why he's so reluctant to say anything about his own feelings. He's afraid of being rejected.

And Fred is thinking: And I'm gonna have them look at the transmission again. I don't care what those morons say, it's still not shifting right. And they better not try to blame it on the cold weather this time. What cold weather? It's 87 degrees out, and this thing is shifting like a garbage truck, and I paid those incompetent thieves \$600.

And Martha is thinking: He's angry. And I don't blame him. I'd be angry, too. I feel so guilty, putting him through this, but I can't help the way I feel. I'm just not sure.

And Fred is thinking: They'll probably say it's only a 90-day warranty...scumballs. And Martha is thinking: Maybe I'm just too idealistic, waiting for a knight to come riding up on his white horse, when I'm sitting right next to a perfectly good person, a person I enjoy being with, a person I truly do care about, a person who seems to truly care about me. A person who is in pain because of my self-centered, schoolgirl romantic fantasy.

And Fred is thinking: Warranty? They want a warranty? I'll give them a warranty. I'll take their warranty and stick it right up their...

"Fred," Martha says aloud.

"What?" says Fred, startled.

"Please don't torture yourself like this," she says, her eyes beginning to brim with tears. "Maybe I should never have...oh dear, I feel so..."(She breaks down, sobbing.)

"What?" says Fred.

"I'm such a fool," Martha sobs. "I mean, I know there's no knight. I really know that. It's silly. There's no knight, and there's no horse.

"There's no horse?" says Fred.

"You think I'm a fool, don't you?" Martha says.

"No!" says Fred, glad to finally know the correct answer.

"It's just that...it's that I...I need some time," Martha says. (There is a 15-second pause while Fred, thinking as fast as he can, tries to come up with a safe response. Finally he comes up with one that he thinks might work.)

"Yes," he says. (Martha, deeply moved, touches his hand.)

"Oh, Fred, do you really feel that way?" she says.

"What way?" says Fred.

"That way about time," says Martha.

"Oh," says Fred. "Yes." (Martha turns to face him and gazes deeply into his eyes, causing him to become very nervous about what she might say next, especially if it involves a horse. At last she speaks.)

"Thank you, Fred," she says.

"Thank you," says Fred.

Then he takes her home, and she lies on her bed, a conflicted, tortured soul, and weeps until dawn, whereas when Fred gets back to his place, he opens a bag of Doritos, turns on the TV, and immediately becomes deeply involved in a rerun of a college basketball game between two South Dakota junior colleges that he has never heard of.

A tiny voice in the far recesses of his mind tells him that something major was going on back there in the car, but he is pretty sure there is no way he would ever understand what, and so he figures it's better if he doesn't think about it.

The next day Martha will call her closest friend, or perhaps two of them, and they will talk about this situation for six straight hours.

In painstaking detail, they will analyze everything she said and everything he said,

going over it time and time again, exploring every word, expression, and gesture for nuances of meaning, considering every possible ramification. They will continue to discuss this subject, off and on, for weeks, maybe months, never reaching any definite conclusions, but never getting bored with it either.

Meanwhile, Fred, while playing racquetball one day with a mutual friend of his and Martha's, will pause just before serving, frown, and say: "Norm, did Martha ever own a horse?"

Communication is desperately difficult. And usually the hardest part of communication isn't speaking well, it's listening well.

Now think about this, if we run into constant difficulty communicating with one another, how much harder is communication between God and us?

A lot of people kind of blunder through life without the slightest idea that God is communicating. They're totally tuned out. Even when God has something to say, they're not going to hear because God isn't even in their thoughts.

But see God is a God with something to say to us.

Lee Strobel has a new book called "Case for a Creator." It 300 pages of a hop, skip, and a jump through the overwhelming complexity of everything from our universe itself to DNA to show how the material world has the unmistakable imprint of the Creator all over it.

God speaks through the created world. He says, "I'm here. Don't worship the creation which is all temporary. Worship me, the one who is the eternal Creator.

We don't have time to go into it all this morning but the Bible has the evidence, historically, prophetically, scientifically, that it comes from God.

The Bible claims to be The Word of God. It is the written revelation of a God who is the master communicator.

It's God's message to us, and it tells the whole truth. Last weeks Newsweek had a cover story about Tim Lahaye and Jerry Jenkins and the left behind series. It cover the events of the end times in Biblical prophecy in novel form.

What was fascinating to me was how many letters they got condemning Lahaye because he believes in a time of God's judgment.

One letter said, "millions indulge in a fantasy he has helped to popularize, envisioning a day when the 'unbelievers' will suffer earthly catastrophe and be cast into hell. Progressive theists...like myself prefer to focus on practical, compassionate solutions to the real problems of life..."

Another said, "As a lifelong Christian believer, I could never enjoy eternal life in heaven knowing that the God I worship is guilty of carrying out unspeakable tortures in hell...Only oafs like Lahaye and Jenkins could propagate such hellish untruths."

"It is monumental hubris to trivialize the Bible with such hell-an -damnation pulp fiction when LaHaye and Jenkin's time would be much better spent inspiring mankind to fulfill peace on earth and goodwill toward all men."

No one, including LaHaye or Jenkins "joyfully proclaim the coming suffering..." as one letter said.

But to deny God's judgment is to deny a large part of the Bible.

The Bible gives us both sides. God is holy and judges sin. God is also loving. He literally took our judgment for us at the cross.

God communicates His message through the Bible and that message is this:

*...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God  
the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.  
He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life...  
He who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony  
that God has given of His Son.*

Here's where we need to begin listening to God. There's judgment on all of us because of our sin. There's forgiveness to anyone who trusts Jesus Christ as Savior.

Have you opened yourself to God's truth. Have you really listened to what He has to say?

Now believing and trusting in Christ means being born into God's family. Being a child of God means we want to keep listening because God's got more to say to us.

Probably the classic passage on communication between God and man is found in Exodus chapter 3.

### **Turn to Ex 3 pg 52**

So far in the Book of Exodus we've seen God at work. Back in the book of Genesis he promised great things for the descendants of Abraham, or the Jewish people.

By the time you get to Exodus though, it looks like God's promises are hollow. The Jews have been enslaved by the Egyptians for 400 years.

In fact, part of God's blessing made it even harder for them. God said, "I'll multiply your number like the sand on the seashore." It worked.

But the Egyptians feared the large number of Hebrews living in their country so they brutalized them, even slaughtering many of their newborn sons.

Into this hopeless situation Moses was born. Through a series of events not only was his life spared, but he was raised in Pharaoh's palace by the king's daughter.

For a while we could think, maybe Moses could have some part in freeing his people.

Then Moses kills an Egyptian and runs for his life from Pharaoh. When we last saw him at the close of chapter 2 he married a shepherd girl and lived the next 40 years in obscurity.

Things looked bleak for Israel. God hadn't spoken for 400 years. But God never forgets His promises.

Today we're going to see God speak to Moses. As we do there's three things I want us to learn from this narrative.

*I. God Often Shows Up When We Are Engaged in the Ordinary Things of Life.*

### **Read vs 1**

This day started off like every other day since Moses moved to the desert. This is like the 14 thousand 600th day.

You get up do you chores, eat some grub, and lead your sheep to pasture. Moses' life was totally predictable. He knew all the grazing places and had the exact location of every water hole within many miles etched in his mind. This time Moses led his flock to back of the desert to Mt. Horeb.

There are a number of people and places in the Bible that have 2 names.

For instance, Chapter 2 calls Moses' father-in-law Reuel. Now chapter 3 refers to him as Jethro. It's most likely that Reuel was his name and Jethro was a title. Jethro means "abundance" or "superiority."

It could be that over the years he had become a rich man as God blessed Moses.

We'll the mountain has 2 names too. Here it's called Mt. Horeb but later it's called Sinai. It's most likely that the mountain range was called Horeb and the specific peak was named Sinai, but we don't know for sure.

What we know was Moses was just doing his job, just doing life the same way he always did when something dramatic happened.

## **Read vs 2**

The *mal'ak yawhew*, or the "Angel of the Lord," is used 52 times in the OT. Each time it's used to describe what the theologians call a Theophany. The word Theophany comes from 2 Greek terms: *Theos*- "God," and *phaneroo*- "to show."

This is God showing Himself in a way that people can see.

Now get the picture. Here's Moses just doing his job. Same old routine. And suddenly he sees something weird.

A bush. A desert scrub brush is on fire.

The bush is just your basic desert scrub bush, just like the countless others that dotted the landscape. The Hebrew word that is used here names it "a thorny shrub." The bush wasn't different. It wasn't remarkable. But what was happening to it was certainly different and remarkable.

There were flames engulfing the bush but the bush itself wasn't burning up.

This was a real event. Moses would probably laugh himself silly at the explanations offered for the burning bush over the years. The "explanations" are even more incredible than the Biblical account.

For some reason people want to always try to invest miracles with natural explanations. Here are some actual "burning bush" explanations commentators have come up with:

- (1) "St. Elmo's fire." This is a discharge of electricity which causes a kind of glow.
- (2) "... reflexes of light, which must often have occurred in dry lands with an abundance of storms."
- (3) A volcanic phenomenon.
- (4) A myth, based on ancient accounts of burning objects which were not consumed.
- (5) "... a flake of gypsum blown against a twig may have set a bush alight."
- (6) A beam of sunlight, piercing through a crack in the mountain.
- (7) A purely psychological experience.
- (8) A gas plant, which burst into flames.
- (9) The brilliant blossoms of mistletoe twigs.

This wasn't something natural. This was The Angel of the Lord.

You know, I have to wonder if maybe God had been trying to get Moses' attention for a while now in less dramatic ways. Trying to get him to break his routine long enough to listen.

There was a sign posted on the old Alaskan Highway which read, "Be careful which rut you choose because you'll be in it for the next hundred miles."

Life is like that. We get use to things. We develop our habits and routines. Maybe God had been trying for some time to get Moses' attention in the desert. I wonder how long He tries to get our attention.

But see, God often shows up when we are engaged in the ordinary things of life.

What happened to Moses, happened on an ordinary day.



Somewhere along the line Moses came to terms with the idea that he would never be the deliverer of his people. Day in and day out he carried out his duties as a shepherd, and as a father, and as a husband. Never in his wildest dreams did Moses expect anything to change.

In the common ordinary everyday circumstances of our lives, God sometimes does something extraordinary. He burns a bush, for us.

Maybe it's some disruption of our routine - an accident or illness, a change in circumstance, like the loss of a job, or something. God will often get our attention by allowing some change in our day to day lives.

We call them "coincidences" but see they're not chance events. They're God's ways of tapping us on the shoulder.

Sometimes He does it in less dramatic ways, like when we're reading Scripture or listening to a sermon. Sometimes it takes prompts to get us to listen to God.

Throughout our very ordinary lives there are extraordinary moments, in which God is seeking to communicate with us.

*I. God Often Shows Up In Unexpected Ways*

*II. God's Call is A Call To Turn Aside and Listen To Him*

I've always loved verse 3 **Read 3**

Like Moses had this discussion with himself. Obviously he thought to himself, "That's weird. I want to check this out."

**Read vs 4**

I want you to notice a key word in this verse. It's the word "when." God didn't speak until Moses turned. God didn't speak until He had Moses attention.

What is it going to take to get your attention? What will finally persuade you to stop what your doing long enough to consider what God may be trying to tell you in whatever is happening in your life? What is it going to take before you will say, "I'm going to check this out. I'm going to stop long enough to see what God might be trying to say to me." That's what Moses did and what he discovered was God's purpose for his life.

John Hamby writes: This is the way that God works. Without a hint of warning, He speaks to ordinary people, on ordinary days in the midst of their ordinary routine.

There are days in all our lives that come unannounced, unheralded. There are no angel voices to warn us that what is about to happen will change our lives forever. It is only in later years as we look back that we understand that it was a turning point in our lives. We never know what a day will bring. Some days open with a flood of sunshine and others the sky is laden with heavy dark clouds. Some days are a thrill to live and others seemingly have to be endured. Some days will hold a wedding and others a funeral, but scripture reveals that nothing can part us from the companionship of the LORD except for needless worry and permitted sin.

### **Read vs 5-6**

This is the first time that the word “holy” is used in the Bible.

Before you can approach God, you have to know who He is.

The nations around Israel believed in holy trees and holy bushes, and holy sights, and holy places. Israel didn't. But God calls the place “holy” because God Himself is there.

This wasn't some ornate sanctuary with stained glass windows, this was the backside of the desert. What made it holy was God's presence.

What God wanted from Moses was his undivided attention.

Now just look at all the things we learn about the character of God:

He is Holy. He is a covenant making God. He's the God of history. He's the God of Moses forefathers.

### **Read vs 7-9**

He's compassionate. He cares about what Israel has been going through. He's imminent and He's personal.

Just because Moses has been going through 4 decades of the ordinary life, and the

Hebrews have been suffering at the hand of the Egyptians doesn't mean that God's off in some remote part of the universe doing "God stuff" (whatever God would do).

God is there. He's been there all along. So He calls Moses by name. Talk about personal.

Do you ever feel like God's packed up and gone from your life? Do you ever feel like He must be a million miles away because you don't hear Him?

God hasn't gone anywhere. God says, "I know how many hairs are on your head, that's how involved I am in your life." God knows your name. God knows your fears. God knows your longings. God knows your secret sins.

God knows, right down to the core, exactly where you are in your life. He sees! He cares! He is aware! And best of all He is touched by it. Satan wants you to think differently. He wants you to think that God doesn't know what's happening in your life or, if He does know then He doesn't care. That is a lie.

- I. *God Often Shows Up In Unexpected Ways*
- II. *God's Call is A Call To Turn Aside and Listen To Him*
- III. *God Delights In Using Ordinary Things And Ordinary People To Accomplish Extraordinary Things.*

This must have been just a breath of fresh air for Moses. After he could get his brain together enough to process what he's hearing he must have been thinking, "At last our prayers will be answered. At last God is going to do something. I'm not sure why He's telling me all this. But I'm sure glad God's going to take care of business."

## **Read 10**

Whoa, say what? Moses must have been thinking, "Are you talkin to me?"

Next week, Lord willing, we'll look at some of Moses' excuses why he can't do it.

God will answer every one because *God Delights In Using Ordinary Things And Ordinary People To Accomplish Extraordinary Things.*

You might feel like Moses. God can't use me for His kingdom. I'm too old, I'm too young. I don't have enough education. I don't have enough time.

Remember if God can use a scrubby brush and an 80 year old sheep herder on the backside of the desert, He can use you.

Listen, God is speaking. He can speak to us, \* through the words of a child \* a song \* a sermon \* a book \* a gentle whisper to our ready heart \* the counsel of a friend \* circumstances guided by biblical principles.

Are you listening? Do you have a humble spirit?

God has things He wants to communicate to you in the ordinary routine of life. If you've trusted Christ as Savior He has a plan and a purpose for you. Are you patiently, prayerfully listening?