



# STUDY SERIES

## Week Four: The Burning Bush - Marc Rader

### Bible

#### Exodus 3:1-10 (NIV) Moses and the Burning Bush.

<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, 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.”

## Sermon Outline

The call of Moses at the burning bush marks a significant transition in the narrative of Exodus. At this point the pace of the story slows right down as the Lord begins to save His people. In many ways, this is the opening scene of the epic story that unfolds throughout the rest of the book. In the light of this opening scene, we are given glimpses into what is coming in the passages to follow. For instance, we are told that the rescue of Israel will go through Pharaoh and that he will need to be compelled by a mighty hand (3:10, 19-20). We are also given a hint that freedom from oppression and repatriation to the Promised Land is not the only outcome that the Lord desires.

In 3:12 the Lord tells Moses that they will worship the Lord at the same mountain when they have come out of Egypt. In 3:18 Moses, along with the elders, is to ask Pharaoh to let them go three days into the wilderness to worship the Lord. This emphasis on worship, or service is an important one. The people of Israel are being set free from serving Pharaoh (who was considered god-like) to begin to serve the Lord; the exodus is a shift of allegiance. A third theme that is introduced in this call narrative is the importance of knowing the Lord. If you had only read from Genesis to this point you would have learned a lot more about the Lord than you knew before. Here we are explicitly told that God is holy and that His personal

name is Lord (the English translation of Yahweh). All three of these become important in the narrative to come. Knowing the Lord is the essence of the exodus, as the people are brought to Mount Sinai to enter into a covenant with the Lord, rather than serving Pharaoh, an inevitable conflict arises. (Have a look at 5:2 for Pharaoh's reaction to Moses' request.)

However, it is the interaction between the Lord and Moses which draws our attention in this passage. It is an interesting dialogue as Moses does his best to get out of being sent to Egypt. He politely raises the possibility that God may have the wrong person (3:11), before raising some questions about who is sending him and how he might prove that (3:13; 4:1), and when this doesn't work he points out some of his more obvious flaws (4:10), and finally, simply asks the Lord to send someone else!

Before we look at the Lord's response to Moses, let me ask you a critical question. Were Moses' excuses and hesitation justified? Did he have legitimate reasons to be let off from this commission? Because we know the end of the story, we can end up assuming that his excuses were not valid. That he was being humble, or lacked a bit of confidence, but obviously he had the skills to become and do all that God called him to do.

I believe, however, that Moses' excuses were valid. That after forty years in the wilderness he would have been a nobody in Egypt, assuming he was a somebody before, and that his speech problem (speech impediment or otherwise), was a real drawback for someone speaking for the Lord.

This is an important distinction to make, because it is what we often do when invited by God to participate with Him. We list our own excuses that we believe are legitimate reasons why God cannot possibly be serious about calling us. If Moses' excuses were invalid, then we don't have to hear God's response to Moses, as His response to **our** excuses.

God's response to Moses and us is, if you'll allow me to paraphrase: Since when was this about you? God meets every one of Moses' excuses with a reference to himself. The Lord will be with him (3:12), tells him His name (3:14), gives him signs (4:2-9), will teach him what to say (4:12), and even sends

Aaron with Moses (4:14). It is not Moses' plans or promises or power that will bring this about but God's. It is not about Moses' ability and it is not about ours! We are invited into God's plans and He is aware of all our shortcomings, failures, and faults and invites us to join Him anyway.

Moses goes to Egypt and, as we'll see, the Lord works in incredible ways through him. He is faithful to say "Yes" to God, from this point forward, and becomes part of the second greatest story in the Bible.

When the invitation of God comes to join Him this week – what will we say? Will we say Yes and trust in His power, His might, His plans?

## Questions

These questions are a guide for conversation. Please take your time, and don't feel in a rush to finish them. Often we can get lost in Bible **study**, missing God's invitation to be shaped by what we read. The objective here is to engage in a conversation around a Biblical idea, and begin to consider its implications for our everyday lives. Where God might be inviting us to act. Take some time to pray and invite the Holy Spirit to lead your time.

1. Opening Discussion: Consider the areas in your life where you lead? It is rare that any of us won't lead somewhere. Think about your family and specific situations like organising Christmas Dinner, your workplace, amongst your friends, in crisis situations, when playing music, in inviting others to follow Jesus. Have you discovered you lead in an area you haven't considered before? Share your reflections with the group.

2. **The Bible Together:** Read Exodus 3:1-10 together aloud. Invite the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and ears as you read the passage. What stands out to you? What don't you understand? What is God inviting you to do? What might you share with someone else? - Share your thoughts with the group, commit to exploring God's invitation to you, and resist the urge to provide answers to all the questions others might have.
3. What does this passage (including up to 4:17) tell us about God that hasn't been made clear to this point in the Bible?
4. How does the insight we gain from this passage about God, impact our willingness to join in with His plans and purposes?
5. What excuses do we make to avoid joining in with what God is inviting us to do? (Hint: This is anything that contributes to God's plan to renew and restore all things.) What excuses do we make specifically to avoid leading in these areas?
6. Knowing, accepting, and believing, that joining in with God is not about our power, might, or plans, brings the freedom to participate. Where would you most commonly place yourself when considering God's invitation to be a part of His plans in the world? Somewhere between knowing and joining in, or perhaps not knowing what God might be asking of you? Share your reflections.

## Prayer

Take some time to pray for each others' answers to question 6. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you understand yourself, and your own tendencies to resist, consider or engage with God's plans. Then pray that the Lord would help each of you remember that it is all about His work in our lives as we participate with Him.