

And we need to listen to godly people. We need to be in dialogue with godly people that will give truthful answers and help us discern things. We can be open to what God is doing in the world. It's not just for hyper-spiritual giants like Billy Graham and Pope Francis. It's for regular people like all of you here at Faith Church or your friends and neighbors. Moses was still a regular guy here.

Next month some of us will talk about ongoing missions and outreach projects and ministries. Next month the missionaries from Tanzania will visit and speak to us. They will remind us of the opportunities that God gives. Let us open ourselves up to what God is already doing in our lives, respond to God's invitation and get involved in God's ministry. If we do, we might run into a burning bush somewhere in our lives in His time.

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Experiencing God (3)

God Invites You to Become Involved

Exodus 3:7-10

Rev. Dr. Charles Yoon

We make all kinds of plans. We make a daily plan, a weekly plan, a monthly plan, and a yearly plan. We make a shopping plan, a study plan, a vacation plan, a budget plan, and a ministry plan. We also make a life plan. For example, you want to have a really good job that pays well. You want to get it fast and to enjoy it. Then you want to get married, have two kids, and get a nice house. When you get a little older, your dreams change a little bit. When you get to a certain age, you want your kids to get a good job and study something better in college to get that good job. You still want them to get married and have the kids. You want them to live in a nice house next to or nearby your house. We make these kinds of plans all the time. It's a natural thing.

In this planning process our Christian life consists of getting God in our lives so that God can bless all of these plans. What does "bless" mean here? The word "bless" means that God would take our plans and make them full and rich and make them happen. God comes into the center of our lives and then we surround God with all of our good plans. By God being in our life, He works through all these plans and makes all of our plans happen and makes it all wonderful. But that's not a biblical picture. The biblical picture is that God comes into the center of our lives and surrounds Himself with His plans. Then God works out His plans in our lives. In what God's doing we experience fullness, peace and joy. God is in the center. God is working out His own plans in our lives. God is not in the business of joining us to make our plans happen, but He works out His plans in the world.

In today's text, God lit the bush. God lit the bush on fire, not Moses. In other words, God interrupted Moses' life to get his attention. So this was not a situation where Moses wanted God to do something, so he piled up a bunch of wood and lit it on fire and said, "God, come to me. I want to be a shepherd. I want to be a great shepherd. I want to be the best shepherd in this part of the world." Moses was going around his normal business and then God grabbed his attention. God wanted to draw Moses into what He was doing.

God saw how bad things really were. God already saw the needs. In verse 7-8 God 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. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians"* (7-8a) "I have seen, I have heard, I am concerned; I have come down to rescue." God saw and knew how bad things were. He heard the prayers of the people who called on His name saying, "This has got to end and to change. God, please do something." God was concerned. He cared about what was happening in the world. Out of His caring, God came down to do something about it.

In fact, God was already at work. In Exodus 1 God worked in Moses' life to protect him, to guard him when the Pharaoh ordered that all male children should be killed. Moses was actually protected by Pharaoh's own daughter. Nobody knew what was going on. Nobody knew God's purposes in the long run for Moses' life. God was at work preserving Moses to get ready for this day.

In the same way God is already at work around us too. When God calls us to do something, He calls us into the situation where He has already been at work. God sees the need. God is already at work about it. The next thing we see in today's text is that God calls us to get involved. He invites us to join Him. In verse 10 God said to Moses, *"So now go. I am sending you to Pharaoh."* God always gives an invitation to His people to participate in what He is

doing. God always uses people. And so at some point or another He enlists one of us to partner with Him.

How do we get involved with what God is doing? How do we accept these invitations, even notice when they are happening? First thing we can do is to pray. We tend to have the "God bless me" prayers where we make the plans and then ask God to bless them. There is plenty of opportunity in the Christian life to ask God to bless us, to do things for us that we feel need to happen. We have that liberty. But instead of praying "God, bless my plans," we need to pray availability prayers. "God, I am here. I am available. I am willing to join You even if it is something unusual." In this prayer we can be involved in God's invitation and to do what God wants us to do.

Second, in order to accept God's invitation we need to ask questions. We've got to take some initiative; to talk to God about these things. Moses talked to God considerably about this, much of it because he did not have a whole lot of faith. Sometimes that is why we have to talk to God, because we don't have a whole lot of faith. We need to find out what the real needs are; to not just step out into something before we really understand what the environment is like; what the needs are; what the people think; what opportunities are there; what's already happening; maybe even do some research on the internet or in talking to other people in our church and in our community.

And then we need to listen. We need to listen to what God is saying. We need to listen to our circumstances, because sometimes our circumstances will put a full stop to something. When things get hard, it doesn't mean we are on the wrong track. Moses' life got a lot worse and the life of the Israelites got worse before it got better. It's not just whether things are difficult, but sometimes a door actually closes on us. So we need to listen to our circumstances.