

Ignite Your Faith!  
Pt. 1: The Burning Bush  
Exodus 3:1-5

It's July. It's Arizona. Therefore: it's HOT outside!

I ran across this list, "How to know it's summer in Arizona:"

You know it's summer in Arizona when your car starts overheating before you drive it.

You know it's summer in Arizona when you go to a fake beach for some fake waves.

You know it's summer in Arizona when you start using two fingers to drive your car.

You know it's summer in Arizona when you go to the mall and the best parking place is determined by shade instead of distance.

You know it's summer in Arizona when hotter water comes from the cold water tap than the hot water tap.

It's hot outside! I don't care if it's a dry heat, it's still a hot heat. Heat makes you think of fire. So let me ask you a fire question. Are you on fire for the Lord?

If asked, how would you rate your faith?

- Intense - On fire for the Lord!
- Resilience - You've been through some tough times, but your faith is hanging in there
- Absence - There is no evidence of faith in your life
- Pretense - You've never really surrendered your life to Jesus Christ
- Post-tense - You used to have a strong faith, but you aren't so sure anymore

In this sermon series we will look at some Old Testament people who were INTENSE about their faith, they were on fire for the Lord and we'll see how the Lord used fire to stoke up their faith.

Today's example comes from the book of Exodus chapter 3.

Exodus 3:1-5

1 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 desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

2 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.

3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight-- why the bush does not burn up."

4 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."

5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

1. Warm Up

Moses could have said, "Wow, look at that bush over there. It's on fire.....and even though it's on fire, it isn't burned up. Oh well, I've got things to do....."

If Moses had been preoccupied with other things, he would have missed an incredible, life altering encounter with God.

But he warmed up to God by drawing near to Him.

Moses SAW the burning bush, but the key to warming up is found in verse 3:

Exodus 3:3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight-- why the bush does not burn up."

Moses said, "I will go over and see" Moses was willing to take the time to go and see.

Are you willing to do that?

Are you willing to take time to spend with God?

Not just Sunday morning, but every day throughout the week?

Do you ever feel distant from God? Look at this promise God makes:

Jeremiah 29:13 "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

God is NOT hiding from you. He wants to have a relationship with you!  
This is reiterated in the New Testament:

Hebrews 11:6 "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

Key phrases: "...comes to Him.....REWARDS those who earnestly seek Him."

God promises that if you seek Him, you will find Him!

If you want to warm up to God, it all begins by going to Him.  
It's really pretty basic, simple stuff here: Go to God!  
Go to Him in prayer. Go to Him in worship. Seek Him in the scriptures.

You warm up to God by drawing close to God.  
What are the things in your life that keep you from warming up to the Lord?

There's an interesting story in the Old Testament about the very first king of Israel.  
His name was Saul. But at first, Saul was a reluctant King. Look at these verses:

1 Samuel 10:21-24

21 Finally Saul son of Kish was chosen. But when they looked for him, he was not to be found. 22 So they inquired further of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?" And the LORD said, "Yes, he has hidden himself among the baggage."

23 They ran and brought him out, and as Saul stood among the people he was a head taller than any of the others.

24 Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the man the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people." Then the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

God had selected Saul to be the very first King of Israel!  
But Saul had not warmed up to the idea.  
A key phrase is found in verse 22, "...he has hidden himself among the baggage..."  
The King James version says that "...he hath hid himself among the stuff...."

What is the "baggage," what is the "stuff" in your life that is keeping you from warming up to the Lord?  
Is it:

- Mixed up priorities?
- Materialism?
- Some habitual sin that you just don't want to let go of?
- An improper relationship with someone?
- Anger or hurt from some unresolved issue of the past?
- Financial challenges, health issues, relationship problems?
- Your own religious legalism or non-Biblical traditions?

Is there a pile of "stuff" between you and the Lord?  
Are you still hiding in some kind of "baggage"?  
Isn't it time to come out and warm up to the Lord?

James 4:8 "Come near to God and He will come near to you."

You've got to start some place, you've got to start some time. Why not now!  
The first step is to warm up to the Lord.  
Turn to the Lord and He will turn to you.

## 2. Heat Up

Once you have turned aside to God, once you have drawn near to Him, once you've warmed up to Him, it's just a matter of time before you start to "heat up" with the presence of the Lord.

At first Moses was attracted simply because of curiosity. But that quickly changed. Moses had an encounter with God and this was the key to his "heating up."

Look at verse 4:

Exodus 3:4 "When the LORD saw that (Moses) had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am."

Notice that it says, "When God saw that Moses had turned aside to see..."

When you turn to something, you are simultaneously turning away from something else. That's what the word "repentance" is all about.

Repentance means to turn to God.

When you turn to God you are also turning your back on some other things in your life. Perhaps you are turning your back on some of those "baggage" things we mentioned earlier. Most definitely you must turn your back on sinful activity.

Remember Jesus' very pointed warning in the Book of Revelation:  
Revelation 3:15-16

15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot . I wish you were either one or the other!

16 So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

In other words, you can't be straddling the fence.  
You can't be loving sin and loving God. If you love God you hate sin.  
In fact, look at what God says to Moses in our key verses:

Exodus 3:5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

What's up with that? Why did Moses have to take off his sandals? What's the big deal?  
Why couldn't he wear his sandals on Holy ground?

What's on the bottom of your shoes? What have you walked in?  
Maybe some dirt, some mud, someone's chewing gum, some tar from the street, or worse yet some doggie "do-do?"  
Where else have you walked? Have you walked in sinfulness?

Psalms 1:1 "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers."

Being in the presence of the Lord puts you in holy territory.

A few weeks ago we got new carpet in our house.  
The very next week they put a sealant on our street. A dark black, oil based sealant was applied to our street right after we got new carpet!  
Can you imagine what would have happened if I went out to get the mail, walked along the edge of the street to get to the mail box, walked into the house across the carpet and left tar stains on my wife's brand new carpet?! Can you imagine what would have happened to me?!  
Right about now you'd be speaking about me in the past tense.

I'd be history. You'd be eating potato salad after the funeral.  
Nobody wants to get street tar on their brand new carpet!

So, how does new carpet compare to the very presence of God?  
If we are that cautious about what we track onto our carpet, how much more concerned should we be about what we track into God's presence?

God told Moses, "Take off your sandals....."  
I ask again, what kind of sin have you walked in?

Proverbs 4:14-15

14 Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men.

15 Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way.

When you've grown beyond warming up to God, when you are actually walking with God, there are some places you simply don't walk any more.

If you are going to heat up for God, you've got to put a torch to those habitual sins.

Matthew 7:13-14

13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.

14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

You warm up by drawing near to God.

You heat up by walking with God.

And then you can begin to get all fired up for the Lord!

### 3. Fire up!

You know you are on fire for the Lord when others around you begin to warm up to Jesus because of your influence.

When you can fire up others for the Lord, then you know you yourself are on fire for the Lord.

One of the many reasons I like to visit our mission team in Peru is because they are so on fire for the Lord. They talk about the Lord and they talk about their mission and they talk about reaching others for Christ. They are on fire for the Lord and I know that because they help stoke my flames. I get fired up when I visit them!

Members here at Christ's Church who are on fire for the Lord can't help themselves:

- They talk about Jesus.
- They talk about the church.
- They invite people to church.
- They are involved in the church because the church is the body of Christ.
- They influence others for Jesus because it's contagious.

Their enthusiasm spreads. That's what fire does!

About 35 years ago I was a youth pastor and the kids sang a song "way back then" that they don't sing anymore. The title of the song is, "Pass It On."

(Do any of you remember that golden oldie?)

Listen to the lyrics to the beginning of the song:

It only takes a spark, to get a fire going.

And soon all those around, can warm up to it's glowing.

That's how it is with God's love, once you've experienced it.

You spread His love, to everyone, you want to pass it on.

Those who have experienced it, those who have been in His Holy Presence, those who understand, "Take off your sandals, the ground you stand on is holy ground," those who are on fire for the Lord, can't help but to fire up others!

You know what? Fire spreads!

Of course, we all know that truth, but I was poignantly reminded of that truth years ago when I first came here to Fountain Hills. Lisa and I were renting a house over on Aguilar Drive. One thing you need to know about that house, it had one of those great big beehive fire places in the corner. This becomes important later in the story. It was Christmas time, and we purchased a small Christmas tree the first few days into December. This also becomes important later in the story. We decorated that tree and we put presents under the tree we had our first Christmas here in Fountain Hills. Christmas comes and Christmas goes and it is near the end of December before I get around to taking down the tree. Remember, I put the tree up the first few days of December. Do you know what happens to a live tree after it's been cut down and placed in your living room for nearly a month? It turns brown. It gets very brittle. It dries out. So after taking the decorations down, I'm trying to figure out what to do with this little tree. Remember that big beehive fireplace?

Have you ever done something that the entire time a little voice in the back of your head is saying, "This is stupid, this is stupid, this is stupid." Men have you ever done something that right before you did it your wife says, "That is really a dumb idea," but you just smile and do it anyway? This was one of those moments.

So I decide I'm just going to burn this tree up in our fireplace, which already has a small fire going in it. I figured that this little tree is so brittle I'll just cram it in and it'll burn up real quick.

Fire spreads! As soon as the tip of that tree entered the fireplace, the fire spread right up the branches and engulfed the entire thing. I pushed as much of the tree into the fireplace as I could and then quickly jumped back before being turned into a giant smores. A ball of fire engulfed the tree, sent smoke and soot all over the wall and ceiling above the fire place as part of the tree fell to the floor and singed the carpet.

But it was a rental house!

Fire always spreads. Whether it's a forest fire or a house fire.....or someone on fire for the Lord, fire always spreads.

Therefore, that is a great test, that is one of the truest indicators as to whether or not you are on fire for the Lord. Fire always spreads. When you are on fire for the Lord you just keep spreading the news about Jesus.

Look at this series of verses from the Gospel of Luke:

Luke 4:14 "..... news about Jesus spread through the whole countryside."

Luke 4:37 "And the news about Jesus spread throughout the surrounding area."

Luke 5:15 "Yet the news about Jesus spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him...."

Luke 7:17 "This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country."

How did the news spread? They didn't have television, they didn't have telephones, they didn't have the internet, they didn't text, they didn't have radio....

All they had was people who were on fire for the Lord spreading the word! Fire spreads!

As an example, look at two of the Apostles:

Acts 4:13, 18-20

13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

18 Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you

rather than God.

20 For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

When you are on fire for the Lord, you just can't help yourself.

Christians on fire for the Lord spread the Word!

When you are on fire for the Lord, you just gotta talk about Jesus!  
Are you spreading the Word?

Are you on fire? It all starts by turning to the Lord. Just like Moses, turn aside and check it out!