



YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON:

## HEARING GOD'S CALL

BACKGROUND: EXODUS 3:1-22 • KEY PASSAGE: EXODUS 3:9-15

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**PURPOSE:** To help youth understand that God's calling can come at any time, any place, and to anyone.

**BIBLE STORY:** God Calls Moses

**MEMORY VERSE:** "God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you." Exodus 3:14 (HCSB)

## BACKGROUND

Frequently teens have misconceptions about God's call. Most assume it is a one-time declaration from God that, if they miss it, will send them spiraling through life without recourse. God's initial call is to life commitment, to follow Jesus Christ. The rest of God's call to the Christian will expand and develop as the teen grows in Christ. God doesn't play "hide and seek" with his will. He does however, insist on "wait and see".

In our instant gratification culture, this waiting is an enigma to those seeking God's will. Through this study, teens will see that God can speak in a variety of ways, times and places. The application section attempts to help teens see that God will use their gifts and abilities, personality and readiness to serve.

The Exodus 3 passage leaves questions when taken alone. A quick read of the first two chapters will help freshen your memory before teaching. Many teens will remember the "baby in the basket" story or have seen the movie Prince of Egypt. Relate that information to the biblical narrative.

The life of Moses handily fits into three 40-year periods:

The first 40 is from birth to being a prince in pharaoh's court.

The second 40 is as a shepherd in Midian for his father-in-law, Jethro.

This is when the burning bush experience occurred.

The third 40 is his leadership of the children of Israel to the brink of the Promised Land.

Important notes can be gleaned from this passage. In verse 4 God called Moses by name. Since we know God as creator of the universe, we expect that God would know his name...but would Moses have expected it? The burning bush with an angel speaking was a unique way to get his attention! No one else encountered God in a non-consumed burning bush. This manner of the revelation of God was personal to Moses.

God tells Moses to remove his sandals as he is standing on hallowed or holy ground. This sign of respect is much like the removal of a hat indoors or standing when an older person enters the room. Moses had no doubt that he was encountering God; he even hid his face. In verses 7-9 God explains what he is doing; then in verse 10 he tells Moses his assignment.

Could Moses have said "NO!"? He was certainly full of excuses! In Ex. 3:11, Moses declares he is unworthy to do the job. Moses knew the children of Israel to be thousands of uneducated and unarmed slaves. How could they be rescued? God's answer: "I'll be with you" is the same promise we get today! God will be with us! What Moses didn't know was that God had been preparing him for the task by placing him in the care of Pharaoh's daughter. Having him raised as an Egyptian meant that he would be educated, learn to read and write, learn management skills, and learn the ways of the court.

In Ex. 3:13, Moses tries to refuse the offer again as he doubts he will be seen as the authority. He was raised in Pharaoh's court; he is considered the enemy to them. He doesn't even know what to call God. The memory verse is the answer to that excuse: "I am who I am". This explains his name as Jehovah—that he exists on his own without being dependent on others. His eternality and unchangeable nature are wrapped into that name. He continues with the explanation by relating himself to this chosen people as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. By giving this definition, Moses can define Jehovah God for all to worship and separate from false gods.

Other excuses of Moses occur in Ex. 4:1 as he doubts the Israelites will trust him; in Ex. 4:10 as he tries to use speech difficulties to avoid the job; and in Ex. 4:13 when he begs God to choose someone else. Yes, Moses could have refused God, just as we today can say no to God. But Moses reluctantly took the task and God used him in a powerful way.

In the last part of the chapter, verses 16-22, God gives Moses the game plan, including what to say. God even assures him of the response of the Israelites and the results of the Egyptians' refusal to listen. The promise of God's presence was not just a one-event promise—it continued throughout his life. And Moses was brutally honest with God; he argued, obeyed, followed, disobeyed, complained, questioned and saw God closer than any other human. God did not reject him for this but continued to show Moses his will and his way. Teens need to know God will be with them in their struggle to understand and learn how to live for him.

Why did God use such a dramatic method to reach Moses? He had little knowledge and no experiences with God prior to this; it took a huge event to get his attention. Today teens may say, "If God came to me in a burning bush and told me what to do, I would do it!" Not so! God revealed himself to us in Jesus Christ, the ultimate interaction with humans. We have the Bible with the will of God throughout its pages, yet we make excuses like Moses did. Use this study to encourage teens to meet with God regularly to learn to hear his voice and follow him.

## PREPARATION

- Get a poster-sized sheet of paper and write the word NICKNAMES on the top of it for use in arrival activity. Provide a marker for teens to use.
- Make copies of Scrambled Words activity found at end of this session. Provide pencils.
- Make copies of My Burning Bush Experience, one per student.
- Gather a compass (or several if you have a large group) and several small magnets for the last activity under "Application".

## TEACHING THE LESSON

### A. INTRODUCTION AND ARRIVAL ACTIVITIES:

As youth enter, ask them to write on a poster their nicknames or names they were called as children. After all have arrived, look over the names and explain that we know to respond to those who call us by our names because we recognize the voice. We distinguish mom's voice from sister's voice or dad's voice from the neighbor's. And we know the voice because we know the person. In this study, we will see how important it is to know God in order to recognize his voice.

Divide youth into teams of 3 people. Give out copies of the [Scrambled Words](#) handout. Ask teens to unscramble the words in the least amount of time possible. After all have been solved, ask the category the words fit into. (All are terms of communication). Here are the words unscrambled: e-mail, telephone, instant messaging, smoke signal, talking, video phone, cellular phone, semaphore, Morse code.

### B. DISCOVERING BIBLICAL COMMUNICATION

Comment that our ways of communicating with each other are not the ways God chose to communicate with humans recorded in the Old Testament. Assign the following scriptures, one per person, for teens to discover ways God communicated to specific people:

- |    |                   |                  |
|----|-------------------|------------------|
| a. | Genesis 16: 7-12  | angels           |
| b. | Genesis 15: 1     | visions          |
| c. | Genesis 28: 10-17 | dreams           |
| d. | Exodus: 28:30     | Urim and Thummim |
| e. | Jeremiah 18:1-6   | symbolic actions |
| f. | I Kings 19: 9-13  | whisper          |
| g. | Exodus 8:20-23    | miraculous signs |

Explain that God spoke in the Old Testament in a variety of ways. The interesting part of these communications is that each was personal, suited for the individual. Each person knew it was God doing the communicating, and each knew what God was saying! Not one instance is recorded of a person wondering if God had spoken or trying to discover what was said!

## SEARCHING THE FOCAL PASSAGE

Have the group find Exodus 3:1-22. Have volunteers read aloud the passage segments listed and answer the questions related to each.

- v. 1 How did Moses get from being a Hebrew baby in a basket to tending sheep at Mount Horeb?
- v. 2-3 Why would God choose to speak to Moses through an angel in a burning bush?
- v. 4-6 Obviously, God knew Moses by name; speculate how Moses might have known about God before the burning bush...who raised him during early years? Did he know he was a Hebrew? Did Jethro teach him more? In verse 5, why did God tell him to take off his shoes?
- v. 7-10 Could Moses tell what God was calling him to do? Why was Moses best fitted for this job among all the Hebrews?
- v. 11-12 What excuse did Moses give for not wanting to obey God's call? How did God respond?
- v. 13-15 What second excuse did Moses give for not wanting to obey God?
- v. 16-20 What message was Moses to deliver? Why did God prepare him by telling Moses what the response would be?
- v. 21-22 What provisions did God make for their journey out of Egypt?

**QUICK REVIEW OF BIBLE PASSAGE:** Ask these questions for teens to answer:

How was God's call to Moses personal?

(called by name; used burning bush; encouraged when Moses questioned)

How was God's call to Moses suited to his background, education and training?

(Hebrew raised as Egyptian, knew the court of pharaoh, could read and write)

How was God's promise of his presence reinforced?

(God told of responses of Israelites and of Egyptians.)

## APPLICATION

In the Old Testament God spoke in various ways. During the time of the gospels, God spoke through Jesus. From the beginning of the church in Acts continuing to this day, God speaks through the Holy Spirit. How will the Holy Spirit speak to you today? Henry Blackaby, in *Experiencing God*, suggests four ways: the Bible, prayer, the church and circumstances. You may want to suggest further study for teens related to this.

Give each teen a copy of the handout sheet, [My Burning Bush Experience](#). Ask teens to quietly fill it out. After most have finished, ask those willing to share one or two of their answers.

## CLOSING ACTIVITY

Gather teens around a table with a compass (or several compasses if you have a large group). Explain that the compass tells us true north by the magnetic needle. This is a useful instrument in finding direction. Ask teens, "What is the compass of our spiritual lives?" (some answers may be the Bible, prayer, following Jesus). Place several small magnets near the compass. Let teens see how moving the magnets confuse true north. Ask teens to name what magnets pull us away from being the people God has called and purposed us to be. Close with prayer for one another to repel the magnets pulling us away from God, and to commit to listening for the voice of God in our daily lives.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY/ RESOURCES

[Experiencing God](#), Henry Blackaby, 1990, Lifeway Press, Nashville, TN

[Commentary on the Whole Bible](#), Matthew Henry, Rev. Leslie Church Ph.D., editor, 1960, Zondervan Press, Grand Rapids, Michigan

[New Bible Commentary Revised](#), D. Guthrie, V.A. Motyer, A.M. Stibbs, D.J. Wiseman, editors, 1970, Intervarsity Press, London

# SCRAMBLED WORDS

Unscramble these words in the least amount of time.

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# MY BURNING BUSH EXPERIENCE?

## 1. GOD'S CALL IS PERSONAL.

What is your earliest remembrance of knowing something about God?

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At what age did you begin a relationship with Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

(If you have not committed your life to Christ yet, then stop and consider doing this right now. Pray admitting you have sinned, believing that Jesus is God's son and commit to following his ways the rest of your life. Talk with your leader about how to do this.)

When you became a Christian, was it a slow and gradual understanding or a dramatic moment of understanding?

Mark your experience on the scale below with an X:

Gradual \_\_\_\_\_ Dramatic

## 2. GOD HAS A PURPOSE FOR WHICH HE CALLS US

List three things you do well: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

How could these abilities be used by God?

What personality type are you? Circle all that apply.

quiet	boisterous	shy
good listener	creative	gentle
dependable	a leader	empathy
detail-oriented	happy	quick thinker
vivacious	punctual	truthful
honest	reliable	agreeable
intelligent	perceptive	industrious

Can God use all of these personality traits to honor him?

What mission activity have you loved doing for God?

What job at church would you love to try?

## 3. GOD PROMISES HIS PRESENCE

Which of the following can you commit to doing?

\_\_\_\_\_ I will start each day with this affirmation: Today I will love God and live like Jesus.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will get to know God by reading his word

\_\_\_\_\_ I will form a prayer life of serious honesty with God.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will ask a mature Christian to pray for me.