The Lord Speaks from a Burning Bush



Scripture Reference: Exodus 2:11-4:17

Suggested Theme: God is more powerful than our weaknesses. God's presence gives us courage and strength to obey Him.

Memory Verse: "Do everything without complaining or arguing." Philippians 2:14, ICB

Story Overview:

Even though Moses grew into adulthood in the Pharaoh's palace, he always knew he was a Hebrew. After killing an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew slave, Moses fled to Midian for his own safety. During the next forty years, he married and helped care for his father-in-law's sheep. One day, the Lord spoke to him. The Lord's voice came from a bush that was full of flames but did not burn out. The Lord told Moses that he had been chosen to lead his people out of Egypt, but Moses offered up many excuses. The Lord gave Moses everything he needed to be a leader and even appointed Moses' brother, Aaron, to help him.

Background Study:

Moses was adopted and raised in the palace of the Pharaoh by the Pharaoh's daughter. Because his mother was allowed to nurse him during his younger years, Moses always knew that he was a Hebrew. Even though he lived apart from them it is likely he would have known his parents and his brother and sister (Aaron and Miriam).

Day after day, Moses would have seen his own people beaten and worked to death by the cruel Egyptians. When Moses saw an Egyptian overseer beating one of the Israelite slaves, he killed the overseer. When he realized that the incident had been witnessed, he feared that he would be put in prison or, worse, killed. Moses decided to escape and travel eastward across the desert to Midian, about two hundred miles from Egypt. During the next forty years, Moses married a local woman (Zipporah) and shepherded for her father. He began raising a family.

The desert mentioned is west of Midian between the arms of the Red Sea. There, Moses came to Mount Horeb (Mount Sinai).

While on Mount Horeb (Sinai), Mores saw a bush that was on fire, but it was not damaged. Moses wanted to get a closer look. Moses heard a voice, and it seemed to come right out of that fire! He did not know who was calling, but he answered bravely, "Here I am." That meant he was ready to listen. The place was holy because God was speaking there. Moses had to be very respectful. He could go no closer. He took off his shoes because he was on holy ground. Removing his sandals was a sign of respect for a superior.

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Moses learned who was calling to him. God had spoken to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob hundreds of years ago, but now the same God was talking to Moses! Moses hid his face because he knew no human could face God and live.

God knew how the Israelites were being mistreated, overworked, and whipped in Egypt. He was ready to prepare Moses to lead them out of Egypt to a land of their own. Moses was to be God's messenger. He was to tell the king of Egypt to let God's people go, and he was to lead the people to another country.

Moses was a shepherd in the desert of another land. He had no power or influence in Egypt. He thought he could not gain freedom for his people. Moses could not rescue the people by himself, but with God's help, he would shape the history of the Israelites. God promised that Moses would indeed bring the people out of Egypt. Moses would come back to worship at that same mountain where God was speaking to him. Then Moses would know that God had sent him and had helped him.

Moses had nearly been killed in Egypt. He was afraid to go back there, so he began to make excuses. The first excuse was that people would not believe God had sent him. In answer to that, God gave Moses three miracles to be used to convince the people that he really was God's messenger. God's pronouncement, "I am who I am," was an explanation of His name, Yahweh. He was declaring Himself the God whose existence depended on nothing outside of Himself. He was declaring that no god of the Egyptians could possibly be compared to Him.

The second excuse was that Moses was not an effective speaker. But God had made his mouth, and God could make him talk more fluently.

God was angry because Moses did not trust Him as he ought, but the Lord agreed to let Moses' brother Aaron go along and do most of the talking.

In the subsequent stories, Let My People Go and The Death of the Firstborn, we will learn that Moses did, indeed, obey God and return to Egypt to save his people.

Way to Introduce the Story:

Discuss jobs that parents and teachers ask us to do. What excuses do we offer to try to get out of them? Do we ever complain about work? "In today's story, God asked Moses to do some work. Let's find out what Moses did."

The Story:

Because Moses was adopted by the daughter of Pharaoh, he grew up in the palace where he received an education in all of Egyptian knowledge. Moses was brought up as a prince, and he could have lived in comfort all of his life.

But Moses was not an Egyptian. He knew that he was actually a member of a Hebrew family. Being a Hebrew also meant that a person was a Jew, a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Remember that Jacob's other name was "Israel?" If a person was a Hebrew (Jew), then that person was called a child (or grandchild, or great-grandchild . . .) of Israel. That meant that the person was an Israelite. So Moses could say he was any of these: a Hebrew, a Jew, or an Israelite.

Moses saw the Hebrew people unfairly treated. One day, when he had become a grown man, he was watching his people as they worked for one of the Egyptian taskmasters. Moses saw one of the Egyptians beating a Hebrew. Moses killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. But Moses had been seen! When the word was spread about the killing, Pharaoh heard it and planned to have Moses killed. Moses was afraid and realized he would have to run away.

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Moses fled to the land of Midian, where he rested by a well. The seven daughters of the priest of Midian came to draw water from the well for their father's flocks. Some shepherds drove the girls away from the well, but Moses came to the daughters' rescue. He helped them water their flock. The girls told their father, Reuel, about the man who had helped them. Moses was invited to their home. He stayed and eventually married Zipporah, one of Reuel's daughters. For forty years, Moses was a shepherd.

Back in Egypt, the people of God were crying out for help because of their slavery. God heard their cries and remembered His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: They would be a great nation and have their own land. God was planning to choose someone to lead His people to freedom!

One day, as Moses watched his father-in-law's sheep, he saw a bush on fire. The fire seemed to come up out of the middle of the bush, but the bush didn't burn up! It just kept burning and burning. Moses went to the bush. As he went nearer to the bush, a voice called, "Moses! Moses!"

"Here I am," said Moses, even more surprised.

"Do not come any closer," the voice said. "Take off your shoes. This is holy ground. I am God." Moses did what the Lord told him to do.

"I know all the trouble My people are having in Egypt," God said. "I want you to ask the king to let My people leave Egypt and go to a new land I have for them."

"Oh, no," cried Moses. "I can't do that! I am nobody. How can I talk to the Pharaoh?"

God said, "I will go with you, Moses."

"But what will I tell the people? What if they want to know who You are?" Moses asked.

"Tell them that I sent you to lead them out of Egypt. Tell them 'I am who I am,'" God answered.

When Moses was worried that the people would not believe the things he said, God answered, "See the staff in your hands? When you throw it down it will turn into a snake. When you pick it up by the tail it will turn back into a staff." Then, the Lord told Moses to put his hand into his cloak and pull it out again. Moses' healthy hand had turned into a diseased hand with leprosy. When the Lord told him to put it back in his cloak, the hand became well again.

"Moses, if they still don't believe you then take some water out of the Nile River and pour it on the ground. The water will turn into blood. They will believe you then." Even though the Lord had answered all of Moses' questions, Moses still had another excuse. "But I can't talk well," Moses said.

"Moses, who made your mouth? I did! I will help you talk," said God.

Finally, Moses said, "Oh, Lord, please send someone else!"

The Lord was angry with Moses, and Moses was only offering excuses for not doing what the Lord said. "I will tell Aaron, your brother, to help, too. I will tell you what to say. Aaron will help you say it."

Moses didn't understand all that God wanted him to do. He thought it was too hard, but God had promised to help him.

What do you think Moses did next? Moses obeyed God and prepared to make the long trip back to Egypt.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible, but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details

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you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.

View this slideshow and download it from the original source:
http://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/moses-burning-bush/

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

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Review:

- What is a Hebrew? (Hebrew is another name for Jews or Israelites)
- Why did Moses run away to Midian? (He killed an Egyptian overseer who was beating a Hebrew slave)
- How did God talk to Moses? (He spoke from a burning bush)
- What were some of the excuses Moses gave to God? (I am a nobody, they might ask your name, they won't believe me, I can't speak well, (and finally) send someone else)
- What powers did God give Moses? (Knowing the right words to say, staff turned to a snake, hand turned leprous, Nile River water to blood)
- Who did God allow to go with Moses to speak for him? (Moses' brother Aaron)
- Why do you think Moses gave so many excuses to not do what God asked him to (ask Pharaoh to let the Israelites go from Egypt)?
- Moses wasn't a good speaker, and he had been in trouble with Egypt long ago. Why do you think God chose to have Moses ask Pharaoh to lead His people out of slavery from Egypt, in spite of these things?

Reflection:

- What does this story teach us about God?
- Are you surprised that baby Moses became the man God wanted to use to free His people from slavery?
- Imagine you are Moses, tending to the sheep, when you see a burning bush and hear God's voice! How would you feel? Would you believe it was God speaking?
- What is something you wonder about in this story?
- When Moses saw the burning bush, he told God 'Here I am,' which means 'I'm ready to listen to you, God.' Do you ever hear God's voice? Do you tell God, 'I'm listening' when you pray? (You can try praying this with the children and sit in silence for 15-30 seconds, listening for God)
- How do you think Moses felt when God told him to ask Pharaoh to let the Israelites go?
- Has God ever asked you to do something, but you didn't want to do it? Why not?
- How can you obey God this week, and believe that God will be with you, giving you strength and all you need to do what He asks?

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Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- Oh, Be Careful Song
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.
- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:

- Find Egypt, Midian and Mt. Sinai on a bible map.
- Obtain a tape with the song “Excuses” (by the group *Acapella*) and play it for the group.
- Ask a man in the congregation to dress up in bible garb and act the part of Moses. He can tell them the story. Be sure to give him plenty of time to prepare. Supply him with the scripture references and story words.
- Draw a vertical line down the centre of a piece of paper to create 2 columns. Write the title “God said” at the top of one column and “Moses said” at the top of the other. Add to each column as you talk about the story. Younger children will need more guidance, but older children can find the answers straight from the Bible. Instead of paper, use a whiteboard or chalkboard if you prefer.
- Help the children learn today’s memory verse. Click here for ways to do this.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

Crafts:

- Make a textured map that includes Egypt, the desert and Mt. Sinai. Guide the children in drawing out the map before then applying paint or textures. Sandpaper or sand could be used for the desert. Blue cellophane for water.
- Use the fun marble painting method to create a painting of the burning bush.

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Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

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Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page The burning bush & puzzle worksheets (Calvary Curriculum)
- Colouring page Moses & the Burning Bush (Christian Answers)
- Colouring page Moses & the Burning Bush (Ministry to Children)
- Craft: Tracing handprint to make a burning bush (DLTK)
- Other: Online map of Mount Sinai (Bible Atlas)
- Other: Consider having a movie night and showing the film “The Prince of Egypt.”
- Other: Another lesson would be to study the names of God (Ministry to Children)

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