

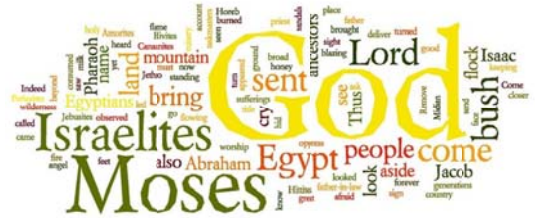
# “Everyone Needs a Burning Bush Sometime”

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Exodus 3:1-15 = Moses at the Burning Bush

When Kathleen, may she rest in peace, was pregnant with our first, I had an extremely vivid dream ~ I dreamed she was carrying a girl. Three states away on the exact same night, Kathleen’s father had the same dream. Subsequently I had this dream several times.



Shades of Joseph ~ we took this as a sign. The whole family took this as a sign. It was so clear we saw no need for selecting any boy’s names.

On June 10, 1983, the child was born ~ a healthy, robust boy!

I’m great at missing the signs. My track record is in fact terrible. I think this is mainly because I am looking for human signs rather than God sightings. While God signs were common in Bible times, have you ever seen those billboards with “Here is your sign from God.” Wish it were that easy. Unfortunately, that’s rarely the way it works today.



Everyone needs a burning bush from time to time. Not that we are lost in the wilderness or anything like that. Yet in this interim time, we could use a little sign from God. We need some of



that flaming bright clarity about where God wants us to go and what God wants us to do. That is precisely the reason over these next months we will be engaging in discernment groups.

But, as the saying goes, “be careful what you wish for....”

Kimberley, may she rest in peace, was Susan’s BFF. In the early days of Kimberley’s walk with the LORD, she was quite fearful that Jesus would send

her to Africa. She had this image in her head that she would be eaten by cannibals. We hold Moses up as a paradigm of faith, but in almost every way, Kimberley's fears, and our fears, mirror Moses'.

When we read the Bible, it seems God's purpose is abundantly clear ~ like Moses at the burning bush. Unfortunately today we don't have a lot of that crystal clarity. As much as we may wish for that, we seldom get it. Even when we do, we rarely follow through on what God requires. Think of Jacob. Think of Jonah. Think of almost all the kings of Israel and Judah. Think of Moses even.



Yes, let's take up Moses. Moses at the burning bush is indeed our greatest paradigm for discerning God's will, but Moses' reluctant responses aren't much different from ours. He is always lauded as the one who really got it right, but in today's text we find him trying his darnedest to wriggle out of God's call. Here we see Moses in a most human

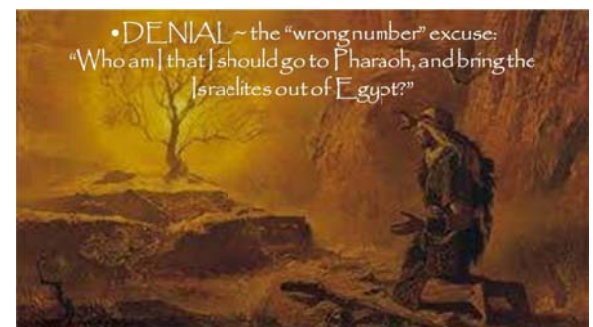
light. In essence Moses responds as each of us would respond: with *denial*, *delay*, *deferment*, *dissuasion* and *disclaimer*.

Excuses, excuses! We're full of excuses. One excuse ~ our big one ~ is "if God would just give me a burning bush, then I would know for sure."

Again, as we say, "be careful what you wish for...."

If we were to be blessed with a burning bush moment, face to face with the living God, would we be standing tall saying "here I am, send me" or would we be mumbling our excuses right along with Moses? Are any of us greater than Moses?

- Moses began just like every one of us with *denial*, the "wrong number" excuse: ***"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"*** We have this excuse in spades. This is our trump card: "I am no Moses. I'm only

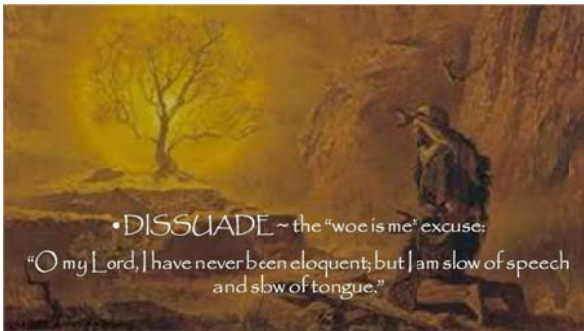
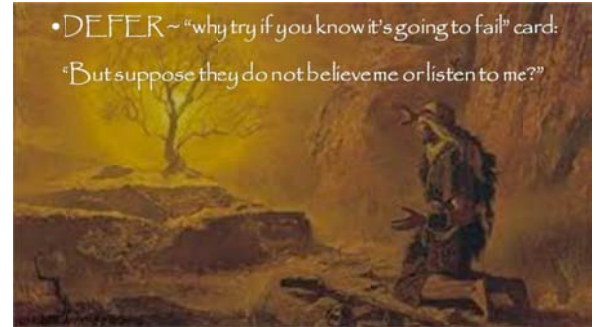


human.” This excuse didn’t work for Moses, why should it work for us?



➤ Then Moses stalls for time, tries to *delay* with the “let’s talk about this” excuse. An infamous delaying tactic: *“Suppose I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’”*<sup>2</sup>

➤ Following fast behind this one is Moses’ attempt to *defer* by trying to play the “why try if you know it’s going to fail” card. When God will not be refused, try to make your obedience contingent on the responses of others. *“But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me?”*<sup>3</sup>



➤ Now in desperation, we try to *dissuade* God with the “woe is me” excuse ~ after challenging God’s choice, faking ignorance and blaming others for a future intention to fail, then we and Moses both claim incompetence: *“O my Lord, I have never been eloquent; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.”*<sup>4</sup>

➤ Finally, having exhausted every other possibility he can think of, Moses resorts to *disclaimer* ~ the “can’t you send someone else” excuse. This is Moses’ bottom line. We’ve hit our bottom line as well. Truth be told, in our heart of hearts, we love the God’s blessing us part but don’t really like our commitment part. Our cry is just as loud as Moses’ ~ *“O my Lord, please send someone else.”*<sup>5</sup>



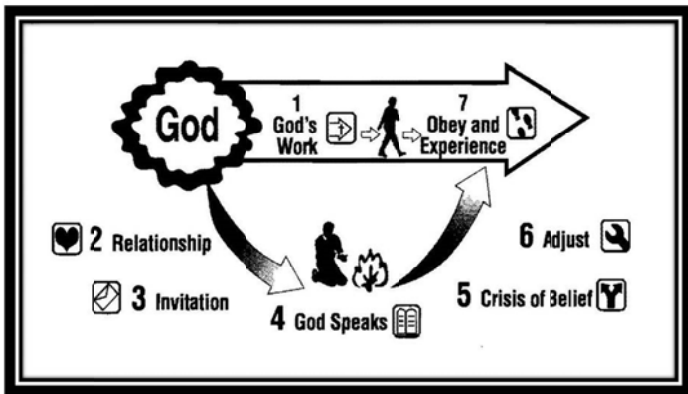
•DISCLAIM~“can’t you send someone else” excuse:  
“O my Lord please send someone else.”

God handled every excuse Moses could muster. When we are blessed with a burning bush experience, God takes away every excuse we can muster as well. God’s will for each of us is that we face up to our own feelings of inadequacy, our own reluctance to commit to God’s



enterprise. God does not take “no” for an answer ~ nor denial, delaying, deferring, dissuading nor disclaiming. Maybe God is so stingy with burning bush experiences because God knows this is how we respond.

We long for certainty about our own purpose and path ~ the certainty we might get if we gave up excuses at a burning bush moment. In a popular book on *Knowing and Doing the Will of God* the authors figure there are seven steps in discovering God’s will. If we respond as hoped to each stage we will effectively grow into God’s plan. The life of Moses illustrates the seven steps:<sup>6</sup>



1. God is always at work around us. Whether we are aware of it or not.
2. God always pursues us, seeking constantly for a relationship with each of us that is real and personal. Whether we recognize God’s pursuit or not.
3. God invites each of us to become involved in God’s work.

4. God speaks by the Spirit to each to reveal God’s purpose and path through a variety of ways:
  - a. through Scripture
  - b. through prayer
  - c. through life circumstances
  - d. through the family of God
  - e. and even sometimes through a burning bush event

5. God’s invitation to join in God’s work always leads us to a personal crisis of belief. Kimberley worrying about cannibals. Our own worries about “Be practical. Can I afford this?”

6. One must make major adjustments in life to join in God’s work. There is always change required.



7. Each comes to know God by experience on the path as we obey and follow. That is how God chooses to accomplish the plan.<sup>7</sup>

God chooses, why we will never know, to use simple, broken, often reluctant and resistant folks just like us, just like Moses to carry God's purposes out.

**E**veryone needs a burning bush – sometime. But be careful. We do indeed hope and pray for guidance, spiritual experiences, even material comforts and healing to enhance the meaning of our lives. When that guidance comes how do we respond? ~ whether God's sign be the burning bush or the still, small voice at the edge of perception, calling us, cajoling us, compelling us to respond to God's grace?



As we seek signs to discern what God has in store for us, let's covenant to listen when God speaks and respond when God calls.

No excuses.

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas D. Webster, "Living By The Word" *Christian Century* 8/23/2011, p. 20

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>6</sup> Henry T. Blackaby & Claude V. King *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Broadman and Holman, 2004) 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, p. 52

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 50