



2 The Burning Bush

Scripture

Exodus 2:11-4:17

Focus

God called Moses to lead the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt.

Faith Nurture Goals

- Wonder how Moses felt about God's call to lead the people out of Egypt.
- Tell how God promises to help Moses.
- Praise and celebrate our holy and loving God.



Leader Reflection

Preparing to Tell God's Story

The life of Moses was filled with dramatic twists and turns. After his rescue by Pharaoh's daughter, we next meet Moses as a young man with an identity problem: is he an Egyptian or a Hebrew?

When Moses sees an Egyptian mistreating a fellow Hebrew, he rashly intervenes and kills the Egyptian. Deep in Moses' heart he's a Hebrew. Yet his fellow Hebrews see him only as a haughty Egyptian noble. Torn and fearful, Moses flees for his life into the wilderness of Midian.

Out in the wilderness, cut off from his family and his people, Moses takes up the life of a simple shepherd. But God is not through with Moses. It all begins with an oddity that arouses his curiosity: a strangely burning bush. As Moses approaches the bush God stops him in his tracks: "Take off your sandals; the place where you are standing is holy ground."

Soon it's clear that Moses is face to face with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In everything that has occurred in Moses' life so far, God has been preparing him for a very special task. God has heard the cries of his enslaved people; and God has chosen Moses to be the agent of his rescue.

Moses, plagued with identity issues and living in obscurity, cannot accept God's call. Whether it's just an excuse or whether he feels genuinely inadequate, Moses cannot see himself in the role of God's spokesman.

During the long discussion between God and Moses, a deeply important biblical moment occurs. Moses asks God by what name he is to be announced to the Hebrews. God gives the enigmatic divine name "I am who I am." Or, "I will be who I will be." This is the name of God---the God who commits himself to be with his people. This name of God was considered so holy that the Jews never pronounced it; our Bibles translate it as "Lord ."

As Moses continues to express his doubts, God tries to convince him with miracles. Finally God gives him his brother Aaron as a spokesman. In the end, with no excuses left, Moses obeys and goes off to face the most powerful ruler of his day.

Again we see that God does not overrule or override human actions and attitudes. God did not need a proud and defiant Moses to stand before Pharaoh. Instead God chose a humble man who would trust in God's power. At the same time, Moses' background made him the perfect candidate. Raised in Pharaoh's own household, yet passionate about his people's oppression, Moses was prepared to stand in the breach.

It's easy to overlook that the Hebrews never fully accepted Moses as their liberator. He always seemed to have to take that uncomfortable ground between the holy, calling God and the obstinate, grumbling Hebrew people.

Steps

Step 1 Breathe

Use this time to focus your attention on God.

Do this with me: calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out. (*Demonstrate a few deep "in and out breaths" with eyes closed.*)

Step 2 Tell and Wonder

Materials: Head cloth with a rope or fabric headband to hold it in place • sandals (optional)

Files: [Story Symbols \(full unit\): Year 2 Unit 3](#)

Re★formed

This story gives us a glimpse into the holiness of our God. Imagine! God is so holy that Moses immediately stepped back, covered his face and removed his sandals— realizing that he was in the presence of the one, true God! Help your kids sense God's holiness!

Let's enter God's story together. Here's the story symbol for the part of God's story that we'll be spending time in today. I wonder what clues it gives us about the story we're about to hear? (*Show the story symbol. Accept any answers without giving away whether or not the kids have guessed correctly.*)

Listen closely as we read the story together to see which story our symbol represents.

Read "The Burning Bush" aloud, pausing throughout to allow children to answer the wondering questions.

NOTE: *It's always a good idea to read through the story beforehand so you'll be able to tell it well.*

You can also read the story from a children's Bible or a simplified translation of Scripture like the New International Reader's Version (NIRV). Remember to pause throughout to allow time to wonder.

Story: The Burning Bush Exodus 2:11-4:17

Show the kids the cloth you brought today. Explain that because Egypt is such a hot, dry, sunny country, some people find it helpful to wear a piece of cloth like this on their heads to protect themselves from the heat and sun. Drape the cloth on your head and place the tie around it. If you brought sandals, place them on your feet. Explain that because the sand is very hot people wore sandals, which kept their feet cool and protected the bottoms of their feet from being burned by the sand.

Open the Bible to Exodus 2:11. Show them the name of the book and chapter number. Read Exodus 2:11-14 to the group. Then set the Bible aside, leaving it open. Tell the group you'll play the part of Moses as you tell the story.

The story follows:

That's how today's part of God's great story—and my story too—begins. You may remember that even though I'm a Hebrew, the Egyptians think of me as a prince. That's because I grew up in the palace. But my real mom and dad are Hebrews. I lived with them when I was little, and I'll never forget all the things they told me about God. I'll never forget that I'm a Hebrew either.

I grew up in the palace because a princess found me in the river and adopted me as her son. I often walked about the kingdom, seeing what was going on. One day, after I saw an Egyptian being cruel to one of the Hebrew slaves, I became so filled with anger that I killed the Egyptian.

The next day, when two Hebrews were fighting, I asked one of them why he was striking another Hebrew person? He asked me if I was going to kill him too, like I did the Egyptian. That's when I knew I was in big trouble. People had seen what I did. Even though the princess had adopted me, I knew that my adopted grandfather, King Pharaoh, would never stand for me killing an Egyptian. So I ran far, far away into the desert. I hid in a place called Midian, where I stayed with a man named Jethro and his seven daughters.

While I was there, I got word that Pharaoh had died. I was relieved to hear that. But we got some other news too. We heard that the new Pharaoh was just as hard on the Hebrew slaves as the old one had been. My people were miserable!

I felt bad about what was happening in Egypt. But what could I do? I was just one man. Besides, my place was in Midian now. I had married one of Jethro's daughters and had a son. I spent my days taking care of Jethro's sheep out in the mountains. I was happy. I thought—I hoped—that I would stay there forever, hidden from Pharaoh.

Sometimes I did wonder if Pharaoh could find me. What do you think King Pharaoh might have done to try to find me? *(Pause for responses.)*

Perhaps he did try—but he didn't find me because God had a plan for me. And God let me know about that plan in a really surprising way! One day I was out in the mountains when I saw something in the distance. When I got a little closer, I could see a bush that was on fire. But as I walked closer still, I noticed something odd: although the bush was on fire, it wasn't burning up. How could that be? I decided to step in close and find out what this was all about.

Close your eyes and try to picture this bush. It's filled with fire but not burning. Describe what you see in your mind. *(Pause for responses.)*

When I was just a few feet from the bush, I stopped. I heard someone calling my name: "Moses!" I looked all around. All I saw were my sheep. I couldn't see anyone who would be calling me!

Then I heard it again. "Moses! Moses!"

The voice was coming right out of that bush! I thought for a moment. Then I knew. It was God's voice talking to me. Calling me! In a trembling voice I answered, "Here I am."

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

I was so frightened that I could hardly make my fingers work, but I took off my sandals, just as God had ordered. *(Take off your sandals.)* How could this be? Why would God be talking to me?

Then God continued. "I am the God of your family—the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob." Wow! That overwhelmed me, so I hid my face. *(Hide your face.)* But God had more to say. "I have a special job for you. I have seen how miserable my people are in Egypt. I have heard them crying, and I care about their suffering. So I'm sending you to talk to Pharaoh and to bring my people out of Egypt."

What? Go back to Egypt? How would you feel if you were me? *(Pause for responses.)*

I started shaking my head no, without even realizing what I was doing. *(Shake your head.)* I was sure God must have the wrong man. "Who am I," I said to God, "that you would choose me to take your people out of Egypt?"

God knew that I was afraid. I'm sure of it. "I will be with you," God said to me.

I was still unsure. "What will I say when your people ask who sent me? How will they know that you've really given me this important job?"

"I am who I am" God told me. "Just go and tell the people that I AM has sent you."

Again I shook my head. I was afraid of what God was asking me to do. "But God," I said, "what if no one listens to me? What if they don't believe that you really spoke to me?"

God told me to throw my stick on the ground, so I did. What happened amazed and startled me and I ran away. *(Move back quickly.)* My stick turned into a snake right before my eyes!

God told me to reach out and grab its tail. I did that v-e-r-y carefully. As soon as I touched it, the snake turned back into my stick.

Oh, my! How could this be happening to me? I wondered. God showed me some other signs too. God told me to put my hand in my cloak *(pretend to do so)*, and when I took it out it was covered with the terrible disease of leprosy. *(Look down at your hand in fright.)* But God told me to slip my hand back into my cloak. *(Do so.)* When I did that and pulled it out again, my hand was completely healthy! *(Look at your hand with relief and amazement.)* God also told me that if I took water from the Nile River and poured it on the ground, it would turn to blood!

Stop and think a minute. If you were me, would these signs be enough to convince you to go back to Egypt and face Pharaoh? *(Pause for responses.)*

All of that should have convinced me. But I was still so afraid of going to talk to Pharaoh that I shook my head again. “Oh, Lord, I’ve never been a very good speaker. Please send someone else,” I said.

Then God was angry with me. “I’ll be with you when you’re talking to Pharaoh,” God said. “And you can bring your brother, Aaron, along to help you if you’re too nervous to speak yourself.”

Then God was gone. The bush stopped burning. It was just as green and healthy as all the other bushes. It looked like it had never been on fire at all! For a few minutes I was shaking so hard that I could hardly move. I had been talking to God. Me—Moses! I had been in the presence of God! I could hardly believe it.

One thing I knew for sure—it was time for me to obey. So I put my sandals back on *(do so, or pretend to)*, picked up my stick, and hurried back to Jethro’s house to tell my amazing story.

God wanted me to go to Egypt. And that’s just what I was going to do!

Step 3 Pray

Close with the prayer of praise below. Tell the kids that they will say the prayer refrain after each sentence:
We praise you, O God!

Dear God, you are a holy God! We praise you, O God!
You have amazing power! We praise you, O God!
You watch over your people. We praise you, O God!
You care for your people. We praise you, O God!
You strengthen and help us. We praise you, O God!
You never leave us—never! We praise you, O God!
Amen.

See [5 Ways to Pray with Kids](#) for other ways to pray.

Step 4 Respond

Select and do one or more of the response activities from God’s Big Story card #25 or check out [5 Ways to Retell a Bible Story with Kids](#) for some fun ways to retell this story. Include older kids in the retelling by having them read the story aloud while the younger children act it out.

**God’s Big Story cards can be ordered from FaithAliveResources.org.*

Easy Extras

1. Burning Bush Collage

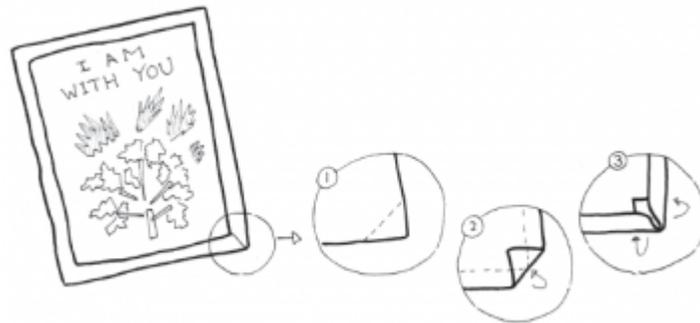
Materials: construction paper (for background), one per child • tissue paper and/or colored construction

paper in burning bush colors • glue • markers • scissors

Tell the kids you'd like them to imagine again what the fiery bush looked like—and then make a picture of what they imagine. Set out the craft materials and demonstrate how to cut or tear out leaf shapes and glue them to the background page. Invite the kids to add detail and/or color using markers in fire colors (red, orange, yellow, shades of blue). Have the kids write the words I AM WITH YOU on their page. (Have a large version of this phrase available for younger children to copy. Older children can also help younger children by writing it for them.) As kids work, ask them to share one amazing thing from the story. Share your own thoughts about God's holiness.

Tip

The collages will take on a finished look if you mount them on a larger sheet of construction paper and crease the corners to look like a picture frame.



2. Age-Specific Activities

Click below to access the full age-specific *Dwell* session for this story:

- [Kindergarten-1st Grade: Moses and the Burning Bush](#)
- [2nd-3rd Grade: The Burning Bush](#)