

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



Our Burning Bushes

KEY PASSAGE: Exodus 3:1-6 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Psalm 25:8 | Proverbs 3:5-6 | Matthew 24:35
Ephesians 2:10, 3:20 | 2 Timothy 3:16-17

► BACKGROUND

Our Father wants us to live godly lives and has provided His instructions for righteous behavior in the Bible (Ps. 25:8; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Those instructions are the same for everyone and will never change (Matt. 24:35). But He also has a specific plan for the lives of all His children, and He will help us find and follow it. Ephesians 2:10 says: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

God’s path for us might not always be easy, but it will be rewarding for us and will glorify Him.

► SUMMARY

Have you ever sensed you were hearing from God?

Throughout my life I’ve had some powerful encounters with the Lord that had far-reaching effects. I’ve never forgotten those moments. When I was a university student, I planned to enter the military after graduation. But God had called me to preach, so He spoke to me in a dramatic way to stop me from taking that route. And over the years, when He wanted me to change pastorates or take a certain action, He has made a way to get my attention and communicate His will for me. Such experiences will be different for everyone, but they’re not limited to a select few. God still speaks to His children. His main channel for directing us is through His Word, though He will also speak to us personally and specifically—especially if we’re willing to listen and obey.

► SERMON POINTS

In the Old Testament, one of the most well-known dramatic encounters with the Lord happened to Moses. After fleeing

from Egypt, Moses spent many years tending sheep for his father-in-law. One day while he was alone in the wilderness with his flock, God spoke to him unexpectedly from within a burning bush: “God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, ‘Moses, Moses!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then He said, ‘Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.’ He said also, ‘I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.” (Ex. 3:4-5)

God then commissioned Moses to be the leader of His people and bring them out of Egyptian slavery.

The main way God speaks to us today is through His Word. But He may also speak to us directly at times. There’s a certain type of encounter with the Lord that we could call a “burning bush experience,” and it’s not limited to the patriarchs or to pastors. A burning bush experience is possible for anyone, and it will probably have the following characteristics:

- **It will be unexpected.** Even if we’re praying to hear from God, He usually answers in a way that catches us by surprise.
- **It will be unique to us.** God’s personal messages are different for everyone.
- **It will challenge us to trust and obey Him.** We’re called to make a decision—to obey or not. And obedience often won’t be easy.
- **It will prompt an emotional response.** We might be moved in some powerful way, such as through tears, relief, or even fear.
- **It will have a powerful and lasting effect.** God often communicates this way about significant situations. If

we're listening, our obedience could have a dramatic impact on us and others.

A "burning bush" experience might be preceded by:

- **Circumstances not working out.** When things are going wrong around us, God may be asking us to stop and listen.
- **Crisis.** A critical situation is an important occasion to seek God's direction.
- **Discomfort.** God may cause us to feel deeply uneasy without apparent reason, in order to get our attention.

Proverbs 3:5-6 promises that God is willing direct us: Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. (NKJV)

How do we acknowledge God in all our ways (v. 6)? Before Moses saw the burning bush, he may not have been praying for a sign from God. But prayer is one thing that will keep us close to the Lord and ready to hear from Him. Under the new covenant, God speaks to us through our relationship with Jesus.

We carry His Spirit within us and have access to His guidance, if we're willing to listen.

- **Stay close to Him.** Our ability to hear and recognize God's directions will improve if we maintain a close relationship. And anything that damages this relationship, such as sin or prayerlessness, will hinder communication.
- **Ask.** God may wait to provide information until we turn to Him. This helps us recognize our dependence on Him.
- **Be patient.** We won't always receive an answer right away.
- **Practice surrender and trust.** God might instruct us to do something we don't want to do. But it's always in our best interest to obey.
- **Pay attention to your spirit.** An agitation in our hearts that isn't related to sin and won't go away may be God's way of telling us to seek Him.
- **Expect an answer.** When we pray repeatedly and seem

to get no response, we may be either not listening, or unwilling to accept the answer God has sent.

- **If you've made a mistake in following God's will, ask Him for help.** Taking a wrong turn can happen, but God will often provide us with a way to adjust our course.

Why should we seek God's will for the life-path decisions we make?

- **He's God.** His sovereignty means we should seek His plan above all others.
- **He's omnipotent.** We can't see every part of a situation, but God can. He knows the beginning and the end of every story.
- **He loves us.** Like a loving father, God always wants what's best for us.
- **It glorifies Him.** Seeking God's direction and obeying Him brings Him glory and honor.
- **It becomes a witness for others.** Our experiences with God show others that He is a personal God who cares about the concerns in our hearts.

It's incredible to think that the God who created the universe is willing to speak to us personally. Whatever you are going through, He loves you, He has a plan for your life, and He will show it to you, step by step. If you're willing to ask, listen, and obey, your heavenly Father will guide you daily on the unique path He has chosen for you. Start communicating with Him today and watch Him work in your life.

► RESPONSE

- Has God ever spoken to you through a "burning bush" experience? If so, what changed in your life as a result?
- Why do you think God involves Himself in our lives at a personal level? What do Ephesians 3:20 and Romans 11:36 tell you about His goals?

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