

Christianity: The Basics

Start with God

TALKING POINTS WALKING POINTS

"Talking Points, Walking Points" is a publication of the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church

2020.9.3&6



Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. ---*Psalm 145:11*
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. ---*Joshua 22:5*

Questions for Personal Reflection and Group Discussion

- Read Genesis 1:1. What does it suggest to you that the Bible simply **assumes** the existence of God?

Read Romans 1:18-23. What evidence has God given for his existence? What happened?

Yet, **many have** believed. Read John 1:9-14. **How** do we explain that? (See John 10:24-30.)

- Read Exodus 3:2-6. Was Moses "pre-scientific" and gullible? **Why** do you think that?

Pastor Doug said: ***"Consider this logic: Everything that began to exist, had a cause.***

Science affirms that the Universe began to exist. Therefore, the universe had a cause.

And God is the 'uncaused cause' behind the universe." **What** do you think of that---and **why**?

- Read Isaiah 6:1-8. Comparing the awesome splendor of God (v. 1-4) to the sinfulness of men (v. 5-7), God's request and Isaiah's offer (v. 8) appear, well, absurd, incongruous, and inadequate, don't they?

Why do you think God uses people to accomplish his tasks? Why not use angels (or just do it himself)?

Review the second to last paragraph of the Sermon Summary.

Why didn't God find some **better** people through whom to accomplish his tasks?

Describe the profile of the ideal human "messenger of God". Why did you include those traits?

Application-Challenge

God seeks and sends, and he is sending US to be his vessels through whom he seeks and saves the lost (2 Corinthians 4:6-7 & 5:20)! God intends that we become a "burning bush" through whom our friends and neighbors can see the fire of God burning---and that they too will "step aside and see"!

Sermon Summary (Exodus 3:1-14)

The Apostles' Creed, the oldest summary of biblical doctrine the church has, begins with "I believe in God." Although you could teach about God from any passage in the Bible, Moses' encounter with the Living God in a burning bush (Exodus 3:1-14) is one of the best. Most people in the world believe in the existence of a God, but they don't know him personally; prior to this event, neither did Moses. God could have appeared in any way he wished, but by deciding to appear as fire, he tells us two important things about himself.

[1] God is real and can be known. This is the place to start, because people—if they believe in God at all—want to construct their own beliefs about him. But God is who he is, not who we want him to be. God is who he is; we can't domesticate him and use him for our own purposes. Even when God chose to appear as fire, it was fire unlike any we've ever seen. Fire needs fuel; when there's no more combustible fuel, the fire goes out. But not **this** fire (v. 2-3)! God also shows his uniqueness through his name (v. 14). God said that his name is "I am who I am." God says that his name is "Being Itself"! The fire of that burning bush was self-existent. That fire, along with this name, is God's way of saying, "I have no beginning; I have no end. I depend on nothing; everything depends on me." I exist as the eternal "AM!" God is pure "being"; there was never a time in which God was not.

Consider this air-tight logic: Everything that began to exist had a cause. The Universe began to exist. (Science affirms this.) Therefore, the universe had a cause. And God is the "**uncaused**" cause" behind the universe. We are not the independent studs that we think we are! God is the source of our health, talents, abilities, and opportunities. If he hadn't given them to us, we wouldn't have anything. This truth is not only humbling, it's liberating—we're not the ones holding life together. We can relax! Worry results from thinking that everything depends on us. We have a real God who is the source of all being. But he is not simply a kind of force out there. He is a God who can be known—but we must encounter him (just as Moses encountered him in the fire). Blaise Pascal, the great French philosopher, wrote of his encounter with God one evening in 1654: "FIRE! God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob! Not the god of the philosophers and savants. Certitude, joy, peace." The God he'd known about up here in his head, he was experiencing. It means not just **believing in** God, but **encountering him**. Have you met God that way? Psalm 34:8 instructs us to "taste and see that the Lord is good." God doesn't just want us to know him intellectually; he wants us also to experience him in our hearts and with our emotions (see Ephesians 3:14-21).

[2] God is a God who seeks and sends. The fire metaphor continues—and we see that fire is both attractive and fatal, both life-giving and death-dealing (Exodus 3:4-6). God has created us to long for him, but our sin makes his very presence a threat to our independence and selfishness. Moses once asked God: "Show me your glory!" God replied: "I can't; it'll kill you" (Exodus 33:18-23). Isaiah had a vision of God and said, "Woe is me. I am undone. For I am a man of sinful lips. I feel like I'm dying" (Isaiah 6:1-5). On the one hand, God seeks us and wants relationship with us (v. 7), and yet at the same time, is dangerous (v. 5). Moses asked, "Why is the bush not consumed?", but the real question is, "Why isn't **Moses** consumed?" The answer has to do with "the Angel of the Lord" (v. 2). The rest of the passage identifies the speaker as Yahweh.

The Angel of the Lord, on the one hand, seems identical to the Lord and, at the same time, seems to be distinct from the Lord. Whenever other angels show up, they speak for the Lord, but when the Angel of the Lord speaks, it is the Lord himself speaking. This is a bit mysterious, but the Angel of the Lord continuously plays a problem-solving role for God in the Old Testament. The Angel of the Lord is revealed as a merciful accommodation of God, whereby God can be present among a sinful people without consuming them (see Exodus 33:1-5a). Alec Motyer puts it this way: "The Angel is not a diminution (reduction) of the divine presence, but an adjustment whereby the Holy God can, in all his holiness, come among and accompany sinners and bring them into an inheritance from which their sinfulness would have excluded them. The Angel is the whole divine nature in an outreaching of grace." The "Angel of the Lord" is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus himself, permitting Holy God to keep company with us sinners. Centuries later he would be born into this world, and be consumed on the cross as our substitute. There he received the punishment for sins that we all deserve. For all who believe in him, Jesus becomes our protector, through whom we can draw near to God. In John 8:58 Jesus said: "Before Abraham was ever born, I am." He claimed to be "the Great 'I Am'" of Exodus 3! Jesus is the second person of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is the God of Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob.

When God says, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," here's what he's saying: "I work with the most unpromising material. I took that coward Abraham, I took that dysfunctional father Isaac, I took that schemer con-man Jacob, and I made them into great people. I changed the world through them. I took meek Moses and made him into a leader. I took Paul, that great persecutor of the church, and turned him into the greatest Christian missionary the world has ever seen."

Just imagine what God can do in and through us (2 Corinthians 4:6-7)! God seeks and sends, and he is sending us to be his vessels through whom he seeks and saves the lost. It is God's intention that to our lost friends, we become their "burning bush", through whom the fire of God burns with the goal that they too will step aside and see!

Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time

**"Five Question Bible Study" (see page to left) is a simple way to study any passage or topic.
We can use it to grow in the knowledge of God...**

Monday---Read Acts 17:24-25. What does it mean that God is "independent"?

Tuesday---Read Psalm 90:2; Jude 25 and Revelation 1:8. When did God "begin"?

Wednesday---Read Jeremiah 23:23-24 and Psalm 139:7-10. Where is God located?

Thursday---Read Job 37:16 and 1 John 3:20. What does God know?

Friday---Read Romans 1:21. Who knows God exists? And yet...(read Psalm 14:1).

Saturday---In preparation for worshiping our risen Lord with your church family,
read Genesis 2:16-17 and 3:1-9.

Sermon Title:

Speaker:

Key Words:

Date:



The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

*that is, the true Christian church of all times and all places

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]