



A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

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 Reflection or Discussion

- 1 Pastor Doug explained to us that **“Everybody is on a faith journey, whether they realize it or not.”** What destination do you think people are hoping to reach?
- 2 Read together Exodus 3:1-14. How did God grab Moses' attention (see **I.** in **Sermon Summary**)?
- 3 Think back in your life to the time before you trusted Jesus as Savior. How did God interrupt your normal routine and turn your attention to Himself? What gave you a craving to know more about God?
- 4 How did God enlarge Moses' view of Himself (see **II.** in the **Sermon Summary**)?
- 5 Think about your ideas about God when you were a child. What did you later learn about God that surprised you, shocked you, humbled you, frightened you, enraptured you, or comforted you?
- 6 How did God warn Moses about His holiness (see **III.** in the **Sermon Summary**)?
- 7 Read Isaiah 6:1-5. You probably haven't had a vision like Isaiah's—but tell us about a time when you realized that your sin offends God's holiness and that He will not tolerate it.
- 8 Choose one of the following passages. How does it help you see God's holiness and perfection?
Exodus 20:1-17 Matthew 5:17-48 James 2:10 1 Corinthians 6:9-10
- 9 Who is the “Angel of the Lord”, and how did He help Moses (see **IV.** in the **Sermon Summary**)?
- 10 When and how did the “Angel of the Lord” eradicate **your** sin problem before a Holy God? When and how did you come to understand this and believe in Him as your Savior?
- 11 **Congratulations!** You've just reviewed the four components of **your** conversion experience!

Pastor Doug says that our “FaithStory”—our personal testimony—is one of our best tools to help us have spiritual conversations with others about Jesus Christ. Turn to this week's “**Digging Deeper**”. Take a few moments now to pair up and help one another get a start on crafting your own FaithStory.

- 1 Possible answers include: heaven, a happier life, wealth, health, marriage, achievement of my goals...
- 2 With a burning bush that was never consumed.
- 3 Typical answers include any form of crisis—a health scare, a relationship break-up, fear of hell, etc. You likely will need to “prime the pump”, so be prepared with your own answer to this question. (But wait for others to think and answer. Check your watch—20 seconds feels like an eternity!)
- 4 A burning bush that was never consumed represented a God who is self-perpetuating, self-existent, not dependent upon anything outside himself. Moses understood this when God said that his name is “I Am”.
- 5 Typical answers will probably fall into one of two categories: either God turned out to be greater/holier than originally imagined, or else he will turn out to be more loving/near to the broken-hearted. This will, of course, depend on whether one’s childhood impression of God was skewed toward his greatness (at the expense of his closeness) or toward his accessibility (to the detriment of his greatness). You likely will need to “prime the pump”, so be prepared with your own answer to this question.
- 6 Two ways: [1] “Take your shoes off; you’re on holy ground”, and [2] via the metaphor of fire.
- 7 You’ll definitely will need to “prime the pump”, so be prepared with your own answer to this question. Think about a time when you felt crushed by guilt for something you did—especially if you’d done the same thing before, yet with less feelings of guilt. The clearer we see God’s holiness, the clearer we see our own wretchedness. Your clarified view of your sin may have been tied to learning something from the Bible. That was Paul’s example—see Romans 7:7–12.
- 8 Look over these passages in advance so that you can choose one for the group.
- 9 The “angel of the Lord” is a temporary Old Testamental manifestation of the second person of the Trinity. He accompanied the children of Israel during their forty-year wanderings in the desert.
- 10 Since the “angel of the Lord” is none other than Jesus Christ, the answer to this question is that he died for your sins 2,000 years ago, and drew you to himself in faith. For the second part of this question (When and how did you come to understand this and believe in Him as your Savior?), be ready with the story of your own saving faith in Christ—but see if group members will volunteer their story first.
- 11 Look over the instructions in the “Digging Deeper” feature of this week’s *Talking Points, Walking Points* so that you’re ready to lead your group in thinking about their own “FaithStories”.

Sermon Summary (Key Text: Exodus 3:1-14)

We are engaged in a series of messages designed to help us learn how to share our faith in a way that is respectful and promotes peace rather than division. One of the best ways to talk about your faith is to share your own “FaithStory”—your personal testimony of **how** you came to meet God. Exodus 3 reveals **four components to Moses’ FaithStory**.

I. An Unsettling Observation When Moses saw a bush on fire—which never was consumed—he called it “a marvelous sight” and turned aside to take a closer look. Ordinarily, people don’t meet God unless something disruptive comes into their life. In Moses’s case, it was a perpetually burning bush. He couldn’t wrap his mind around it. He had to come and investigate. Any number of things can prove unsettling: a cancer diagnosis, the death of a loved one or of a marriage. God uses these experiences to get our attention. They are an occasion for us to turn aside from the godless path we were traveling. When you think about it, this actually is a kindness of God. Moses could have dismissed what he saw by trying to convince himself, “There’s probably some rational, natural explanation for it,” and just gone on his way. Had he done that, he never would have met God. If you are going to meet God, you too must turn aside.

II. An Expanding View of God God revealed himself to Moses through the image of fire—which points to one of the most amazing attributes of deity. That bush that refused to burn out; it had an unending supply of fuel. It had its own power of being within it—symbolizing the God who is self-sustaining. God has no end, and no beginning. He simply “is”. When someone tells me that they don’t believe in God, I ask: “Well tell me about this God that you **don’t** believe in.” Usually I don’t believe in **that** kind of God either! The god people disbelieve in is a small, simplistic figment of their imagination. He is not a god worthy of our worship or admiration. He is not rich, expansive, and multidimensional like the true God of the Bible. The God of the Bible is complex, both powerful and humble. He is loving and just. He is transcendent and immanent. He is glorious and self-effacing. He is sovereign, and yet we make free decisions. Gods of our own imagination are simple, rejectable.

III. A Personal Problem The true God is holy—and that’s dangerous for sinners like us. We want a loving, safe god, not a dangerous one. We want a permissive god, whose morality mirrors our own, who grants our wishes, and blesses our plans. We like God’s love, but his holiness is terrifying and dangerous to us because it exposes our sin and that makes us uncomfortable. When we draw near to the real God we know we don’t measure up. In the presence of his beauty we sense our ugliness, our darkness. With Isaiah we say: “Woe is me, for I am ruined!” Not only is our sin exposed, so is God’s active goodness. He doesn’t tolerate evil and sin in us. He is determined to do something about it, and that makes him dangerous. The God of the Bible is like fire, and because we don’t like that we tend to create a god according to our own liking. The one attribute we would never choose in a god is holiness, because God’s holiness is a big problem for us sinners! We realize that God is offended by, and will not tolerate, our sin.

IV. A Surprising Grace Moses must have thought: “I know why the bush wasn’t consumed—but why am I not consumed in the face of God’s holiness? How can a sinful man like me see God and live?” The answer is found in the text: God appeared in the burning bush as “the Angel of the Lord”—the way God draws near to us without destroying us. The Angel of the Lord is how God mercifully accommodates himself to us, without his holy presence consuming us. The Angel of the Lord can only be understood as a preincarnate appearance of Jesus Christ! How can we see the fire of God, which is both terrible and beautiful, and live? On the cross, we see just how holy God is—so holy that Jesus Christ had to die. But we also see how beautifully loving God is that he was willing to send Jesus to die as our substitute, making atonement for our sin. God solved our sin problem at his own expense. And when we trust Christ as Savior, we become “partakers of God’s nature”—miniature “burning bushes” of God’s glory and beauty (2 Peter 1:3)!

You can write an attractive, winsome story of your faith journey—your “FaithStory”—and learn how to share the story of your faith in a way which will see results. Preparing your FaithStory begins with telling the story of what your life was like before you received Christ. It is not necessary to go into extreme detail. Effective communication is usually brief, clear, and to-the-point. Your FaithStory will take no more than three to five minutes to tell.

How to Write Your FaithStory

Don't:

- Don't make statements which reflect negatively on any church, organization, or person.
- Don't mention denominations or church names—keep the focus on Jesus.
- Don't speak or write in a preachy manner. The purpose of a FaithStory is simply to tell your story.
- Don't use vague terms like “joyful”, “peace”, or “changed”, or religious terms like “saved”, “sin”, or “convicted” without explaining what they mean in everyday language or giving a real example from your life.

Do:

- Ask God for wisdom. Be realistic, don't exaggerate.
- Begin with an attention-getting sentence or incident.
- Be positive, accurate, and specific—details arouse interest.
- Use a Bible verse which directly relates to your experience, but don't give detailed verse references (such as “1 John 5:11-13 says...”). Instead simply say, “One of Jesus' followers said...”
- Write things as you would say them.
- End with a logical conclusion.

Now, grab pencil and paper:

- My attitudes, needs, and problems before I received Christ were...
- My life revolved around (I gained happiness and security from)... Give a simple example.
- How did this disappoint you? (How was it unfulfilling? How did you realize it?)
- When and how did you first hear about Christ?
- What were your struggles just before you received Christ?
- What happened when you received Christ and how/why did your attitudes begin to change?
- What happened after you received Christ?
- How did your life change? When and how did you begin to notice change?
- How are you differently motivated now?
- Is there one verse from the Bible which powerfully relates to or illustrates your story?

Final Checklist:

- Does it read like a story?
- Is it disjointed? Does it make sense?
- Can you read it aloud in three to five minutes?
- Have you exaggerated anything?
- Did you give God credit for the changes in your life?

What now?

- Give it to a friend, asking him to give honest feed-back. Show him the “Do”, “Don't” and “Final Checklist” sections(above) and together carefully evaluate it to make sure it follows those criteria.
- In order to learn your FaithStory, print it out with simple, clean font (such as Arial). Select 14 point and double spacing. In front of a mirror, read your FaithStory aloud until you know it well.
- Make a list of neighbors, co-workers, friends, and family members who might not know Christ personally. Begin praying for them, that God will prepare their hearts to hear your story. Ask God to do the same for others you do not yet know, whom he intends to bring across your path.
- Pray for yourself. Note what Paul asked prayer for in Ephesians 6:18-20 and Colossians 4:2-4.
- Be expectant. The fact that God has chosen people for salvation before he even created the world (Ephesians 1:4), that he always is at work (John 5:17; 6:44; 16:8), and that we are God's co-laborers (1 Corinthians 3:9; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:20; 2 Corinthians 6:1) gives us great confidence that he intends to use us to lead others to salvation.
- Initiate with others. Be friendly. Start simple conversations or respond to their overtures. Then, simply and sincerely bring God into the issues discussed. Ask if you can share the story of God's work in your life.
- Feel inadequate? Good—we are! But our God is more than adequate, and we are his co-laborers (2 Corinthians 3:4-6). Do you know less theology than the man in John 9? I doubt it! Will you do what he did?

Do you have a testimony of faith in Christ? If so, your kids need to hear it!

Take some time this week to work through the "Digging Deeper" feature of this week's Talking Points, Walking Points: "How to Write Your FaithStory".

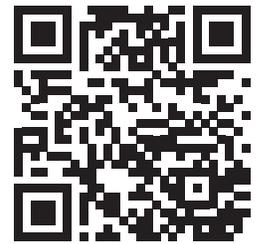
Jot down your answers to the questions and prompts. Then, at the dinner table say something like this: "Pastor Doug gave us parents a homework assignment. He asked us to learn to tell the story of our faith in Christ. I'd like to hear what you think of my story, and if it makes sense to you." Then, tell them your FaithStory.

How do your children respond to your story? What questions do they have?

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You want encouraging friendships.
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2



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'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,'
and it will happen."

—Jesus

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- Connect virtually or in-person
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Dan.Clement.TCC@gmail.com