

## Wandering in the Wilderness (March 2011)

"What is Mount Horeb?" is a question people often ask us. In scripture it is called "the mountain of God." Here we tell the story of Moses' first encounter with God at Mount Horeb as he was **wandering in the wilderness** - a wandering not unlike so many of our own.

Are there desolate places in your life? Does it seem as though God has forgotten about you? Are you struggling with the fact that your lack of success in relationships does not match the desires of your heart? Is there a hidden part of you that yearns for release and fulfillment? Then you and Moses have a lot in common!

In the Bible, in Exodus Chapter 3, we see Moses working as a shepherd. It says that he led his father-in-law's flock to the far side of the wilderness and "came to **Horeb, the mountain of God.**" He must have been tired and dirty because the wilderness was dry and dusty. He had to feel alone with only a flock of sheep to keep him company. There wasn't much food in that desolate place, so what was he doing there?

We can only guess. Perhaps he was getting away from the demands of family life and fatherhood. Remember, Moses grew up in a dysfunctional family where his grandfather, the Pharaoh, claimed to be GOD. Maybe he viewed the wilderness as his own personal place to escape the shame and guilt of being a murderer. His anger had caused him to lose his place of security. He seemed to have no sense of identity. Was he Egyptian or Hebrew, prince or sheep herder, royalty or ragamuffin? Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, had spoken to him years and years ago, but he had not heard from Him since. Now he was in this desolate place-physically and emotionally!

Perhaps there is a lesson to be learned from him, in this desolate place. He saw a bush that was burning but was not consumed by the fire. That was something different. Moses made a decision to go check it out. When he got near enough to feel the heat, God called out his name and Moses answered, "Here I am." Then God said, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Exodus 3:1-5

Moses was **ready**. The burning bush intrigued him and he purposely walked toward it. He expressed a **willingness** to listen when he answered, "Here I am." Later, he expressed **intentionality** by not running away when God identified himself, even though Moses was terrified.

As God spoke to him out of the burning bush, the questions about Moses' identity and his destiny were answered with exacting clarity. God planned to rescue the Israelites from Egypt and he planned for Moses to lead the people out. Moses

balked for a while, but God already had help coming in the form of Moses' brother, Aaron.

On a regular basis we see people in desolate places experience similar encounters with God....at Mount Horeb House. Our job is to walk alongside those who need encouragement and support.