

**Sacred**

**THUMBprint**

What is God doing to get your attention?



**MYSTERY**

**7 Day  
Devotional**

**Rick Carlson**

*God said, "Take off your sandals for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.*

*Exodus 3:5*

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# Introduction

There is an interesting science that has developed in recent years that studies ancient fingerprints left on pottery and other objects. Obviously, the scientist cannot tell us who the people are who left those prints but we can be assured by today's scientific methods that these people were as unique as you and me.

There are hand and foot prints in Egypt that date back 4,000 years. There is even a ridged print that could date as far back as 10,000 years.

The ancient Babylonians and Chinese used thumbprints like signatures in official documents and business transactions. Scientists don't know if they understood the uniqueness of each print or if they thought that the touch of the document had some kind of mystic spiritual connection.

Not until about 100 years ago did the science of fingerprinting come to the forefront. Now it is an accepted science used especially in law enforcement.

Take a look at your thumbs. The characteristics of fingerprints include nine patterns with names like "loops and whorls" that are consistent in all humans. The combination of these nine patterns gives each person their own unique set of fingerprints. Reading and pondering the THUMBPRINT Devotionals will certainly affirm the uniqueness of your own spiritual identity but more importantly we will drill deeper into the question, "What is God doing to get your attention?" by exploring how to respond to God's advances.

The truth is, lots of us go along through life just minding our own business when all of the sudden, something happens. It may be bad or good. Either way it is significant, and makes us aware of the circumstances or events that have gotten our attention. It's kind of like a wake-up call. Sometimes we are really shaken up and we want to blame some one or get even or quit.

The purpose of this devotional series is to:

- drill deeper to the awareness of God's presence
- enlighten you by what the Bible says about God's work in your life
- challenge you to authentically respond to God

Throughout the Bible God took action to get people’s attention in as many unique ways as there are thumbprints. God inspired people, warned them, confronted them, saved them, fought for them, fought against them, taught them and loved them. God had his reasons and purposes for taking action in people’s lives.

The six THUMBPRINT profiles are based on the acronym T.H.U.M.B. plus O. Here is how the individual profiles correspond to the letters in the acronym:

Profile	Letter	Description
Pilgrim	T	<b>Thirst:</b> Thirsty for God, longing for the truth
Philosopher	H	<b>Hunger:</b> Hungry for meaning and significance in life
Warrior	U	<b>Undercurrent:</b> Up against unseen forces in life, undercurrents that threaten to carry you away
Prophet	M	<b>Mystery:</b> Curiosity about the mysterious, the awesome works and actions of God
Saint	B	<b>Brokenness:</b> God gets our attention through illness, disappointments, devastation, pain and grief
Observer	O	<b>Observer:</b> Low or no awareness of God’s presence in the circumstances of life but you are watching and waiting

The “M” represents “mystery.” Mystery gets your attention. When you see something that doesn’t make sense, your curiosity draws you to investigate. When you observe undeniable greatness, wondrous beauty, magnificent grander, awesome power and anything takes your breath away, you awakened to the presence of God. It is also possible that a Prophet will dream prophetic dreams and experience visions from God. God will use whatever means necessary to get your attention and draw you to respond by exploring what he wants to show you and say to you.

When God has your attention, things that you thought were once important no longer have the same hold on you. When God gets your attention, your life will never be the same.

# Day 1: Mystery



It is very interesting the way our culture has pitted science up against God. As if they are enemies or something. True, there are many controversial issues on the table but think about it. From the very beginning, people who look to scripture as authoritative acknowledge that God created humans with an almost unquenchable curiosity. If there is a mystery, we will pursue it. Not only are we curious by nature, God created us with a free will to come to wrong conclusions.

It is well documented that science has made plenty of wrong conclusions throughout the centuries. It wasn't too many years ago that humanity was convinced that the world was flat and polio was incurable. People who look to science as the sole authority for answers to the mysteries of the universe may not like to hear me say this, but God is not in competition with science. Scientists are simply exercising a gift of God, the gift of curiosity about the world around them.

God uses the gift of curiosity to get our attention. We can't help it. When something is out of place, or doesn't make sense or leaves us with a question, we will look for an answer. We love to solve mysteries.

It is good to ask questions, good to explore the unknown, good to make hypotheses and formulate theories. However, let us never let our love of curiosity replace God. May it always awaken us to his presence, power and sovereignty over all things.

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

*Issac Watts (from "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross")*

## **PRAYER**

Lord, let my curiosity always point me to you. Let my discoveries always reveal the wonders of your nature, your power and your grace on my life. Let your wonder and awe capture my imagination today. Amen.

# Day 2: Mystery



As a child, Sheva began having dreams, vivid dreams that did not make any sense to her. Sheva was born in Iran and was devoted to her Muslim faith as was her family and the vast majority of the Iranian people.

After waking up, she went to her mom and asked, “Mother, who is Jesus? I saw someone named Jesus in my dream and he was very kind but I don’t know who he is.” Sheva’s mom did not really know how to answer other than to tell the young girl that Jesus is one of the prophets that is written about in the Koran.

This seemed to satisfy Sheva for a while but the dreams kept happening. They were not the same dream but the same Jesus kept showing up. Sheva continued to ask people what they knew about Jesus but nobody she knew was very helpful.

In her early twenties, Sheva married a man named Sam who was a very successful businessman. He owned a jewelry store and was part owner in his family’s cardboard manufacturing plant. Sheva and Sam were very happy with their life in Iran except for the fact that Sheva was curious.

One day she told Sam about the dreams that she had experienced throughout most of her life and that she wanted to go and visit America to find out about Jesus. Sam is a good man and he loves Sheva very much. He made arrangements for a visitor visa and planned a trip to California to meet the only person in America they knew. They told a few close friends and family about their plans and with just a couple of suit cases and as much cash as they could take without arousing security interest, they took off on their trip. At long last Sheva was going to find Jesus.

A few weeks after arriving in America, Sheva got a call from her mother who said that Iranian government officials had brought a letter to the house stating that if Sam and Sheva were to return to Iran that they would immediately be put under arrest and sent to prison for breaking religious law. One of Sheva’s friends had reported her trip to the police. This was devastating. Sheva’s family was now under constant watch and could no longer communicate directly with her. Things in California did not go well for them either and so they decided to go to Minnesota where a friend of a friend lived.

Long story short, while living with the friend of a friend, Sam and Sheva met a classmate of mine from seminary, a 67-year-old African American woman with a passion for Jesus and a heart of gold. My friend was not a member of our church but she had visited and thought that it would be a good place to connect her new Iranian friends.

Over the course of the next 2 years Sam and Sheva came to faith in Christ. They had a little girl and started their lives over as American immigrants with political asylum. The mystery of Sheva's dreams was solved. Her curiosity and determination to find an answer led them to a living relationship with Jesus.

God gets people's attention through mystery. Whether it is the awe inspiring, mind blowing exploration of the universe in all its complexities, the intricate design and miraculous workings of living organisms or the simple dreams of a young Muslim girl in Iran, God uses our natural curiosity to get our attention.

You may not be a scientist or detective but if this morning you are faced with a feeling or a thought that makes you curious about spiritual things, then you need to pursue it and find out what is going on. God may be using the mysterious to get your attention.

### **PRAYER**

Jesus, whatever you want to show me, open my eyes. Whatever you want to tell me, unplug my ears. Whatever you want to teach me, stimulate my mind. Whatever you want to do to draw me into your will and purpose, lead the way. I will follow. Amen.

## **Day 3: Mystery**



Before chapter 3 of Exodus we are introduced to Moses. He is far more than just a lucky Hebrew kid. You get a sense that God had something very important for him to do. After an amazing series of events that not only saved his life as an infant, he was adopted as a grandson of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Moses was afforded every perk and privilege of a prince.



He got the best education, beautiful clothes and the best food. The ancient historian Josephus said that Moses was not only a revered prince he was also a handsome man, so handsome that both Hebrews and Egyptians turned their heads to look when he passed by. He became a brilliant general who delivered Egypt from the Ethiopians. His experience as a deliverer was sure to come in handy. Humanly speaking, he had all the influence and resources at his disposal to accomplish great things for God.

But one day in anger Moses killed an Egyptian who was mistreating one of his Hebrew brothers. Within a matter of hours the story spread all around the country and reached the ears of Pharaoh. Moses' life was now in danger and so he ran and left it all behind - the palace, the prominence and the promise of being able to deliver his people.

Talk about a midlife crisis going south. Now at 40 years old, Moses went from the very top of his game to rock bottom. For anybody who has ever been rejected – anyone who has ever been overlooked for a promotion, an honor, a reward or has failed in any kind of venture, you can relate to Moses.

Was God punishing him by allowing this to happen? After all his motives were good. He acted decisively and with great energy. He was the only Hebrew in over 400 years since Joseph to be in such a unique place to deliver his people from slavery. But now he had nothing.

Why is it that we so often think that God will only use us if we are successful, have plenty of money and can be a great public speaker. Hogwash!

God picks humiliated losers like you and me and Moses to reveal himself, to do his will and to make a difference in the world.

## **PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, it is not that can do great things for you but that can do great things in me in spite of my short-sightedness, weaknesses and failings. Therefore, I make myself completely available to you because there are plenty of deficits in me for you to turn around for your glory. Use me today, God, to make a difference. Amen.

# Day 4: Mystery



There are 3 curiosities that we will explore this morning. In a matter of a few short paragraphs in Exodus 3 we see Moses pivot from being...

*powerless to powerful,  
purposeless to purposeful, and  
from being a loser to being a great leader.*

There are three curiosities imbedded in this story that God used to get Moses' attention. We will explore each of the curiosities over the next three days

## **The First Curiosity: The curiosity of the flame within “any old bush”**

*Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. “There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight – why the bush does not burn up.” Exodus 3:1-3*

Ian Thomas' book "The Saving Life of Christ" says, "Any old bush will do as long as God is in it." Robert Roe in his studies of the Life of Moses explained:

*The bush was probably an old stunted, bowed acacia tree, full of thorns, ugly as sin, the kind that grows wild up there where Moses was in exile. It was not some gorgeous cypress tree reaching straight into the sky. No! God appeared to Moses in a lousy old thorn bush, any old bush. That is all He needs. So He took a crummy old thorn bush and used that to be His manifestation.*

The “any old bush” appeared to be on fire but was not burned up. Curious. As a shepherd, Moses had probably seen bushes burn many times before like after a lightning strike or in a campfire. But this one caught his attention. He was drawn to the curiosity like a bug to a flame.

You may be involved in the sciences and know that curiosity is an essential spark that leads to discovery. So how does God use curiosity to draw us to himself?

*It is a curious thing to meet someone who is at peace in the middle of a life-crisis.*

*It is a curious thing to watch someone choose the moral high ground, keep their word, or act in a self-less and generous way when the natural reaction would be very different. It's almost like watching a burning bush that is not consumed. You ask yourself, what makes that person different? What do they have that I haven't got?*

*It is a curious thing to see the miraculous in the middle of the mundane or victory when there should be defeat.*

For Moses, it was just “any old bush” but what made it extraordinary was that God was in it and so Moses went in for a closer look.

***The first curiosity is to be alert to the flame within “any old bush.”***

#### **PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, make me aware today of the extraordinary in “any ol’ bush” that I might see. Make me alert to your word and presence in the mundane, your call and promises whenever you get my attention. Amen.

# Day 5: Mystery



There are three curiosities imbedded in this story that God used to get Moses attention. Yesterday we explored the first,

**The curiosity of the flame within “any old bush.”**

**The second curiosity is the voice spoken to “any old shepherd.”**

*When the Lord saw that Moses had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses! And Moses said, “Here I am.”*

*“Do not come any closer,” God said. Exodus 3:4*

Did you notice that not until Moses acted on his curiosity did God speak and reveal his presence.

I find it very interesting that God told Moses to stop and not come any closer. Besides the fact that Moses had no idea what he was walking into, God prevented him from experiencing more of God’s glory than he could handle.

We know that this was not the last time Moses would be with God on this mountain. Mount Horeb is also known as Mount Sinai. This was where Moses received the 10 commandments, not once but twice. This was where God walked in front of Moses and revealed his glory.

The truth is, God uses broken, fallible, imperfect people to do his work. “Any old shepherd” will do.

God doesn't need a person powerful in words and deeds and educated in all the wisdom of Egypt to set people free from captivity. He just needs “any old shepherd” who is just going about doing his job and is willing to stop and check out a curious, “any old bush” that is not burning up.

## **PRAYER**

Lord, take my ordinary life with all of my mediocrities and insufficiencies. Use me in extraordinary ways not to elevate my reputation but to glorify you. Help me to enter this day with the confidence and joy of your presence. Amen.

# Day 6: Mystery



There are three curiosities imbedded in this story that God used to get Moses attention. We already explored the first and second curiosities:

**The curiosity of the flame within “any old bush.”**

**The second curiosity is the voice spoken to “any old shepherd.”**

**Today, the third curiosity is the shoes on “any old pasture.”**

*God said, “Take off your sandals for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. Exodus 3:5*

Interesting thing. Not only was the burning bush holy, so was the ground around it. God chose to manifest himself on “any old pasture” and so declared it holy. Not only was the bush holy but also the ground around it, and it became the holy temple of God.

Much later in Israel’s history, the priests who served in the temple had to remove their shoes when they entered. There was to be no insulation or protection between the soles of their feet and the holy ground that they walked on.

Whenever we are in God’s presence, pray that nothing would insulate or protect the “sole of your heart” from the holiness of God.

*It is good to feel the sharpness of God’s word poking into your soul. It’s as if you were standing on jagged gravel.*

*It’s good to feel the warmth of God’s presence against the most sensitive areas of your life. It’s like standing on a warm sandy beach.*

Remove anything and everything in your life that might make you think that you can walk God’s path in your own strength, resources or talent.

I am indebted to Rev. Jack Hayford who, at Promise Keepers a number of years ago, brought this insight:

*The shoes you wear have been many places. Just think for a moment about the places where your shoes have walked. My guess is that some of those places are far from holy and are downright disgusting. That's why we wear shoes after all. Our feet are insulated from the stuff of the world that might not only hurt us but could even kill us.*

*The fact is, everywhere your shoes go, you either pick up contaminates in the treads or they are ground into the leather. As Moses found out, the bottom of your shoes have no business being in contact with Holy Ground.*

## **PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, wherever I am in your presence I am standing on Holy Ground. I choose now to not track in the contaminates of my life into your holy space. Thank you for making ordinary places to be sacred and sacred places to be accessible to ordinary people. Amen.

# **Day 7: Mystery**



Moses was no longer a resident of the Egyptian palace. Now he was just “any old shepherd” in “any old pasture” observing just “any old bush.” Recognizing that he was in the presence of someone extraordinary, he took off his shoes, leaving nothing between him and holy ground.

I have found that the custom of removing your shoes when you enter a home is inconsistent at best. There are certain cultures and parts of the country where the removal of shoes is essential and always expected. Some households change their expectations according to the season or the current weather conditions outside. And still other households never expect their guests to remove their shoes. The difference, in expectations can be seen on the floors and carpets. Taking off your shoes prevents the contaminants of the outside world to be tracked into the house.

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If God has gotten your attention, recognize that his expectations are that everyone in his presence cannot track in the contaminates of the world. Holiness requires purity. When in the presence of God we have to acknowledge that not only is there stuff on our shoes but there is stuff on our hands, in our hearts and on our minds.

Consider removing your shoes when you pray today. Acknowledge that you are standing on holy ground. Let the simple act of removing your shoes remind you in a tactile way whose presence you are in and the respect and purity he requires.

In the quietness of your heart, confess the contamination of your soul. Then, remember that Jesus has offered to make you clean and remove all your sin so that you can stand absolutely clean before God.

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9*

## **PRAYER**

Holy God who makes his presence known through any old bush, I stand here on holy ground. I am not ready for any quest until I have been in a holy place with you. I confess that there is stuff on the soles of my shoes that I brought into this place but that through Jesus’ death and resurrection, my soul is made clean.

I am listening for your voice as I feel the heat of your presence. Speak to me, Lord. Reveal yourself to me, and tell me what you want me to do and I will do it.

You’ve got my attention, Lord. I am listening, Amen.