

Whether we are aware of it or not, each and every day we are bombarded with countless messages and information from a variety of media sources such as: television, the radio, the internet, emails, Facebook posts, billboards, just to name a few. In fact, with the myriad of news and data continually being thrown at us, in order for a certain message to grab our attention, for us to take notice of it, often times it needs to be something miraculous, shocking, or at the very least it needs to be interesting enough to touch us emotionally. And it's not just people in advertising, or marketing that have their work cut out for them. These days it would seem that every report that is written, every presentation that is delivered, every announcement given, or every sermon that is preached is competing for people's attention!

As the information overload, prevalent in our lives, becomes more and more competitive, communication, and or getting the word out, has become more and more sophisticated and challenging. And yet the basic principles behind providing people with vital or needed information; is that we must attract their attention and persuade them to take action! Such as: buying a certain product, attending a certain event or function, contributing financially to a certain cause, or in the case of Moses in our Old Testament lesson this evening, accepting a call to save a people from their slavery in Egypt!

Nowadays if we want to get people's attention, if we want to touch their lives with the grace filled message of the Gospel, instead of a lighting a bush on fire, or trying to create some kind of special effects scene with lights, smoke, mirrors and an amplified scary voice like we are in the movie the Wizard of Oz, perhaps we can borrow a tool and an acronym used in the Advertising industry. It's called AIDA marketing and it stands for Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action. Today as we explore our story from Exodus, if we examine the biblical events that took place through these four different lenses, we might just uncover a method, or an idea, that can help us lead others into a life altering relationship with God.

Just as the Lord was able to use Moses to deliver the nation of Israel from their bondage to the Egyptians, he can use us to free the people of this world from their

captivity to sin, doubt, uncertainty, and even death. By the grace of God we have been given a powerful message to share that involves leading others to a belief, and an understanding, that Jesus died for them on a cross, that he was raised from the dead so that all believers may share in His Resurrection. But, before we learn how to use AIDA marketing to spread the Good news of the Gospel, as Disciples of Christ, perhaps it might benefit us to observe God using it in a defining moment of Moses's life when he received a calling from God that he couldn't ignore.

Back then, without modern technology offering up overwhelming bits of information that could possibly go in one ear and out the other, one can assume that in the middle of the wilderness a bush that kept burning, and burning, like it was powered by an energizer battery, would probably have been quite the attention grabber! While Moses is leading a flock of sheep belonging to his father-in-law to find food and water, he sees a flaming shrub, and the sight of it is so puzzling to him that he decides he must stop and try to figure out the mystery behind the supernatural occurrence taking place right before his eyes. And when God observes that his plan for capturing the attention of the Shepherd has succeeded, he continues to keep his attention by calling out his name! Notice that God surprises Moses, rather than trying to scare him, and the Lord's actions result in him drawing Moses closer to him.

Imagine what it must have been like for the former Prince of Egypt to hear his name emanating from a fiery bush! He was out in the dessert with only a flock of sheep for company, and not only does he encounter a miraculous sign, that he can see with his eyes; he also hears a powerful voice with his ears, and whoever or whatever was talking to him appeared to know who he was. God had caught Moses hook, line, and sinker and now that he had his attention, he needed to sustain that attention by using the next step in Aida marketing; by sparking an interest in the Shepherd so that he would be intrigued enough to listen to the message concerning the Lord's rescues operation for his people.

Going backwards just a bit in the story for a moment, do any of you remember why Moses left Egypt? His royal life in Pharaoh's household had most likely been pretty posh

and comfortable with servants waiting on him hand and foot, and yet he had run away from all of that because of certain incident that happened involving a Hebrew slave and a taskmaster. Moses had witnessed an overseer beating an Israelite, one of his own people, and so he took revenge on the man by killing him. Later when he offered to step in to help mediate an argument between two Hebrew slaves, Moses discovered that they were aware of the murder that had taken place and so he fled for his life!

Both of those incidents demonstrate that Moses cared for his people, that they held a place in his heart, he had an interest in them! So after the Lord reveals to him that he is the God of Abraham, and the God of Jacob, in other words the God of the Israelites, he does what many of us might do if we want to keep someone's interest and attention. The Lord reveals to Moses that he too has witnessed the atrocities and the outrageous injustice that the Hebrews were experiencing during their time of slavery. Just as Moses had sought to help the Israelites when he was back in Egypt, God informs the Shepherd that the two of them share something in common, they share a similar interest.

God declares to Moses that he has heard the cries of his people, that he is aware of their suffering, and he has come down to deliver them through divine intervention. While I was studying this text this week I began to wonder if perhaps this is a foreshadowing of what God will do through Jesus. God will come down, he will enter into the world, he will take on our flesh, he will suffer, and die in order to deliver us from our slavery to sin, in order to free us from death!

Once the Lord has gotten Moses' attention, once he has kept him interested in what he has to say, we witness the Lord using the third Aida step. He stirs up a desire within the Shepherd to do what he wants him to do. In learning that God was going to do something about the horrible things being done to the Israelites, Moses' faith and his understanding of God changes and is transformed. Rather than seeing God as being distant, up in the heavens having little or no interaction with his creation, the former Prince of Egypt experiences God in his midst, and he hears and he sees that God has love and a deep concern for his people. In listening to God's strategy for saving the Hebrew people, all of a

sudden like the burning bush in front of him, Moses' heart is set on fire with a desire to take action, which brings us to the final and most important step in the Aida process.

Now before taking action, Moses asks a question that many of us can relate to. When God informs the Shepherd that he plans on using him to free his people, the first words out of his mouth are, "Who am I that I should go?" Often times when we are asked to do things that scare us, things that we don't feel qualified to do, things that might lead us out of our comfort zones, we too are tempted to offer up similar excuses.

When I first received my call from God to become a Pastor, I remember that my initial reaction was quite comparable to the verbal response that is offered by Moses. I reflected on some of the mistakes that I had made in my past, I knew that I was far from perfect, and I kind of wondered if God was serious. In fact, it took some nudging, some prodding, and a little bit of encouragement from God speaking to me through other people in my life, for me to eventually take action. Like Moses in our story this evening I learned that when God calls us to take action, when he wants us to do something, he also promises to be there with us!

Moses led sheep to Mt. Horeb, and eventually he would lead the people of Israel back to that same place where he experienced God in a life defining AIDA moment. God would deliver his people, and would save them, through a man who had formally been a runaway fugitive seeking to save himself. The Lord grabbed the attention of Moses with a burning bush, he was able to appeal to his interests, and he created a desire within him to take action. Which begs the question, in what ways has God been able to capture your attention?

Often times God will use people, rather than flaming shrubbery, to pull us toward himself. Perhaps today, as we continue our Journey during Lent, you may actually be able to think of specific people, who have been a beacon of God's light in your lives, who have encouraged you in the faith. Maybe they have been a kind sign for you, and have helped you encounter God as Moses did. Perhaps they have even helped transform your

understanding of the Lord, and your eyes and heart were opened to a new way of seeing the kind of love and concern our Creator has for all of us.

Each time we worship together we light candles on the altar to honor God and to remind us of the light of Christ that leads and guides us in this world. Maybe as we focus our attention on those flickering flames we will be reminded of the burning bush, and perhaps we will seek to take action as Moses did. Like Moses, let us allow the light, and the flame of God's Spirit, to blaze within us, so that others may be changed and transformed by the grace that is available to them; so that they too may be delivered from sin and death. As disciples of Christ we are called to grab people's attention, and their interest through our faith, so that they too will desire to take action. And, let us always seek to remember the words said by the pastor at our baptism. 'Let your light shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify God.'