

BROADWAY CHRISTIAN CHURCH • COLUMBIA, MISSOURI
THE WORSHIP OF GOD • FEBRUARY 9, 2020 • EPIPHANY
GUIDING LIGHT SERIES

The Litany
Based on Psalm 119

Teach us, O Lord, the way of your laws,
and we will observe it to the end.

Give us understanding, that we may keep your law
and observe it to the end.

Lead us in the path of your commandments,
for we delight in it.

Turn our hearts to your decrees,
and not to selfish gain.

Turn our eyes from looking at vanities;
give us life in your ways.

See, we have longed for your teachings;
in your righteousness give us life.

The Scripture
Exodus 33:7-16

Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp; he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise and stand, each of them, at the entrance of their tents and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses. When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise and bow down, all of them, at the entrance of their tent. Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then he would return to the camp; but his young assistant, Joshua son of Nun, would not leave the tent.

Moses said to the LORD, "See, you have said to me, 'Bring up this people'; but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.' Now if I have found favor in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people." He said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." And he said to him, "If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and

your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth.”

The Message
Guiding Light: Service
Mark Briley

Synopsis: *“Lord move, or move me,”* goes the lyric sung by the group, *Far from Home*. We’ve all likely done our best to move God like a chess piece in the game of our lives; longing to control every aspect of our future. To our dismay, we wonder if God’s not ready to move or if God is moving in some different way altogether. As we wrap up our Guiding Light series, finding our way into 2020, we draw from the experience of Moses who is standing on the brink of the unknown wondering, *“Will you go with us, God?”* Maybe God has already moved. Maybe God is waiting to move us.

Theme Verse: *“For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight unless you go with us?”*



Do you ever wake up in the morning thinking: *“I don’t think I can possibly get out of bed today.”* For some, I know this is a daily, physical challenge that can be frustrating, limiting, and downright painful. Other times, this thought comes from a place of utter exhaustion. You’re coming off an incredibly full and trying day and you awake to discover the bed has now become a part of your body and it has just sucked you into its pillowy goodness. You can’t imagine moving from that spot... maybe not for the rest of your life; you certainly can’t imagine rising to some level of productivity any time



soon. Well, you might feel like this: *“I can’t adult today. Please don’t make me adult today.”*

Or maybe you’ve had that experience of needing to lay totally still so as not to upset the toddler that is sleeping in a Pack ‘n’ Play in the room you’re staying in while visiting family. I don’t mean to be so specific – I just imagine such an occurrence might happen. You know the toddler is already awake and is peering over the edge of the toddler kennel just poised to erupt at the slightest movement from the adult bed nearby. Total stillness. *Don’t move*. If you need to use

the restroom yourself, well, you decide how important the precious moments of silence are to you. Sometimes it's hard to even imagine making the move to get out of bed. But that's only the start of day, right?

We wonder about moving through the rest of our lives, too. We have our routines and daily motions that take us from here to there. We're influenced by what we study, what we watch, who we engage, our family systems, our colleagues, even strangers. You may say, "*I'm my own person. Nobody moves me. I move when and how I want to move.*"

Perhaps. But the power of influence may move us more than we know. Attending a leadership conference, a couple of years ago, I had the pleasure of learning from Juliet Funt among others. Powerful experience. Always fires me up to imagine new ways to lead and create and cast vision. Always *moves* me... to stay on message. Juliet Funt is the CEO of *WhiteSpace at Work*¹ which is an organization that focuses on getting the most out of your time at work. Her name will sound familiar to some of you as her father, Allen Funt, was the creator of *Candid Camera* – which was sort of the original hidden-camera reality show that launched in the 1940s. If you're not old enough to remember the show, think Ashton Kutcher's "*Punk'd*" on MTV. If you're not old enough to remember *Punk'd* on MTV, then choose your favorite *YouTuber* who pranks people. Everybody got the picture? You say, "*Nobody can move me?*" Check this out. [Editor's note: Take a moment to follow this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgRoiTWkBHU>]

This gives new meaning to Paul's word to the Christians at Rome, "*Do not be confirmed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your minds.*"

We are in our final week of our Guiding Light series wondering how God moves. Can God be moved? How does God move *us*? I remember as a kid, one of my classmates thinking he could stunt our Sunday School teacher. He asked her the classic question, "*Could God make a rock so big that God couldn't move it?*" I don't remember her answer. But we wonder about these things, yes? We get concerned about our place in the world. Are we in the right spot?

As a student minister, an executive of one of the largest companies in Indianapolis, where we lived and served, came to my office with this great concern about a job opportunity that would move her out of state. Should she stay or should she go? I was all of 23-years-old, wide-eyed, and thinking, "*Don't screw this one up, Briley.*" Seemed like a big deal with a lot at stake. She told me more. I listened harder... to her... but also for God to bail me out of this one. She finally asked, "*How do I know where God wants me to be?*"

¹ <http://www.whitespaceatwork.com/>. Funt showed the two *Candid Camera* clips used in our service as part of the conference.

I scanned my office walls for an inspirational quote on a poster or something to no avail. I ultimately offered something to the effect of *“God calls us first and foremost to be a certain kind of person. It’s not always about location. We get ourselves right, centered, focused; and God can use us wherever we are.”*

Moses never made it to his promised place, after all. Did that devalue all he did with his life? I don’t think so. I wish I would’ve had the words of Mother Teresa in that moment. Someone once asked her to pray that they would have clarity about a particular situation. Her response was humbling if not a tad shocking: *“I will not do that,”* she said. *“Clarity is the last thing you are clinging to and must let go of. I have never had clarity,”* she said. *“What I have always had is trust. So, I will pray that you trust God.”* I wonder about this movement of God and realize I often want control of God’s movement... or at least, in choosing my own movement, I want God’s blessing.

Moses didn’t make it to the Promised Land himself, but he was constantly moving toward it. We hang with him this morning and a brief snippet of the fascinating narrative of the book of Exodus. When you look at the context of Exodus, you find that the human race is in trouble and, I suppose, we arguably always are. You consider the state of the world today, our division, and our wondering about the future; we’re all trying to figure out how to clean up the growing messes of the world. Exodus tells of this powerful and dramatic movement of God among Moses and the Israelites. Salvation isn’t described in an abstract truth but rather in this narrative. And narratives, like any good story, are invitations for us to participate – first through our imagination and then, if we will, by faith – moving in our own lives in full response to God.²

Our passage from the 33rd Chapter is part of the gripping narrative of a severely brutalized people who are saved from slavery and moved into a life of freedom, which brings about its own challenges. How do they – how do we – move in this life of freedom... this salvation?

Moses is leading the Israelites in the wilderness – trying to find their way to the Promised Land. Things haven’t been, shall we say, spectacular. Moses goes to this leadership conference with God on the mountain and comes back to find the people are out of control, partying and carrying on; and his brother, Aaron, who was left in charge, didn’t get the house cleaned up before big brother got home. The people had literally created a Golden Calf to be their god and it was just a mess which led to a period of destruction and death and misery.

Moses ultimately goes back to meet with God and his TPS report is not so good. In fact, Moses says, *“God, it’s terrible. These people have sinned, made gods of gold for*

² Exegetical background and contextual set-up as found in Eugene Peterson’s introduction to the book of Exodus in *The Message*. NAVPRESS. Colorado Springs. 2002.

themselves. If you won't forgive their sin, fine, but then just erase my name out of the book you've written."

But what does God say. *"Nope. Get on with it, Moses. Keep moving forward."* God adds, *"But... I may not go with you and these hard-headed people. I need a break."*

Have you ever been so fed up with someone or some group that you've just said, *"I am so done."* This is the narrative we have going here in this conversation between God and Moses. And so comes the reset. When you're coming off a rough patch... a mistake or series of mistakes... or you've lost your spirit ... which wandered away a bit at a time because you quit feeding your soul... you reset. Your next move is not location... it's getting your heart re-focused.

And so, Moses pitches this tent outside of camp to get refocused. He calls it the *"Tent of Meeting,"* which sounds very formal. But it created this ritual of Moses going out to the tent to interact with God. *"And God spoke with Moses face-to-face,"* the text says, *"as neighbors speak to one another."* They spoke like neighbors. I love that. *"What are we going to do about these moles, God? They're killing our yard."* *"I don't know Moses. How are we going to get Mabel across the street to put her garbage can in at night?"* You know – neighbor talk. When Moses would go to the Tent, the people would stand at attention at their own tents. Watch. Wait. The whole time. They didn't surf the web or plug in their ear buds and tune out the world. They stood. And waited. That was respect. How do you spell respect? *R-E-S-P-E-C-T!* (Rest in peace, Aretha). This was a shift, right? The people had recently grown impatient with the movement of God. I mean they feel like they are wandering aimlessly, getting nowhere, so they took matters into their own hands. They melted their gold and created a calf that they called, *"Holy Cow!"* But, as we often discover, the material possessions, our financial wealth, is not soul-sustaining. And so the people stand reverently, waiting, ready to move but not without God's leading.

I love the exchange Moses then has with God in this Tent of Meeting. The Message version of the Bible lays it out like this: *"Moses says to God, 'Look, you tell me, 'Lead this people,' but you don't let me know whom you're going to send with me. You tell me, 'I know you well and you are special to me.' If I am so special to you, let me in on your plans. That way, I will continue being special to you. Don't forget, God, this is your people, your responsibility."* Talk about direct! God responds, *"My presence will go with you. I'll see the journey to the end."* Moses says, *"You darn right you will."* (I added that part). He says, *"If your presence doesn't take the lead here, call this trip off right now. Are you traveling with us or not?"* And God finally consents; *"I will go with you."*

Do you ever lack in your persistence with God? Jacob, whose wrestler name is Israel, which means struggle or wrestle, scraps with an angel by the creek and with God's angel in a headlock demands: *"I won't let go until you bless me."* He doesn't walk away

from the encounter unscathed. He limps from there on out, but he got the blessing. We are all limping in some way; none of us escape this world without the trials of mind, body, and spirit. Perhaps the angle, then, becomes in the way we wonder about blessing... about moving God... about God moving us.

In our American culture, we are encouraged not to wait. We are told most of life's problems can be fixed...and fast. Like our fast food, we expect God to change our lives instantly. Sue Kidd, a writer who is an admitted quickaholic, says this about her own resistance to waiting: *"When you are waiting you are not doing nothing. You're doing something. You're allowing your soul to grow up. If you can't be still and wait, you can't become what God created you to be."*³

You can't move as God calls you to move. Moses and the Israelites may have gotten it wrong much of the time so far; but in this moment, they had become more patient in their persistence. They had been banging their heads against the same ceiling and it wasn't working. It's like that person who just keeps going hard, hard, hard... keeps getting up again and at first we're like, *"Man, isn't that something?!"* We just love that tenacity. Look at them go. But after a bit we're like, *"Do you think he's got a concussion?" "Do you think we should tell her it's not working?"* We go from *"Go, go, go!"* to *"Wait, this is not smart. Stay down. Don't get up until you figure this part out."*

But in that moment, we often feel helpless. We just want it fixed. We want God to move like we want God to move. Imagine, however, trying to talk to a child, giving them directions on how to find their way through a problem, but all the child is doing is running around you in a panic, no eye contact, jabbering so much themselves that they can't possibly hear a word you may have to say. What do you do? When this happened at school, I remember Mrs. Shackelford stop and simply say to our class that wasn't paying any attention: *"I'll wait."*

God surely sees us running around, building golden calves, surrounding ourselves with noise 24/7 and must finally have to say, *"I'll wait."* You want to make a move? You wondering about that job, or that class, or that relationship, or that shift, or that opportunity, or that concern, or that heartache? God very well may be waiting for us to quit mindlessly scrolling through our social media feeds, glossing over our prayers, and not honoring our bodies need for sabbath, for rest; so that we might stand at attention at the front door of our lives saying, *"Okay, God. Move in a way that I've never seen before. Or... move me."* This is trust. It may not be total clarity. But trust is where it's at. Do you trust God to move you?

Now. It has long been studied that people may only retain 10% of what they hear in any oral presentation, so I'm not foolish enough to think you hang on my every word. In fact, there's another *Candid Camera* clip, maybe the most famous of its 40-year

³ From Michael Yaconelli's book, *"Dangerous Wonder."* NAVPRESS. Colorado Springs. 1998.

history, that demonstrates our quick ability to forget the message. Take a look. [Editor's note: follow this link to see the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGyTbzjUEg>]

If you forget *this* message, I understand. But if you hold onto something, as we end this series and plunge more deeply into 2020, or enter a new season of your life whatever that may be... even if it's a new season simply called "*Making it through today*," as your pastor, I'm praying you hold onto this word: *trust*. Trust God. Don't move the way the culture pressures you to move; making gold into calves or climbing ladders for the sake of impressing your classmates at school reunions.

Instead, wonder about the movement of God in your life. When you awaken each morning and think you couldn't possibly move out of bed, pray for God to move your heart, "*God, move me today as you will.*" If you can trust, you can move in the confidence that God is with you. Which ultimately allows you to be you. Which is good! We need you to be you because, well... everyone else has already been taken.