

Unlike Moses, Pastor Has Seen 'The Face of God'

Sorry, Moses. I have to tell you that I've trumped you. I realize that the faith journey is not a competition, so please don't hear me bragging about this. In fact, it was one of the most humbling, if not gratifying, experiences I've ever had. But, I've managed to do something you couldn't do, weren't ever allowed to do.

Maybe I better explain.

It all started for you with that burning bush thing back in the days when you were keeping sheep for your father-in-law Jethro. You came upon the bush that was on fire but wasn't being consumed. God spoke to you out of the bush. That's when God told you he wanted you to go back to Egypt and release the Israelites. You were afraid that day, Moses, afraid to look at God. Can't say that I blame you.

I wonder if that had anything to do with what happened some time later at Sinai. By this point you've led the people of Israel out of the pharaoh's clutches, and have gone up the mountain to commune with God. This time you're not as afraid, so you come right out and ask God, "Show me your glory, I pray." I take that to mean you wanted to see God's face. You missed your chance back on Horeb when God came to you in the burning bush. Now that you and the God of your ancestors Abraham Isaac, and Jacob have got some history together, have been through the fires together so to speak (if you will excuse the pun), perhaps you feel as if you've earned the right to look at God.

Do you remember how God responded? God said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The Lord'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But... (And this is when you began to suspect what the answer would be, isn't it?) But," God said, "You cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live."

That's where I've got a leg up on you, Moses. I have seen the face of God.

Recently I had the opportunity to travel with seven other clergy types to Africa. Not the part where you grew up in Egypt, but farther south.

It is an understatement to say that Africa is different from the place where I live. There's a great deal more poverty there, and while they have water it doesn't mean they have ready access to it.

Nor to medications. And they desperately need medications because malaria and HIV/AIDS are rampant.

Add in a large dose of government corruption and you've got a recipe for difficulty. The average age span is about 40 in many areas of the continent, people are discriminated against when they become sick, and many of them have no work of any kind.

Yet, the people are beautiful, hopeful, gracious and accepting—and quick to smile. That is especially true of the children. And while the little ones might eventually come to a point in life when the hardness of it gets to them and they lose that child-like enthusiasm for life, while they are still children they represent hope and joy and all the good things about their native land.

And that, my dear friend, is where I have experienced something you have not. You see, you wanted to look into the face of God. Well, I have.

Every time I re-visit my pictures and see the face of the children—who laughed and pointed and spoke excitedly in their tribal tongue (though English is the official language) when I showed them their image on my digital camera—I have the joy of looking straight into the face of God.

God is embodied in the children of Africa, and other places like it, where life is hard and they are counted as what Jesus called “the least of these.” I have looked into the faces of the children of Africa, and in them I have witnessed the very face of God.

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Sorry, Moses, sorry.

[Randy Hyde](#), pastor of [Pulaski Heights Baptist Church](#) in Little Rock, Ark., was one of seven pastors to visit Africa May 1-15 on a “mission immersion” [trip](#) sponsored by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Also see: [More Churches or More Mobilization?](#)