

FIELD-TESTED SERMON RESOURCES

# SERMON SERIES

TRUSTED | BIBLICAL | FIELD-TESTED

Thank you for downloading this sample PDF from our Sermon Series line of resources.

When you stand up in front of students to proclaim the Word of God, you need trusted, creative, and biblically solid content. YM360's Sermon Series are exactly what you're looking for!

Field-tested, from-the-trenches of youth ministry, YM360 Sermon Series are complete detailed sermon outlines, discussion questions, and graphic packages designed to help you lead students closer to God through proclaiming His Word.

## SERIES OVERVIEW FOR SMOKE: God's Present-Tense Presence

Vincent Van Gogh famously once said, "One may have a blazing hearth in one's soul, and yet no one ever came to sit by it. Passers-by see only a wisp of smoke from the chimney and continue on their way." Where there's smoke, there's fire. And where there's fire in the Bible, there's God. Come with us as we step into God's presence, God's power, God's provision, and God's priority. Sit for a moment beside the flame. Stare into the smoke and let your heart be set on fire for Him.

## "SMOKE" COVERS THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES AND PASSAGES:

- **Session 1 – The Presence Of God (Exodus 3:1-6)** | The story of Moses and his encounter with the burning bush shows us that smoke signals God's presence is present tense. God wasn't a past-tense deliverer of the Israelites. He was ready, willing, and able to deliver them in the present. God wasn't a past-tense deliverer of Moses as a baby. God wanted to use Moses in the

present. God has plans for us, just as he did for Moses. He wants us to live in His present-tense presence.

- **Session 2 – The Power Of God (1 Kings 18:16-40) |** In the story of Elijah, smoke signaled that God’s power had prevailed. This is still true today, but do we live like it? To do this, we need to begin as Elijah did by altering the altar. We must clear the way for God’s present-tense presence and prevailing power to break into our lives and quit wavering between two opinions.
- **Session 3 – The Provision Of God (Exodus 13:17-22) |** The Exodus era of God’s people is just part of a long tale of God providing for the Israelites. God’s provision may not have been what the Israelites expected, but the heavenly pillars of cloud, fire, and smoke left no doubt that God was providing by guiding. God is still providing by guiding us today. His work is not dependent on us, but it’s not independent of us either. We have a role, and that’s to follow where God guides.
- **Session 4 – The Priority Of God (Exodus 3:7-12) |** God’s invitation for Moses to revere, repent, and remain came with an expectation to return. God called Moses to make God’s mission the priority of his life. Moses’ mission was to help the Israelites escape slavery and move into the Promised Land. God also invites us to make Him our priority. As we return to the burning bush, we see that smoke signals that God’s invitation comes with expectations. If we are to make God our priority, we should expect Him to summon us to follow Him on mission.

**"SMOKE" IS PART OF YM360'S SERMON SERIES LINE OF RESOURCES AND IS IDEAL FOR:**

- Any large group setting
- Mid-week youth service
- “Master teacher” format

# BACKGROUND SLIDES, PROMOTIONAL ARTWORK, AND MORE. . .

## EVERY SERMON SERIES FROM YM360 COMES WITH:

- **Detailed Sermon Outlines** – Every Sermon Series comes with detailed sermon outlines. Teach them "as is" or adapt them to suit your specific ministry context.
- **Discussion questions** – Questions are designed to foster conversations, help students think critically about the teaching, and wrestle with how these Biblical truths impact their complicated and ever-changing lives. You can use these discussion questions to facilitate small groups after your large group teaching or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go.
- **Title and Background slides** – These are designed to be dropped into your favorite presentation software to help you build a creative environment around your sermon. Use them as a backdrop for song lyrics, Scripture passages, teaching points, and any illustrations you choose to display.
- **Artwork for promo and social media** – Social media images, web banners, and a printable poster file are included. Perfect for newsletters, websites, social media platforms, or print them off for posters and bulletin inserts.
- **Logo (including native logo design files)** – We include a logo file and the native design files to allow you to use the logo in ways you see fit.
- **100% downloadable and adaptable**

Each YM360 Sermon Series comes with title and background slides, promotional art (including Instagram images), and logo treatments. Here is what to expect.

**BACKGROUND AND  
TITLE SLIDES**



**PROMOTIONAL  
ARTWORK**



**LOGO  
TREATMENT**



NOTE: Each YM360 Sermon Series also comes with the native files of the logo in case you want to replicate the design for other uses.

**How To Use A YM360 Sermon Series** | YM360 Sermon Series are designed for use by a communicator in a large group setting. Each series download provides various elements such as a detailed sermon outline, suggestions on illustrations or images, Scripture passages, background information, and application points that you can use to craft a message that speaks to your students in your specific context.

This series download also includes discussion questions that can be used to facilitate small groups after your large group teaching or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go. These questions are designed to foster conversations, help students think critically about the teaching, and wrestle with how these Biblical truths impact their complicated and ever-changing lives.

Make sure to leverage the series logo, title slide, background slides, and social media artwork this YM360 Sermon Series provides for promotion and message support. We've even included the native design files to allow you the freedom to use the logo in any way that meets your needs.

This YM360 Sermon Series was created to be suitable for all types of churches and ministry environments. It was intentionally designed to provide you with everything you need while also allowing you the freedom to make it fit your particular ministry context. Nobody knows your ministry like you do. Therefore, we encourage you to make any adjustments to this series you feel are necessary to best fit the needs of your students, church, or ministry context.

**A Prayer Before You Prepare** | Heavenly Father, maker of Heaven and Earth, I give you praise. Thank You, Father, for Your ever-abundant mercy and grace. Thank You for allowing me to shepherd Your sheep. Thank You for entrusting me with feeding Your lambs. Forgive me, Father, for any sin or disobedience. As I enter into Your presence, Your servant is listening. Guide me, Father, in the study of Your Word. As I prepare to lead students this week, I pray that You speak through me. Give me the words to challenge and guide these students to step into Your presence, power, provision, and priority. I pray that this message I am about to prepare will challenge, equip, and encourage a generation who so desperately needs hearts set ablaze for You. I pray that You bring the students this week who need to hear. I pray that You break the hearts that need to be broken and soften the hearts that need to be softened. I pray that You are glorified. I lay down any agenda or pride that I may have. I give you this message and this ministry. Your will be done! In Your Holy Name, I pray, Amen.

**Series Snapshot** | *Smoke*, a four-session sermon series, will explore four incredible Old Testament stories where God interacted with His people through smoke and fire. This series will challenge your students to step into God's presence, power, provision, and priority. As they stare into the smoke and see how God reveals Himself, their hearts will be set on fire by God's present-tense presence.

**Series Overview** | Vincent Van Gogh famously once said, "One may have a blazing hearth in one's soul, and yet no one ever came to sit by it. Passers-by see only a wisp of smoke from the chimney and continue on their way." Where there's smoke, there's fire. And where there's fire in the Bible, there's God. Come with us as we step into God's presence, God's power, God's provision, and God's priority. Sit for a moment beside the flame. Stare into the smoke and let your heart be set on fire for Him.

- **Session 1 – The Presence Of God (Exodus 3:1-6)** | The story of Moses and his encounter with the burning bush shows us that smoke signals God's presence is present tense. God wasn't a past-tense deliverer of the Israelites. He was ready, willing, and able to deliver them in the present. God wasn't a past-tense deliverer of Moses as a baby. God wanted to use Moses in the present. God has plans for us, just as he did for Moses. He wants us to live in His present-tense presence.
- **Session 2 – The Power Of God (1 Kings 18:16-40)** | In the story of Elijah, smoke signaled that God's power had prevailed. This is still true today, but do we live like it? To do this, we need to begin as Elijah did by altering the altar. We must clear the way for God's present-tense presence and prevailing power to break into our lives and quit wavering between two opinions.
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## **Smoke Series | Session 1**

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**Large Group Teaching Summary** | Often, we think of God's presence as something in the past — the faith of our fathers — or as a hope for the future. But through session one, we see that smoke signals that God's presence is present tense. In the story of Moses at the burning bush, we learn that when we're awakened to God's presence, our response is to revere who God is, repent of what He's not, and remain where He is.

**Key Takeaway** | God's presence is present tense.

**Scripture Focus** | Exodus 3:1-6

**What You May Need** | *Optional Illustration: Shocking Moments (Video clips) (Personal Story), Optional Illustration: Shoes (Visual), Optional Illustration: Repentance (Isaiah).*

## I. Introduction

- A. Welcome to our new series we are starting this week called *Smoke*.
1. Today, we begin a series called *Smoke*. If you're thinking that smoke is kind of a strange name for a series, you're not wrong. You might even be wondering what in the world smoke has to do with God.
  2. If you read through the Old Testament, you'll start to see that smoke often signals that God is near.
  3. God appeared a surprising number of times in the Bible in the form of smoke and fire, and as God interacted with His people, we learn some important things about God.
  4. So in this series, we're going to stare into the smoke to see how God reveals Himself. And hopefully, as we do this, our hearts will be set on fire by God. Let's get started.

### B. *Optional Illustration: Shocking Moments*

**Teacher's Note:** *Begin the series by talking about one of the most shocking or surprising things that have ever happened to you. This can be a positive or a negative story as long as it drives home the point that at any moment, anything can happen. You can supplement your personal story with the following illustration.*

1. If you flip through the channels on your TV, chances are that you'll soon find a clip show that features the most shocking or surprising moments from a certain genre. From the most shocking moments in entertainment to the most shocking courtroom confessions to the most shocking falls from grace to the most shocking sports upsets, these shows surprise us with events that no one could have ever expected. And these moments go to show that at any moment, anything can happen.

**Teacher's Note:** *You may want to take a moment here to show some specific video examples of shocking moments caught on film. A quick YouTube search will give you plenty to pick from. Make sure to closely watch and listen to the video examples you use ahead of time to ensure that they are appropriate for your group setting.*

2. We live in a world where, at any time, anything can happen. This is both great and terrifying news. We never know what to expect, and that means our plans or hopes, or goals can be overturned at any moment. But when we don't have a plan, or when our situation is bad, the reality that anything can happen at any moment is great news. These are the moments when we need something to break into our lives.
- C. Have you ever thought about why anything can happen at any moment? It's because God is around. God is present and powerful. He can provide for us. And He also wants to be our priority. God isn't content merely to let us make our own plans and goals because He knows that it is better for us to be a part of His life and His plans and goals.

- D. In this series called *Smoke*, we're going to see that AT ANY MOMENT, ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN. And we're going to discover that THIS IS TRUE BECAUSE OF GOD.
- E. When we first hear the phrase smoke signals, most of us think of Native Americans who used them as a means of communication. But while most of us haven't used smoke to send a message across large distances, smoke still signals some important things today.
  - 1. An emergency flare uses colored smoke to signal location. For example, a lost hiker can light a flare to help rescuers find him.
  - 2. The smoke from a grill comes with a smell that lets us know that it's time to eat.
  - 3. Smoke also signals that something is wrong and is often the first sign of a house fire.
- F. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, SMOKE IS OFTEN A SIGNAL OF GOD'S PRESENCE. Where there's smoke, there's fire. And in the Bible, where there's fire, there's God. That's why we're spending this series staring into the smoke. We want to encounter God, and we're going to follow the smoke signals toward God.
- G. We begin here in session one by following the smoke signals toward God's presence. So, let's begin looking for the smoke signals.

## I. Background

### A. Moses

- 1. This story begins at a moment in history in which it seemed as though anything couldn't happen. The people of Israel, who had moved to Egypt 400 years earlier to avoid a famine, had been enslaved by the Egyptians. Now the million-plus Israelites spent their lives as slaves who were not only overworked but also overpowered by the Egyptians.
- 2. But remember, because of God, anything can happen. EXODUS 2:23-25
- 3. Moses was born into this world, but through God's provision and his mother's ingenuity, Moses ended up as a prince of Egypt.
- 4. As a young man, Moses saw an Israelite being severely beaten by an Egyptian, and it enraged Moses so much that he actually killed the Egyptian. He thought no one saw him, but the next day he discovered that this murder was public knowledge. So Moses fled to the back side of the desert, leaving behind both his royal home and his fellow Israelites.
- 5. But in the middle of this moment, smoke signals were starting to appear for the first time in centuries.

### B. Read EXODUS 3:1-6

## I. Explanation

- A. It was just a normal day for Moses. He was once again tending the flocks of his father-in-law on the far side of the desert. But at that moment, Moses learned that anything can happen.
- B. Flames of fire sprang up from within a bush, but the bush didn't burn up. The smoke of the burning bush signaled something, and Moses wanted to find out what it was. When



- C. God saw that Moses came over to investigate what was happening, God called to Him from the bush. And Moses responded to God's presence by saying, "Here I am."
- D. Once Moses had acknowledged God's presence, God commanded Moses to take off his shoes because he was standing on holy ground. Then God gave His resume to Moses, so to speak, by affirming that the One in the burning bush was in fact, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There was no doubt in Moses' mind that he was in the presence of God Almighty. And so he hid his face because he was afraid to look at God. This moment was the defining moment for Moses, who was the defining character in the Old Testament.
- E. This story shows us that SMOKE SIGNALS THAT GOD'S PRESENCE IS PRESENT TENSE. God wasn't a past-tense deliverer of the Israelites — He was ready and willing and able to deliver them in the present. God wasn't a past-tense deliverer of Moses, either. Moses' life wasn't just about being rescued from a basket in the river as a baby. No, God wanted to use Moses in the present.
- F. In this moment, what Moses had heard about and hoped for was here. He had heard about God in the past, but he hadn't experienced God lately. He hoped that God would act in the future. But now God was here, and in this present-tense moment of God's presence, awakening happened in Moses' life. God had moved out of the future and into Moses' face. God had moved out of history and into Moses' heart.
- G. The same is true for us. NO MATTER HOW LONG IT HAS BEEN SINCE GOD SHOWED UP IN OUR LIVES, GOD IS STILL LIVING AND ACTIVE. At any moment, anything can happen because God's presence is present tense. And that means awakening can happen in our lives as well.

## II. Application

- A. ***Optional Illustration: Shoes***  
***As you begin this application, take your shoes off as a tangible expression of revering God, repenting of sin, and remaining through worship. This physical demonstration will help your students experience God's presence. Take off your shoes slowly as you discuss these ideas.***
- B. As we think through each smoke signal in this series, we're going to take a moment to specifically ask the question of how we can step into the smoke. Today we've already said that SMOKE SIGNALS THAT GOD'S PRESENCE IS PRESENT TENSE. But as we stare a little more into the smoke at the burning bush, we discover that God wants to awaken us just as He awakened Moses.
- C. A lot of us live as if God is a past-tense God of our Fathers or think of God as a future-tense hope. But what would it look like for us to be awakened by God's presence here and now?
- D. In Moses' story, we discover three things that we must do to let our hearts be awakened and set on fire by God's presence.
  1. First, WE MUST REVER WHO GOD IS.

- a) We see this happen in this passage as Moses took his shoes off before God. Like Moses, we are standing on Holy Ground when we are in the presence of God.
  - b) The presence of God is awesome, and it naturally leads us to being in awe. When we talk about revering God, we're pointing toward worship.
  - c) The reason we gather together for worship on a regular basis is that we need to celebrate who God is. We do this because God deserves it, and we do this because we need to celebrate it. In worship, we recognize that God's power, provision, and priority are present here because God's presence is present tense.
2. Just as much as we must revere who God is, WE MUST REPENT OF WHAT WE'RE NOT.
- a) In Hebrew culture, the sole of the shoe was considered the dirtiest part of the person. So when God told Moses to take his shoes off, it was not just a call to worship – it was a call to take off sin and repent.
  - b) We hear the word 'repent' used in the church a lot. Do you know what 'repent' means? The word repentance in the Bible literally means "the act of changing one's mind." True biblical repentance goes beyond regret or feeling bad about your sin. Repentance is a complete change of our mind, heart, and actions. Repentance acknowledges that our sin is offensive to God. To repent means to make an about-face. This means we turn away from self-driven desires/way of living and towards God-driven desires/way of living.
3. Third, WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT GOD IS HOLY.
- a) The Holiness of God is one of the most difficult of God's characteristics for us as humans to understand. One reason we struggle so much with understanding God's Holiness is that it's one of His essential attributes not shared, naturally, by us as humans. We are created in God's image, and we can share or even live out many of His attributes, to a much lesser extent, of course (love, mercy, faithfulness, etc.). That makes these things we can get a handle on. But some of God's attributes, such as omnipresence (the ability to be anywhere and everywhere at the same time), omniscience (the ability to know everything), and omnipotence (the ability of unlimited power), are things that will never be shared by you and me as created beings. God's Holiness is another.
  - b) Holy means to be separated or set apart. God's Holiness is what separates Him from all other beings.
  - c) God is perfectly righteous and loving and good. We are not. There is no trace of evil or darkness in Him (1 John 1:5). We are sinful, selfish, and even evil at times.
  - d) The only way we become Holy is through salvation in Jesus. Our Holiness is imputed. That word means that we are credited Holiness due to Jesus's Holiness and His dying on the Cross to pay for our sin. Romans 5:9 says that we have "been justified by His blood." That means that if we have Jesus as our Lord and Savior, then we have been justified in the eyes of a Holy God, and He sees us as Holy because of Jesus.

E. So, when we come into the presence of this perfect and Holy God, we need to take time to revere who God is through worship, recognize what we're not through repentance, and seek to change the things in our lives that don't match God's Holiness. We follow Moses' lead and take off our shoes-both symbolically and literally as a sign of our acknowledgment and repentance.

**F. Optional Illustration: Repentance**

***We find this kind of repentance when Isaiah came into God's presence in Isaiah 6. Isaiah "saw the Lord seated on a throne, and the train of his robe filled the temple." (Isaiah 6:1) As the angels sang about God's holiness and glory, Isaiah was overwhelmed. "Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." (Isaiah 6:6) In this instance, Isaiah is forgiven, and then God sends him out as His messenger***

G. God has plans for us, just as He did for Moses and Isaiah. These plans may shock us, but one thing that shouldn't shock us is when God's present-tense presence leads us to repentance. Once we have revered God and repented of sin, God's presence also invites us to remain where He is.

**I. Closing**

- A. God may break into our lives with a burning bush or some other smoke signal, but He doesn't want to leave us in a state in which we need a big event to notice that He is near. Instead, God wants us to live in His present-tense presence each and every day.
- B. So as we encounter the present-tense presence of God, we revere, we repent, and we remain. By doing this, we will continue to sense the smoke signals that tell us that God's presence is present-tense.
- C. Remember, SMOKE SIGNALS THAT GOD'S PRESENCE IS PRESENT TENSE. And that means that anything can happen at any moment. Your bad can be turned to good. Your hurts can be healed. Your struggles can become stories of God working in your life.
- D. So, let us leave this first session together by deciding to step into God's presence, take off our shoes regularly in reverence and repentance, and remain where He is.
- E. And join us next time for session two, where we will take a look at the story of Elijah, fire falling from heaven, and how a showdown of who's God was real ended with smoke rising from only one offering, proving that God's power prevails.

**Smoke Series Overview** | Vincent Van Gogh famously once said, “One may have a blazing hearth in one’s soul, and yet no one ever came to sit by it. Passers-by see only a wisp of smoke from the chimney and continue on their way.” Where there’s smoke, there’s fire. And where there’s fire in the Bible, there’s God. Come with us as we step into God’s presence, God’s power, God’s provision, and God’s priority. Sit for a moment beside the flame. Stare into the smoke and let your heart be set on fire for Him.

**Large Group Teaching Summary** | Often, we think of God’s presence as something in the past — the faith of our fathers — or as a hope for the future. But through session one, we see that smoke signals that God’s presence is present tense. In the story of Moses at the burning bush, we learn that when we’re awakened to God’s presence, our response is to revere who God is, repent of what He’s not, and remain where He is.

**Key Takeaway** | God’s presence is present tense.

**Scripture Focus** | Exodus 3:1-6

## **Smoke | Session 1 Discussion Questions**

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You can use these discussion questions to facilitate small groups after your large group teaching or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go. These questions are designed to foster conversations, help students think critically about the teaching, and wrestle with how these Biblical truths impact their complicated and ever-changing lives.

### **Get Them Talking | An Optional Opening Question To Get Students Talking**

Let’s go around, and each person think of/say something that has smoke (smokey) as a name or as a nickname. If you take more than 3 seconds to answer, you’re out. The winner gets \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Read Exodus 3:1-6. What stands out to you most about this passage of Scripture?
2. In Moses’ story, we discovered three things that let our hearts be awakened and set on fire by God’s presence.
  - First, we must revere who God is. Why do we need to do this? How do we do this?
  - Second, we must repent (turn away or change your mind). How do we repent? When was the last time you were honest with yourself and with God about your sin? What sin do you need to repent of?
  - Third, we must understand that God is Holy. Why does God’s Holiness matter? How are we made Holy?
3. In this moment, what Moses had heard about and hoped for was here. He had heard about God in the past but hadn’t experienced God lately. He hoped that God would act in the future. But now God was here, and in this present-tense moment of God’s presence, awakening happened in Moses’ life. God had moved out of the future and into Moses’ face. God had moved out of history and into Moses’ heart. Have you ever experienced a time when God moved in your life in such a way that you knew you were in His presence?

4. Do you tend to look at God's presence as in the past tense, the present tense, or the future tense? Why?
5. Do you value God's presence most in the past, present, or future tense? Why?
6. How would you describe God's presence? (Check all that apply)  
 Holy  Welcoming  Intimidating  Cold  Warm  Refreshing  Stunning  Distant  Loving
7. Why do we need to take God's presence seriously? How do we do this?
8. Why does God welcome us into His Holy presence? How can we enter His Holy presence?
9. Read Hebrews 10:19-22. What does this passage tell us about entering the presence of God? What does it look like for us to enter the presence of God like this? What are some practical ways we can do this?