

A Culture of Encounter
Exodus 3:1-15
5.6.18



Reflection Questions for Personal Use or in a Group Context... (please consider the teaching notes prior to consideration of the reflection questions)

“Do you remember the first time you ran away from home? How long were you gone? How are did you go?” (please be sensitive to the nature of the context and circumstances. If this is painful for you, please do not feel compelled to respond.)

“What are some of the things that strike you about Moses’ ‘burning bush’ encounter with God? What are some of the things that are puzzling for you? Do you think such dramatic encounters actually make belief in God easier, or more complicated? Do you think there is a danger in always expecting such extraordinary moments in order to validate our faith?”

“What do you think about this statement:”

If you are seeking meaning through an encounter of God, you will find him everywhere.

If you are seeking meaning apart from God, you will find it anywhere.

“Where is here? In my loneliness? In my failing marriage? In my silent addiction? In my 80’s?”
“Where are you? Where is God? How might a simple, “Who are you?” and “Here I am” initiate a deeper connection?”

“Could you describe an instance that you would consider an encounter with God? Was there something you discovered to be true of him that you had previously not known? Was there something you discovered to be true of yourself, as a result? Did you feel that the encounter was inviting a specific response?”

Teaching Notes...

The Bible is a comprehensive and coherent Story which is meant to reveal the goodness and good intentions of God, the nature of reality, provide meaning to history, and our place in it.

What we have in the scriptures is not the “*Best of God*”, simply for study or entertainment, but the records of people who have encountered God and have been compelled to call everything into question, so as to allow their lives to be re-defined in his.

Revelation involves a pattern that is recognizable all throughout the biblical narrative:

reception--- this is not simply the exchange of information, but the revealing of his person (desires, will, purposes, etc.)

replication--- we begin to assimilate and embody such revelation in order to best reflect his purposes for us in the world.

The first in the **DESIRE** series of values was...

Discovery: We are a people who are being informed and formed by the biblical narrative and who are developing both a strong sense of identity (*who we are*), and a deep sense of purpose (*why we are*) within the Story of a loving and faithful God.

“Revelation” and “Incarnation”

Encounter: We are a people who intentionally make ourselves “*present to*” and “*present for*” God in order that we might know him and respond in obedience to his loving initiatives.

“Glory” and “Worship”

“Honor the LORD for the glory of his name. Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.” Psalm 29:2

“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever! Amen.”
Romans 11:36

[Genesis 3:8; Exodus 19:3; Isaiah 6:1-8; Jeremiah 29:13-14; Matthew 28:17; Mark 5:6]

Glory always anticipates a response. Worship is the right (fitting, appropriate) response to glory.

Glory is God on display. The biblical narrative continues to establish that whatever else seems to be going on, and whoever else is involved, this is a story about God. It is recognizing the worth of God and learning to live “gloriously”. It’s our way of saying to God, “We get it!”

We begin as the “known”, not as presumptuous “knowers”.

God names us before we can name him. Not in some generic, “*insert name here*” or, “*Hey you, earthling!*”, but personally.

God is eager to be known and experienced by all and that “... *as we draw near to him, he draws near to us*” (James 4:8) in ways that both distinguish him and us. I am convinced that both of those movements are acts of grace. My pursuit of God is only the result of his pursuit of me. Without the God-prints all over us or the subliminal God-messages, we would find no motivation for pursuing him.

“Here I am” is our first, best response.

It doesn’t pretend to know anything or understand anything; it just makes itself available to the Presence.

It’s what the biblical narrative calls “*humility*” (Matthew 5:5). When we approach our “presumptive God”, we discover precisely the god we were looking for because he is one that has been fashioned (shaped) in our image... in our imaginations.

It’s the call that identifies us and places us in the God-story.

“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.”

Exodus 3:6

God fixes the experience in the story so that Moses would not conclude that this was simply some random, personal, spiritual encounter.

“What did Moses know of his real father?” (Amram) He was raised as an adopted son of Pharaoh. Influenced by his father-in-law, Jethro. “You are not the abandoned son. You are not the son of an angry and paranoid tyrant. You are the son of a good father who has been present and active in your history... even the perplexing parts.”

“Here” is a word that locates us.

“Here” is where we are. In our present reality. pleasant or unpleasant.

“Here” is confessional. Authentic. Freeing.

“Here” is the only place you can truly encounter God.

You don’t have to be somewhere else or someone else to encounter God. If you don’t find God “here”, it’s futile to search for him “there”, because God is “here”.

It’s hard to be “here”.

I want to be “there”. “There” is deceptive and deflective and disillusioning. We are distracted. We are pre-occupied with *“all the things [we] have to do and all the things [we] want to get”* (Mark 4:19).

God is present, but must, at times, must make himself more obvious in order to be found.

It is the *“turning toward”* that invites deeper revelation and gives meaning to the experience. Observation is content to describe or explain. Participation requires risky involvement.

Being present is an active posture. It means that I may have walked by the same situation--- the same person, the same hurts and fears--- but am awakened to the God-possibilities that reside in that moment (Genesis 28:16).

God often shows up, unrehearsed and unscheduled, according to his own wisdom and purposes. Ours is not to attempt to standardize those movements or restrict the means by which he reveals himself. It is to allow God *“creative-license”* in our lives where we are freely with him, and he is free to be himself with us.