



S2.Lesson 18: Prayer – Moses & the Burning Bush

Middle School Lesson Plans

Supplies Needed: Journals; Handout; tv or laptop to show movie clip (movie clip link is available at rfour.org/curriculum.html); a watch or timer

OPENING PRAYER

TELL

- We're starting a new session today.
- Last session was about what happens when we don't pay attention to God. We only had two stories in that session, and they went together. Quick Summary: Adam and Eve spit into the Garden of Eden milkshake which then eventually led their older son Cain to kill their younger son, Abel.
- This session is looking at Bible stories that show us how we can pay attention to God through prayer.
- There are lots of misunderstandings about prayer.
- We're going to start today with a clip of a comedian sharing an experience of prayer at a worship service he had attended.

WATCH Thou Shalt Laugh 4 Movie Clip

ASK

- Did you know that choosy moms choose Jesus?
- So in the clip, the comedian is saying he won't be out-prayed by his church neighbor.
- Do you think there are right words to use in prayer and wrong words to use in prayer?
- What do you think the purpose of prayer is for?

TELL

- An important way to think about prayer is to think about it as a conversation.
- We're going to read a story now with Moses that shows what conversational prayer can look like.
- We met Moses back in December when he was a baby boy and instead of being killed by the Egyptians, he was instead adopted.
- Moses lived in Egypt for 40 years. He then left and went to live in the countryside – where he did so for another 40 years.
- The story we're going to read now is toward the end of those 40 years of living in the countryside.

READ Exodus 3:1-15

Moses was keeping the flock of sheep for his wife's father, Jethro; Moses kept his flock in the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There, an angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of a bush; Moses looked, and the bush was blazing, *but it was not burnt*. 3 Then Moses said, "I must stop what I'm doing and go look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not being burned up." 4 When the Lord saw that Moses had stopped to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." 5 Then God said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6 Then God said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

7 Then the Lord said, "I have seen the hurt of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry caused by the Egyptians. Indeed, I know their hurt, 8 and I have come to you to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of Egypt to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of Canaan. 10 So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" 12 God said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain." 13 But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is God's name?' what shall I say to them?" 14 God said to Moses, "Tell them, 'I am who I am.' "

Then God said, "Also, you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you. 15 The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': This is my name forever, and this is my title for all generations."

ASK

- Where was Moses keeping his flock? (in the wilderness)
- The concept of wilderness, here, is to be away from other people and the comforts of civilization. Have you spent any time somewhere that you would consider "wilderness?" If yes, what did you notice about yourself when you were in it?
- This land that Moses was in, he'd been there for 40 years. So when the story tells us he arrived at the mountain of God, that's just a place marker for him. It's nothing special to him. But then what happens to get his attention? (a bush is burning, but is not consumed)
- What's the first thing that God says to Moses (verse 4)? (Moses' name)
- Then what does God tell Moses (verse 5)? (how to prepare for their conversation: Come no closer, take off your sandals and then God introduces God's self)
- What names does God use to identify himself (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob)
- Does this surprise you that God would use a connection with humans to introduce himself?
- And what is Moses' response to God (verse 6)? (hides his face in fear)
- What do you think Moses might have been afraid of? (feeling not worthy? **A fun note:** There's probably some awe being felt by Moses here. Our language suggests we don't do

well when fully filled with awe. Something that fills us with awe, we call “awe-full.” But if something is only half-filled with awe, that’s what we call “awe-some.”)

- Verse 7 though 10, what does God want Moses to do? (free the Israelites)
- Does it surprise you that God needs Moses’ help for this?
- In verse 11, what is Moses response? (Why me?)
- So basically, Moses is arguing with God. Just awhile bit ago, Moses was hiding his face from God, but now Moses is arguing with God.
- In verse 12, what is the first thing God tells Moses? (I will be with you)
- Also in verse 12, God says he will give Moses a sign. However, WHEN will that sign be given to Moses? (*AFTER* Moses does the thing God’s telling him to do)
- That’s not what we usually think of as a sign, is it?
- Moses is still not convinced. He sees a problem with God’s plan. God doesn’t have a name. What does God say his name is? (I am who I am)

TELL

- God’s name doesn’t seem all that satisfactory, at least not at first. However, spelled out in Hebrew, we would pronounce “I am who I am” as “Yhwh” or what we say as “Yahweh.” The Hebrew writing for Yahweh are all “breathy” sounds. Some Biblical scholars argue that the name of God here is meant to symbolize breathing. Yod – hey; Vav- hey. So that when the Israelites ask, “Who sent you,” Moses answer is really, “The one who gives you breath.” And that *is* a pretty impressive name, don’t you think?
- So there’s a common understanding that we’re to pray to God for what we want.
- And that’s not a bad thing to do.
- But what we see in this story is that prayer is a conversation.
- And a conversation has two parts to it: Talking AND Listening.
- In order to do both of these parts well, we can’t do these two parts at the same time.

EXPLAIN ACTIVITY

- So how do we listen to God?
- Well, one way that we can listen to God is by paying attention to God’s name.
- And the way we can do that is by paying attention to our breathing.
- The same word the Israelites used for *spirit*, they also used for *breath*. That word is *ruach*. And since God’s name, Yahweh, are breathy sounds, then it’s not too much of a leap to think of our breathing as saying God’s name.
- So we’re going to sit still for five minutes (we’ll set a timer). And during those five minutes we’re going to sit still, without making noise and we’re going to breathe slowly and deeply.
- When you breathe in, think of the first part of the word, Yahweh. Just think of “Yah” as you inhale. Then when you exhale, think of the second part of the word of Yahweh: Weh. If you’re mind starts to drift (and it will), turn your mind back to your breathing. Pay attention to how much air you’re taking in. Think of the words that go with the inhaling and exhaling.
- Also, it’d be good to close your eyes to avoid distraction

- Also, if you choose to not participate in the activity, you may not in any way disrupt the rest of the class - do not make any noise or try to get attention. You're just going to have to sit still for the five minutes.
- Any questions?
- Let's get comfortable (scatter about the room, if need be)
- Here we go!

DO Breathing/Prayer exercise

ASK/TELL

- Did the five minutes seem like a long time or a short time?
- Were you able to stay focused on your breathing?
- Did you notice anything about your breathing?
- This is something that you can do no matter where you are (though you might want to keep your eyes open).
- In today's story, God tells Moses that he'll be with him.
- The same is true for us with God. God is with us.
- By paying attention to our breathing and thinking of our breathing as God's name, we're remembering that God is with us.
- We'll talk more about how to remember God is with us next week.

CLOSING PRAYER