

REDISCOVERING OUR PLACE IN GOD'S STORY



ACT 3 / WEEK 1 BIBLE STUDY

OPENING QUESTIONS

- 1) Who is someone in your life that you consider a faithful friend? What traits do they have that make them so faithful? Share a story about how they demonstrated their love and commitment to you.
- 2) Has there been a time when you or someone you know has clearly heard from God? How did He speak to you/ them? (If not, describe how you best experience God in your life today.)
- 3) Describe a time when you felt called by God to do something (or at least knew it was "the right thing to do") but you were reluctant because of fear or insecurity. How did you overcome those fears? What did you discover about yourself or God in the process?

SCRIPTURE **Read Exodus 3:1-22.**

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."

When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am."

"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'"

God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.'

"This is my name forever,
the name you shall call me
from generation to generation.

"Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—a land flowing with milk and honey.'

"The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God.' But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go.

"And I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed. Every woman is to ask her neighbor and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians."

OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

- 1) The passage describes how God hears the cries of the Israelite slaves. In a world where deities were represented by kings and pharaohs, what do you think the significance of this statement by God would have been for Moses and the people of Israel? Whose cries do you think God hears today?
- 2) What does this passage tell us about God? What attributes are highlighted by his interaction with Moses?
- 3) How did Moses respond to God calling him to go to Egypt? What were his excuses for not going?
- 4) For each of Moses's excuses, God had an answer that reassured Moses of God's ability to provide. What is God really asking of Moses in this passage?
- 5) What is the significance of God introducing Himself as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?
- 6) Why do you think God chose Moses to lead his liberation of the Israelite slaves? Why didn't God just set them free on his own?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- 1) In this passage, God chooses a murderer with a stutter to lead his liberation project for Israel. Throughout the Old Testament, we will see that God chooses to use idolators, adulterers, and people of little faith to advance his rescue plan for the world. What does this tell us about God? What does this tell us about the church?
- 2) Moses had five excuses for God about why he wasn't qualified to go. What sort of excuses do we make to keep from responding to God's call?
- 3) God told Moses, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt." Is there a prayer in your life you feel like God isn't answering? Does this passage give a different view of what God might be doing?
- 4) In Act 3 of the biblical narrative, God chooses a covenant people through whom he will bless and rescue the world. In Act 5, that covenant people is now the church. Who are the slaves God might be calling us to bring the good news of freedom to? What has God promised us as we respond in obedience?

SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

Read the news two or three times this week. Each time you do, imagine who might be crying out to God for rescuing. (They may be crying out to the Christian god or any number of imagined deities.) Spend some time writing out your own prayers of petition on their behalf. Ask God to hear their cries and rescue them.

REDISCOVERING OUR PLACE IN GOD'S STORY



ACT 3 / WEEK 2 BIBLE STUDY

OPENING QUESTIONS

- 1) If you have a sibling, describe a "rule" or policy your parents had that was different for the two of you. How did your individual strengths and weaknesses affect what you were or were not allowed to do?
- 2) Paul's letter to the church he established in Corinth was written in response to the struggles and arguments believers were having, partly due to the influences of the Corinthian culture. Learning and philosophy were valued greatly by the Greeks, yet the society was known to embrace and practice paganism and immorality. In what ways might the culture at UVM create struggles or disagreements in the lives of Christian students today?
- 3) Describe a situation when you went along with something you thought was wrong and others thought was ok. What was the outcome in your life and relationships?

SCRIPTURE

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-13.

Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that "We all possess knowledge." But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. But whoever loves God is known by God.

So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that "An idol is nothing at all in the world" and that "There is no God but one." For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.

Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall.

OBSERVATION

QUESTIONS

- 1) Share one thing that stands out to you in these verses or that you find challenging, encouraging, or confusing.
- 2) Why do you think Paul contrasts knowledge and love? Are the two always mutually exclusive?
- 3) What is an idol? What does it mean to worship an idol? Paul describes idols as “nothing at all in the world” but then he makes a big deal about eating what has been sacrificed to idols. Why?
- 4) What does it mean for someone’s conscience to be defiled?
- 5) How can something be sin for one group and not another group? How can your knowledge destroy someone weaker in conscience?

APPLICATION

QUESTIONS

- 1) Some have described idols as anything we give our heart and allegiance to before God. Name some idols - objects, pursuits, rights, or freedoms - in today’s culture. Which ones are always wrong? Which ones might be “nothing at all” to some people, but to others can create significant spiritual harm?
- 2) Consider one of those “idols” that are not spiritually harmful to some but are a stumbling block to someone who is weaker in conscious. What can be done to support those who struggle in these areas? What responsibility does the stronger brother or sister have?
- 3) Paul concludes these verses by saying that if what he eats (does) causes someone to sin he will never eat (do it) again. Give an example of something that can be given up to prevent someone from falling into what they consider sin?
- 4) As we have already seen, despite humanity’s and Israel’s idolatry and failure to be faithful to God, God has remained committed to rescuing his good creation from the effects of our sin. As Act 5 people of the church, though, we must still deal with the effects of idolatry in our own world and the church. Theologian Christopher Wright explains, **“God’s battle with the gods is an essential part of God’s mission. And God’s mission is the blessing of the nations. So the blessing of the nations must ultimately include ridding them of gods that masquerade as protectors and saviors but are actually devouring, destroying, disappointing deceptions. The battle to rid the nations of their false gods is a battle of divine love.”** Discuss two or three idols that are most prevalent in our culture today. What does it mean for us, as the church, to live in a way that lovingly exposes idolatry and demonstrates what it means to worship the true God?

SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

We are all tempted to worship idols - to place our trust, to fear, to desire, and to worship creation rather than the Creator. Spend some time examining your own heart and life. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What are the things in this world that most entice you?
- What are those things you most fear?
- What are things (other than God) that you most often place your trust in?
- What are good things you need but you spend too much time, worry, or effort focused on getting?

Spend some time journaling in response to these questions. Write out a prayer of repentance. Commit yourself, once again, to worshiping, serving, and following Jesus above all of these things.