

1. Introduction

- a. Research on why people go to church = become closer to God
 - i. I'm going to assume we're a pretty normal group of people, and the same is true for us.
- b. This month we're going to give you focused opportunities to draw close to God, to acknowledge his presence, and to invite him to speak to you.
- c. Three things to do: 1) Invite God to speak to you, 2) engage him through active participation, and 3) remember what you hear.

2. Guided Prayer 1: Reading and reflecting on Exodus 3:1-6

This morning, we will be spending some reflective time with a passage of scripture. As Christians, we take seriously the reality of God's presence in the Bible. We know this is the inspired Word of God, so we read expecting to meet with the Lord in it.

I will be guiding us this morning in an intentional method of listening to God in scripture. I like to think of this as reading the Bible *with* Jesus. With one ear, we listen to the written Word of God, and with the other, we listen to the incarnate Word.

This might be a new way of listening to God in scripture for you. It might even feel a little uncomfortable. Don't worry about doing it right or perfectly. You might hear something specific and meaningful, or you might struggle to hear anything. That's okay. We're practicing. It may be that you are simply growing in your ability to slow down and listen to God. You might even fall asleep. Maybe God is telling you that's what you need right now. Let's lean in and trust that God is here and actually wants to be with us this morning.

We'll be listening to Jesus as we wade into Exodus 3:1-6. Our time will be made up of four movements.

- First, I will read the passage slowly. Listen carefully. Is there a word or phrase that stands out today?

- Second, I will read the passage again. As you listen this time, consider *why* this word or phrase stood out.
- Third, I will point out some details of this passage that help us see how God may want to speak to us.
- Finally, I'll give you some space to engage God and reflect on what you're hearing from him today..

As we begin, settle into a comfortable position and take a deep breath. If it is helpful, close your eyes.

Remember, right now we are in the presence of God. Psalm 139 tells us if we go to the highest heights, God is there. If we go to the deepest depths, God is with us. There is nowhere we can go to escape the loving presence of God.

First Movement

Listen now to this passage from Exodus 3. As you listen, pay attention to what stands out. Is there a word or a phrase you are drawn toward? Is there a particular moment of this story where the Holy Spirit seems to be drawing your attention?

Read Exodus 3:1-6

What stands out to you in this passage? Is it a word or phrase, a moment in the story? Where is the Holy Spirit drawing your attention?

20-Second Pause

Second Movement

Let's now mull over what we are noticing. Why is the Spirit drawing this part of the passage to your attention today, in this season of your life? We're not necessarily looking for a theological interpretation. We are listening to what God might be saying to us today.

Read Exodus 3:1-6

What might God have to say to you in this text today? Maybe God has an invitation for you. Perhaps you are recognizing God in a feeling somewhere in your body or in a particular emotion that is surfacing. Maybe God is bringing a word or image to mind, or perhaps it is simply a sense of awe and wonder. What are you noticing today?

20-Second Pause

3. Sermon

a. Verses 1-3

i. God spoke through an angel appearing as fire.

1. It was a mediator of God's voice. Like a cloud, like a donkey. Usually a still small voice we hear inwardly (Elijah), like Jesus in the wilderness.
2. As we think about experiencing the presence of God, we think about listening for his voice. It might come to us through places and means that are unexpected.
3. God won't speak through evil. Eg. "Let's steal and do something good with some of the money."
 - a. **God can speak to you through just about anything.** Just like he spoke to Moses through an angel appearing in a fire.

ii. God spoke progressively through fire.

1. Abraham and the smoking pot (Gen 15 & 17)
2. A bush -- brighter, more noticeable
3. A mountain on fire (Ex 19)
4. Fire from heaven (1 Kings 18)
 - a. **When you become attentive to God's presence, it shines brighter and brighter.**

b. Verses 4-6

i. The progression of Moses' experience of God's presence.

1. He noticed a strange thing -- a bush on fire.
 - a. In spite of herding sheep!
2. He investigated it. He thought, "I must go over and look."
 - a. Could have ignored it. Could have run away.
3. He heard the voice of God.
 - a. It was only after Moses noticed and investigated what God had put in his path that God then spoke to him.
 - b. It doesn't always work this way, but it did with Moses, and maybe with you.
 - c. **When you notice and investigate the circumstances of your life, you can anticipate God speaking to you.**

- ii. Three examples from my life:
 1. God invited me to notice something visually with my eyes -- the rock(s) in the labyrinth.
 2. God invited me to notice something physically in my body -- the motor of racing to prove myself.
 3. God invited me to notice something emotionally -- triggered by a comment that exposed my insecurity.

c. Verses 13-15

- i. What God said to Moses -- He revealed his name.
 1. Significance? It is a way of accessing God and addressing him. It's an invitation to a relationship.
 - a. Example. Dina gave me her name and number. I knew how to reach her.
 - b. God gave Israel access to him. They knew his name. They could reach him. Throughout OT and into NT.
 2. Philippians 2. God gave Jesus the name above every name. The same God who revealed himself to Moses revealed himself to us in Jesus and gives us access when we follow Jesus as Lord.
 - a. **God is inviting you into a relationship by giving you his name.**

4. Guided Prayer 2

First Movement

I wonder, how did you recognize God's presence as you listened? What stood out to you in the teaching? At some point in our teaching this morning, something probably stood out or connected with you. Maybe it is a word or a phrase. Perhaps a fresh insight. Maybe a question surfaced for you. What stood out today? What if that was the Holy Spirit? It might have been a moment that resonated or a phrase that piqued your curiosity. Maybe you questioned something or felt a sense of resistance. Maybe there's a situation in your life that comes to mind.

So, what is it? If it is helpful, you can close your eyes. Remember that God is with us now.

What is God inviting you to notice today?

30-Second Pause

Second Movement

I want to invite you to become curious now about what you noticed. Why do you think the Holy Spirit is bringing this to your attention today? You might sense God inviting you to take some practical step. Maybe you have a sense of God's love or joy or peace, gratitude or wonder. Maybe your heart is troubled, or a deep question has arisen in you.

What is God saying to you through what you noticed?

45-Second Pause

Third Movement

Let's allow what we have been noticing to lead us to prayer now. Take these next two minutes to have a conversation with God. How do you feel led to respond to God today? You may express your gratitude or wonder. You might ask a question. Be honest. You may have some hard questions or frustration to share. That's okay. God can take it.

How do you feel led to respond to God today? Speak to the Lord and listen. These next two minutes are yours.

2-Minute Pause

Transition to Responsive Worship

We're going to move into another time of worship through music. During the first song, I invite you to remain seated and continue holding what you have just been discussing with God. Allow God to continue speaking to you through the lyrics of the song. Then in a few minutes, Carson will invite you to stand and we'll close our time today celebrating the gift of God's presence.