



Discipleship Values



In Ex 33:15-16, we find a very profound prayer, offered by Moses to God:

“If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?”

Through the Old Testament, God’s people tended to take God’s presence for granted. However, when the temple was destroyed and they went into exile, they lamented what they felt was the withdrawal of God’s abiding presence, including his blessing, protection and provision. In 1 Chron 16:10-12, we are told to ‘seek the Lord’, ‘Look to the Lord and his strength’ and ‘seek his face’. In Deut 4:29, we are promised, that if we “seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and all your soul.”

ICEBREAKER: What challenges are you facing this year – in your work? family? ministries? studies? How confident are you, that God will be with you? How hopeful are you that God will miraculously intervene in a tough situation?

PRAY: Loving God, you know all the things we are facing this year. Some of them will be times of joy, but there will also be many challenges and temptations that we will face. We are your people and we commit ourselves and all our circumstances to you. We want to know you better and we need you to give us strength and courage to be faithful and obedient to you. Show us, and continually remind us in tangible ways, that you are with us. We want to see your glory and reflect your image each day.

READ: Exodus 33:12-23, 34:5-9, 34:29-35

By the time Moses got to Mount Sinai, he had come to expect that God would regularly speak to him. He expected to see evidence of God’s presence and that God would guide his people in tangible ways. He had seen God demonstrate His power through mighty acts and signs and wonders.

But, after the ‘golden calf’ incident, things changed. God was angry at the sin of the people and declared, “I will not go with you, because ... I might destroy you on the way.” (Ex 33:3) Moses pleaded with God to not only be present with him on this journey, but also with the people. As a result, God responded “I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name.” (Ex 33:17)

Moses’ relationship with God was also characterised by a recognition of God’s sovereignty and a humble dependence on God, yet also a boldness when petitioning God, both for himself and for the people.

- What things did Moses ask God for in the follow verses:
 - Ex 33: 13b, 13c
 - Ex 33:15

God was displeased with his people and his anger might well have led to divine judgement. By contrast, Moses had “found favour” with God (Ex 33:12)

- Read Ex 33:16. Why do you think that Moses was so keen that God would extend this favour to His people?

In Ex 33:18, Moses boldly asked God: “Show me your glory”. This is a bit weird given that Moses had already seen God reveal himself, his power and his glory, on multiple occasions. For example, God had appeared to him through a burning bush, numerous miracles in the court of Pharaoh, God ‘passing over’ Egypt, the defeat of the Egyptians at the crossing the Red Sea, provision of food and water in the desert and by giving the law. But, here, Moses was effectively asking God: “I really can’t understand what you’re glory looks like, so please show me what you’re talking about”, and “show me who you really are”.

- What do you think about Moses’ request? What ‘picture’ do you have in your head, when you think of ‘the glory of God’?

Moses was the leader of and prophet to God’s people. God’s people had already breached their covenant relationship with their God. This people still had many challenges in front of them, in order to enter and conquer the land of Canaan. God wanted to give Moses a revelation of his nature and character. Moses needed to both know ‘about’ God with his head/ intellect but he also tangibly experienced God’s presence and nearness with all of his senses. He was impacted by both the Word of God and the presence of God.

- Think about the following statements. As the leader of and prophet to God's people ...
 - Moses needed to understand that God has discretion - but also the final say - about issues of grace and judgement (Ex 33:19) - because ...
 - Moses needed to know and experience God's **mercy** and forgiveness because ...
 - Moses needed to know and experience God's **compassion** and grace because ...
 - Moses needed to know and experience God's **goodness** because ...
 - Moses needed to know God's eternal and unchanging nature, as revealed in his name (**the LORD/ Yahweh/ I am who I am**) because ...
 - Moses needed to get a taste of the power of God because ...
 - Moses needed to get a taste of the holiness – and 'otherness' - of God because ...

After this experience at Mt Sinai, Moses would never be the same again.

- How had Moses changed? (Ex 34:29) Why do you think Moses was unaware of the change?
- How did the people react to Moses now, when he returned with the second set of tablets with the Ten Commandments? (Ex 34:30) Do you think there was any change in Moses' credibility, both as the leader of the people and as a prophet?

READ 2 COR 3:12-18

The Exodus passages we've just read, comprise the 'back story' for this passage in 2 Cor 3. In 2 Cor 3:7, the apostle Paul highlighted that the Old Testament law, which was given to Moses on stone tablets, "came with glory", and this was reflected in the face of Moses. But, in 2 Cor 3:8-10, Paul noted that "the ministry of the Spirit", that brings righteousness and is lasting, will "be even more glorious."

In Genesis, we read that men and women were created in God's image (Gen 1:26-27) Because of sin, we now fall short of the 'glory of God'. (Rom 3:23) Only Jesus perfectly reflects God's glory and exactly represents God's image. (Heb 1:3), and "we have seen his glory". (John 1:14)

In Ex 34: 33-35 and 2 Cor 3:13, we read that Moses covered his face and effectively 'veiled' the glory of God that God intended for him to reflect to the sinful people that he journeyed with. But, in 2 Cor 3:18, Paul gives us a pin-sketch of the work of the Spirit in our lives:

"And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit." (NRSV)

- What do we learn about the "ministry of the Spirit" in:
 - 2 Cor 3:18
 - 2 Cor 3:15-16
 - 2 Cor 4:6
 - 2 Cor 3:17
- In 2 Cor 3:12, what two attitudes did Paul say we are to have?

REFLECT, RESPOND, SHARE, PRAY: The verses below give an invitation to boldly and humbly approach God, to seek His face and to ask Him to powerfully transform us to become more like Jesus.

1 John 3:21-22 (NRSV) "Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, **we have boldness before God; and we receive from him whatever we ask**, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him."

James 4:7-10 "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **Come near to God and he will come near to you.** Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."

- What do you need to ask God to do, to meet you where you are at and transform you?