

New Vision

Not God Enough • I AM • Exodus 3:1-15 • 06/03/2018

We like God to be containable in a box. We sometimes feel as if he is just like us. But even though we are made in his image, he is no human. One of our fundamental deficiencies in this life is our vision of God. The God we often imagine in our hearts is not the same God who reveals himself through the Scriptures. Many of the issues in our lives come from trading the true God for a much smaller version. Ironically, our “diminished” God feels, for a while, easier to believe in. He acts in ways we can understand, explain, predict, and even control. He rarely offends us, so we are not embarrassed to talk about him with our friends. He helps us find our meaning and purpose. We think everyone should give him a try. But in the end such a God cannot sustain faith and the realities of this world. He cannot account for the complexities of creation or the mysteries of suffering. He’ll never incite passion, devotion, or worship. He’s too small. “A god small enough to be understood,” the British philosopher Evelyn Underhill observed, will never be “big enough to be worshipped.” At the end of the day a small god leads to big problems.

The truth is, God is big, massively big. He has many attributes that make him uniquely God. There is none like Him. And that is a good thing for us. This series is about how we can know and trust and love this God. It’s about how to hear God when he speaks. It’s about understanding what humility looks like. It’s about discovering that He really is for us and that his Spirit lives in us. It’s about knowing that God is big enough; that he cares enough, and that we can trust him. Join us as we take some time to see who God truly is and see that his attributes are awe-worthy!

Main Point

God becomes God enough when we live in awe of His independence.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Name a “first” in your life that you still remember as meaningful today. Do you still celebrate it? If so, how?

What are some reasons why people like to remember and celebrate “firsts”?

First mentions are powerful and the first mention in the Bible of God’s name is I AM. This mention reveals much to us about who He is and assures us of what He promises.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Invite a volunteer to read Exodus 3:1-5.

What do you learn about God in these verses?

Why do you think God chose this moment when Moses was shepherding at Horeb to call out to him?

In your experience, where do you most often find out for yourself who God really is—when you're expecting it (like, maybe at church) or when you're least expecting it (like, in the midst of your everyday routine)? Why do you think that is?

“Horeb” is another name for Mount Sinai, where Moses would later receive the Ten Commandments. There was nothing extraordinary about the mountain itself, but God would use the place as a reminder to Moses of this very important “first”—when God called him out of the ordinary routine of his life to do the extraordinary work of God. In these first five verses, we also see that God revealed His holiness and power in no uncertain terms. He was the subject in Moses’ life, and He is the subject in ours.

| Invite a volunteer to read Exodus 3:6-12.

How would you characterize Moses’ reaction to God?

Can you relate to Moses here in any way? What is something God has revealed to you or called you to do that made you feel fearful or uncertain?

It was the people enslaved in Egypt who were crying out to God. We don’t know if Moses was crying out to God on their behalf, too, but for whatever reason, God chose to reveal Himself to Moses first. God would answer their prayers. They would learn they could only be satisfied in Him. But He would use Moses to do that.

| Invite a volunteer to read Exodus 3:13-15.

Why do you think Moses didn’t ask “How?” but, “Who?”

If someone were to ask, “Who is God to you?” what would you tell them?

Why do you think God answered Moses in this way, without any qualifying words or lengthy descriptions?

God is before all and in all. God is independent. He wants us and Moses and His people to know that HE IS and there is no one else. Our response is not understanding of God but adoring Him. Intimacy and awe breed

worship. Intimacy on its own can be selfish and awe alone can create coldness but the combination brings authentic worship. “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” – A.W. Tozer, “The Knowledge of the Holy”

Why do you think Tozer believes that our view of God is the most important thing about us?

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Split up into pairs of two and read Romans 1:19-23 and list two take aways from the passage to share with the group.

When you were a kid, how did you view God?

Most of us haven't rejected God, we have reduced Him. How does our culture define God? Does this view match the Bible?

What are ways that you feel "useful" to God?

God's independence means He doesn't need us, does this change your view of God?

Pastor Brady listed possible results of independence from God, can you see any of these in your life?

1. Prayerlessness
2. Forgetfulness
3. Anger in trials
4. Lack of conviction of personal sin
5. Avoidance of Christian community

Which one can you change today?

If your view of God changes through this summer, list one way your life might be different?

Pray with your partner that you would experience this today.

Commentary

3:1 Many ancient gods were associated with a mountain where they were believed to live. The Lord was by no means limited to this mountain, however, as His actions at other mountains and other places make clear (e.g., Gen 22:14; 1Ki 18:20-45; 2Ki 6:17; Isa 2:3; Ezek 28:14,16; Zech 8:3).

3:2-3 The Angel of the Lord was active in Genesis to inform, rebuke, protect, and provide guidance and success (Gen 16:7-11; 21:17; 22:11,15; 24:7,40; 31:11). The account in Exodus 3 describes the following conversation as directly between the Lord and Moses, without concern for how the event occurred. Fire is frequently associated with special displays of God's presence (Ex 13:21-22; 19:18; 40:38; Dt 4:11-24,33-36; Jdg 6:21; 13:20; 1Ki 18:24,38; 2Ch 7:1-3; Ps 18:8,12-13; 50:3; 97:1-5; Isa 66:15-16; Dan 7:9).

3:6 The possibility of danger implicit in human contact with God is reflected throughout Scripture (19:21-24; 24:11; 33:20-23; Gen 32:30; Jdg 13:20-23; Isa 6:5; Ac 9:3-9; 1Tim 6:15-16; Rev 19:11-21). This place was holy, not because of any quality intrinsic to it, but because of God's presence and activity. The tabernacle would be a place set apart by the Lord's presence (Ex 29:43-44). To stay at a distance and remove footwear was then and is now in many cultures a sign of respect and humility. The Lord's self-identification, which began, I am the God of your father, connected this event with the past both by naming the patriarchs and by the wording of the statement (Gen 15:7; 17:1; 26:24; 28:13; 31:13; 35:11; 46:3). It also had the ring of a formal pronouncement by a king (Gen 41:44).

3:8 In Egypt the Israelite flocks were limited to the region of Goshen (see Gen 46:32-34). By comparison, the new land would be spacious... flowing with milk and honey—resentful Levites later used this phrase to describe Egypt (Num 16:12-14). In the land of Canaan, such abundance depended on rain. The word for honey may also describe a sweet syrup made from boiling dates, grapes, and other fruit.

3:11-12 Moses' question— Who am I?—reminds us of the question one of the Hebrews asked Moses in 2:14: "Who are you?" The answer to these questions has nothing to do with Moses' upbringing or abilities. The Lord's promise to Moses, I will certainly be with you, depends for its value on who the Lord is; it matters that He is present because He is willing and able to act. This promise gave Moses grounds for authority that was missing earlier (2:11-15) and continues the important theme of God's personal involvement in the lives of His people (Gen 28:15; 31:3; 46:4; 48:21; Ex 33:14-16; Num 14:43; Jos 1:9; Zech 8:23; Mt 28:20; Jn 14:16; Heb 13:5). To worship God with all the Israelites at the mountain where God and Moses were speaking would be a sign for Moses because he would be able to look back and know that this worship was possible only because of what the Lord had done (Ex 18:1-12; 24:1-11).

3:13-15 God's statement is worded with a finality that sometimes appears at the end of a conversation, typically to put an end to debate without volunteering information, like Pilate's statement, "What I have written, I have written" (Jn 19:22; also Gen 43:14; Ex 16:23; 33:19; 2Sam 15:20; Est 4:16; Jer 15:1-2). The

statements containing I AM (v. 14) use the same Hebrew verb that God's promise, "I will certainly be with you," does in verse 12 (and also 4:12,15).

The wordplay with the verb makes it especially prominent and recalls the promise, as if to remind Moses, "The one who promises to be with you is the one who sends you." Since Hebrew verbs gather much of their temporal meaning from their contexts, the same form can indicate present or future or both at once, depending on the situation. Here the promises in 3:12; 4:12,15 are oriented to the future; so though "will" is appropriate in English, it does not exclude God's presence with Moses at the time they were speaking. Nor does the English present tense "am" in 3:14 exclude the future.