

Campus-Wide Bible Study Fall 2013
Week 10
Exodus 33

For an opening prayer and introductory notes to the leader, see the OPTIONAL supplemental material document on the website.

Read Exodus 33 and pages 117-122 in Goldingay aloud.

Leaders: Use the provided questions as guides to your study of the text. You can choose which questions to focus on—some are better for groups who have new believers or first time bible study participants, others are for people who have a good knowledge of the Bible. You do not need to answer all the questions! Your role as the leader is to keep the conversation focused on the Bible passage or on the application of the passage to the lives of the members of your group.

Discussing the Text:

The Israelites and God have had a tumultuous and dramatic relationship so far. Look closely at Exodus 33:1-6. Describe the emotional contours of these verses.

- Why would the Israelites be asked to take off their ornaments yet again?
- What might this action demonstrate?

Verses 7-11 are quite confusing. God has just told the people that he will not go with them. And yet the people are allowed to go out to this tent and meet God, and something special still happens when Moses goes out to the tent. On the other hand, this tent is a far cry from the tabernacle whose elaborate building instructions have filled chapters 25-31. But God is still willing to meet people there and to manifest himself with Moses.

- What do we make of these verses?
- How is God making a concession to the people?
- How is God's patience demonstrated here? How is God distant or remote here?

Describe Moses' and God's interaction in verses 12-16.

- What is Moses asking for and why? Note too that in verse 14 God promises to go with Moses singularly, but this does not satisfy him.

Up until verse 17 Moses' concern has been for the well-being of Israel. He is putting himself on the line for the sake of his people. But now in verses 17-23 Moses asks for a private display of God's glory, and God obliges this request.

- Consider why Moses would ask for such a display. Why would God respond that way?
- Note too that God still remains free (v 19) even as he condescends to Moses' request.

Linking to Christ

- At the climatic end of the book of Exodus (Ex 40:34-35) God's presence fills the temple that the Israelites have finally constructed. In the New Testament we are taught that through the earthly work and continual reign of Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit has been sent into the world as the renewed presence of God. The Apostle Paul says that "we are the temple of the living God" (2 Corinthians 6:16b) and also that "you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst" (1 Corinthians 3:16). Reflect on what it means that through Christ we have become the temple of God and God's Spirit. What might this mean for a neighborhood? For a local congregation? For individual people?

Discussing the World:

Madeleine L'Engle wrote, "If and that our love is pain,/so does love grow,/ that Love's bewildering reign/ earth's hearts may know." In other words, love and loving relationships are painful and need to be grown and nurtured, but this growth will not take place outside of pain and struggle and they will not make everything make sense.

- How has the Exodus story demonstrated these principals so far?
- Discuss who seems to have suffered and/or loved more, God or Israel.

How have you experienced God's loving discipline in your own life? How have you seen God correct you *and* encourage you?

In Exodus 33:12-16 Moses is able to leverage his relationship with God for the sake of the Israelites and now God's presence and not an angel will go with them. In this way the people will be distinct from "every people on the face of the earth" (v 16) because God's presence will go with them.

- Is God's presence what distinguishes Christian's today?
- If not God's presence then what is the distinguishing mark or attribute?

Writing about Exodus 33 and Moses' request to see God's glory Ellen Davis explains that when Moses makes this request, "it is not Moses the religious-political leader of Israel speaking, but Moses the mystic, the ardent lover of God."¹ We can often get caught up serving God and witnessing to his kingdom with our lives and work, but what about loving God, desiring God?

¹ Davis, Ellen F. *Getting Involved With God: Rediscovering the Old Testament*. Lanham: Cowley, 2001. 157. Print.

- How do we long for God and God's presence and for the simple pleasure of being with one who loves us?