

Story 1: Moses and the Burning Bush

God's  Changes Everything.

(Remember to set up your space: Altar cloth in the center of your circle, unlit candle in the middle, letter tiles scattered, filled water bottle, flip flop, question mark, and scripture book around the candle.)

Additional Supplies Needed for this Session:

sheep clip-art cut-outs (one per participant)

red streamers (one strip approx. 12inches per participant)

OPENING RITUAL:

Leader: **We gather together as God's people, intentionally seeking a word from God, believing that God's word has the power to change us.**

(For this first session, point to the tiles, scrambled on the "altar". Explain: We long to hear God's word. In a world of abundant words, spoken and written, we struggle to discern God's word to us. It takes intentional time and effort to wrestle with the words before us and listen for what God longs for us to hear. On a given day, we may hear a different word from God. Each person may hear the word differently. We gather to intentionally seek God's word, to listen, to wrestle, to discern, to be open to God's word changing us.)

LETTER TILES FOR THIS SESSION: Leaving the other letters scattered, pull out the letters C-A-L-L , spelling the word CALL on your altar area.

STORY FOCUS: God's call changes everything.

GATHERING ACTIVITY:

Give everyone a cut out of a clip-art sheep and the same color pen/marker. Without having anyone else see their sheep, have them write on their sheep 5-6 things that make up their "ordinary day". For example: hockey practice, piano lessons, babysitting a sibling, attending school at Esko High School, playing Nintendo Switch, etc. Then collect and scramble the sheep. Randomly pass out the sheep (if they get their own, tell them not to tell). Take turns having people read the sheep they received and as a group guess whose sheep it is.

THE STORY:

Have someone pick up the scripture book off the altar area and turn to the Exodus story. Have them read the first section of scripture text, Exodus 3: 1-4.

Exodus 3:1-16

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ²There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. ³Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." ⁴When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

Leader: Moses was having an ordinary day, tending his flock as he did every day. It is during this mundane, ordinary task, within his ordinary day, that God shows up and Moses takes notice.

RITUAL ACTION: Light the Candle

Leader: God comes to us, during our mundane tasks, within our ordinary days, and calls us by name to unexpected and extraordinary opportunities to join God in God's work.

(This first session, explain: **we light the candle to remind us of God's presence with us, here amidst the ordinary.** You will light the candle every story session, to remember God's presence.)

Return to the text:

⁵Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Leader: What makes this mountain, this spot of wilderness, 'holy'? God's presence and Moses' awareness of that presence makes it "holy ground", sacred, hallowed, blessed. It is not the uniqueness of the ground, or the location, but rather the relationship between God and Moses that makes it special. God comes to Moses. Moses is directed to take off his shoes in recognition of this "holy space".

RITUAL ACTION: Each story session will include a time to stop and recognize "holy ground" moments. One member of your group should pick up the flip flop and share a response: **"How have you experienced "holy ground" this last week (or since our last gathering). In other words "Share a time amidst your ordinary days that you became aware of God's presence in your life"**. Continue around the circle until everyone has had a chance to share.

Return to the scripture:

⁷Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, ⁸and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

Leader: On this "holy ground", Moses hears that God has observed the misery of God's people and that he knows their suffering. Moses is reminded that God desires deliverance and abundant life for all God's people. God calls Moses to hear what God hears and long for deliverance and abundant life for all.

REFLECT: What misery and suffering do you think God hears today? Where does God long for us to be bearers of deliverance and abundant life?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY: Have each youth take time to write their answers to the reflection question on a streamer strip, representing the flames of the burning bush. After everyone has had a moment to write their responses, squeeze together around the altar area.

Pray: God, we know you hear your people's cries, attune our ears...

Then have youth "pop in" sharing what they have written on their streamer, while holding their streamer high above the altar area and waving it. Wait until all streamers are waving and responses have been heard. Then end with **"God you hear and you come to us. Amen"**. Then invite all to lay their streamer on the altar handing these "cries" over to God.

Return to Scripture:

¹¹But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" ¹²He said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain." ¹³But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" ¹⁴God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"¹⁵God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.

⁶Go and assemble the elders of Israel, and say to them, 'The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying: I have given heed to you and to what has been done to you in Egypt.

Leader: Moses doubts that he will be able to respond adequately to God's call. God reassures Moses "I will be with you". I AM.

RITUAL ACTION: QUESTIONS

Leader: The word of God does not only come to us with answers but rather to stir up within in us deep questions. What is one question you have after encountering this scripture text? This can be a question about the text itself (Ex. Why didn't the bush burn up?) or a question about God (Why if God hears the cries doesn't God act faster?) or a question about your faith (How do I know God is with me?) or your call (Is God calling me to hear the cries of those recently effected by the earthquake in Mexico? If so what am I supposed to do?) Pass around the question mark giving everyone a chance to share a question. Then place the question mark on the altar saying:

Leader: We bring our questions to you God. Amen.

SENDING RITUAL ACTION: Take the water bottle and pass it around the circle. The person holding the water bottle should bless the person on their left. For today's blessing, we remember God's word to Moses "I will be with you." Dipping your finger in the water, trace the sign of the cross on the other's forehead with the words "I AM with you."