

Daily Bible Readings (Unit 3)

April 26

Psalms 18:1-6

April 27

Romans 9:6-16

April 28

Exodus 3:13-20

April 29

Exodus 33:1-6

April 30

Exodus 33:12-16

May 1

Exodus 33:17-23

May 2

Exodus 34:5-8

May 3

Ezekiel 1:1-6, 22-28

May 4

Isaiah 6:1-13

May 5

1 Kings 19:1-8

May 6

Romans 11:1-5

May 7

1 Kings 19:9-13

May 8

1 Kings 19:14-18

May 9

1 Kings 19:19-21

May 10

Psalms 99:1-9

May 11

Luke 9:18-27

May 12

Luke 9:28-36

May 13

Matthew 17:9-13

May 14

Luke 1:12-17

May 15

Exodus 34:29-35

May 16

Exodus 34:29-35

May 17

Psalms 48:1-14

May 18

Ezekiel 10:1-5

May 19

Revelation 14:14-20

May 20

Daniel 7:1-8

May 21

Daniel 7:9-14

May 22

Daniel 7:15-22

May 23

Daniel 7:23-28

May 24

Psalms 107:17-22

May 25

Matthew 18:10-14

May 26

2 Corinthians 13:11-13

May 27

2 John 4-6

May 28

1 John 4:7-10

May 29

1 John 4:11-21

May 30

1 John 5:6-12

Unit 3

God Revealed

In the following five lessons, we will look at some of the various ways God has been revealed in the biblical account.

The lesson title for May 2 is “God Declares Who God Is.” As we study this lesson, we will come to understand who God is in light of the revelation to Moses. God self-revealed to Moses as “a God who is compassionate and merciful, very patient, full of great loyalty and faithfulness, . . . forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion” (Exodus 34:6-7). In what ways have you experienced these characteristics of God in your life today?

The lesson for May 9 is titled “God in the Quiet Sound.” As we read Elijah’s story, we will

notice a number of ways that God spoke to Elijah: with a meal, through a messenger, on a mountain, and with the call to a new mission. This lesson invites us to explore the various ways God continues to speak and be revealed to us today.

The lesson for May 16 is titled “Jesus Transformed.” What did the disciples learn about God and Jesus Christ through that experience? What does Jesus’ transfiguration teach us about God and Jesus Christ?

The lesson for May 23 is titled “The Indestructible King.” God and the divine plans for the people are revealed through vivid and symbolic imagery. How did Daniel’s apocalyptic vision offer hope to the people of Israel as they lived under the oppressive rule of foreign powers? How does this ancient vision reveal God’s message of hope to us today?

The final lesson in this unit is titled “God Is Love.” The most powerful way that God is revealed to us is through the gift of Jesus. This lesson invites us to embrace and to celebrate God’s all-encompassing love.

May 2

Lesson 9

God Declares Who God Is

Focal Passage: Exodus 33:12-23; 34:5-8

Background Text: Exodus 33:1-6, 12-23; 34:5-8

Purpose Statement: To understand who God is in light of God's revelation to Moses

Exodus 33:12-23

¹²Moses said to the LORD, "Look, you've been telling me, 'Lead these people forward.' But you haven't told me whom you will send with me. Yet you've assured me, 'I know you by name and think highly of you.' ¹³Now if you do think highly of me, show me your ways so that I may know you and so that you may really approve of me. Remember too that this nation is your people."

¹⁴The LORD replied, "I'll go myself, and I'll help you."

¹⁵Moses replied, "If you won't go yourself, don't make us leave here. ¹⁶Because how will anyone know that we have your special approval, both I and your people, unless you go with us? Only that distinguishes us, me and your people, from every other people on the earth."

¹⁷The LORD said to Moses, "I'll do exactly what you've asked because you have my special approval, and I know you by name."

¹⁸Moses said, "Please show me your glorious presence." ¹⁹The LORD said, "I'll make all my goodness pass in front of you, and I'll proclaim before you the name, 'The LORD.' I will be kind to whomever I wish to be kind, and I will have compassion to whomever I wish to be compassionate. ²⁰"But," the LORD said, "you can't see my face because no one can see me and live." ²¹The LORD said, "Here is a place near me where you will stand beside the rock. ²²As my glorious presence passes by, I'll set you in a gap in the rock, and I'll cover you with my hand until I've passed by. ²³Then I'll take away my hand, and you will see my back, but my face won't be visible."

Exodus 34:5-8

⁵The LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him, and proclaimed the name, "The LORD." ⁶The LORD passed in front of him and proclaimed:

"The LORD! The LORD!

a God who is compassionate and merciful,
very patient,
full of great loyalty and faithfulness,
⁷ showing great loyalty to a thousand generations,
forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion,
yet by no means clearing the guilty,
punishing for their parents' sins
their children and their grandchildren,
as well as the third and the fourth generation."

⁸At once Moses bowed to the ground and worshipped.

Key Verse: "The LORD said, 'I'll make all my goodness pass in front of you, and I'll proclaim before you the name, 'The LORD.' " (Exodus 33:19).

I like to look at photographs and take walks down memory lane as I recall family celebrations, vacations, and special events. When I look at Easter pictures of when I was a child, I remember that Mother helped my sister and me dye Easter eggs, and she made our Easter dresses. When I look at pictures taken when I was in college, I remember Dad loading and unloading the trunk of his car at the beginning and the end of each college year with all the things students need for dorm life.

Our parents were good to my sister and me. When we look at family photographs, we are reminded of their goodness and love.

The Lord said to Moses, "I'll make all my goodness pass in front of you" (Exodus 33:19). That is an awesome promise! So many centuries later, we continue to see God's goodness pass in front of us. During this season of Easter, we are especially mindful of God's goodness in Jesus' glorious resurrection.

This lesson begins a new unit titled "God Revealed," through which we will discover some of the ways God has been revealed in the biblical account. One way we can respond to these

revelations is through spiritual practices such as praise, thanksgiving, and song. In this lesson, we will come to understand who God is in light of God's revelation to Moses.

Who Will Go With Me?

Have you ever asked, "Who will go with me?" Many times, we want someone to go with us, to wait with us in a doctor's office, to be another set of ears when we hear the medical report, to help us navigate traffic, to offer guidance if decisions need to be made, to join us in cheering on our favorite team.

One day, when Moses was going about his daily work and "taking care of the flock for his father-in-law Jethro, Midian's priest . . . a flame of fire in the middle of a bush" (Exodus 3:1-2) caught his attention. God spoke to Moses "out of the bush" (3:4) and called him to lead the people out of bondage in Egypt. God did not ask Moses to take on this daunting task alone but promised, "I'll be with you" (3:12).

Perhaps one of the reasons God called Moses to take on this challenging work was because Moses was not timid about expressing his feelings. As Moses stood before the burning bush in God's presence, the promise "I'll be with you" was not enough to convince him to immediately say yes. Moses was not afraid to speak up and offer several excuses as to why he was not the right one to fulfill this task.

Finally, when God said that Moses' brother, Aaron, would also go with him, Moses realized he had run out of excuses. He accepted the task God set before him and went back to Egypt, carrying "the shepherd's rod from God in his hand" (4:20). Moses had the assurance of God's promise "I'll be with you" and also Aaron's company when he approached Pharaoh, when he led the Israelites out of Egypt to freedom, and when he journeyed with the Israelites through the wilderness. He had someone to go with him!

The Background Text and Focal Passage for this lesson describe events that happened after Moses and the Israelites fled from Egypt and set up camp at Mount Sinai. Moses had experienced God's presence and faithfulness many times over, and Aaron had been at his side.

While the people were camped at the base of Mount Sinai, God summoned Moses to ascend the mountain. There, God gave Moses instructions to share with the Israelites about the way they would live in community as God's chosen people. Then, "when God finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, God gave him the two covenant tablets, the stone tablets written by God's finger" (31:18).

Unfortunately, the Israelites grew weary of waiting for Moses to descend the mountain, and they decided to take matters into their own hands. They asked Aaron to make gods for them (32:1). Aaron gave in to the people's request and "made a metal image of a bull calf" (32:4). The Israelites turned away from God and worshiped this metal image with praise and celebration.

God knew what the Israelites were doing and was furious with them (32:10). When Moses "got near the camp and saw the bull calf and the dancing, [he] was furious. He hurled the tablets down and shattered them in pieces at the foot of the mountain" (32:19). He confronted Aaron and the Israelites about their sinful actions and the punishment they would endure (32:20-35).

The Background Text and Focal Passage for this lesson record the conversation that took place between the Lord and Moses after the incident with the bull calf. It is helpful at this point to go back to Genesis and the account of God's call to Abram to journey to "the land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). God made several promises to Abram, including "all the families of the earth will be blessed because of you" (Genesis 12:3) and "I give this land to your descendants" (Genesis 12:7).

After the incident with the metal bull calf, Moses and the Israelites witnessed the Lord's fury. Were they now wondering what would happen regarding God's promise to Abram generations earlier? Again, Moses and the Israelites witnessed the Lord's faithfulness when God told Moses, "Go and leave this place, you and the people whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt. Go to the land I promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when I said, 'I'll give it to your descendants' " (Exodus 33:1).

In spite of being furious over the Israelites' sin, God remained faithful to the promise. However, there seems to have been a catch. God said to Moses, "I'll send a messenger before you. . . . But I won't go up with you because I would end up destroying you along the way since you are a stubborn people" (verses 2-3).

How do you think Moses felt when he heard God speak these words? Did he, too, want to step aside, perhaps let Aaron take on the role of leadership without him? We would understand if he did. But Moses did not step aside. As he did at the burning bush, he expressed his feelings before God.

One of the key themes in the Bible is God's faithful presence with the people. When the Israelites first left Egypt, "the LORD went in front of them during the day in a column of cloud to guide them and at night in a column of lightning to give them light" (13:21). God also said the divine presence would be known in the person of "a messenger" or "an angel" (23:20; CEB, NRSV) to guide and to protect them. According to the NRSV, the messenger, or angel, was understood to be "the Lord in person."

We can understand Moses' dismay and confusion in discovering that, instead of God going with him, God promised to send a messenger or an angel ahead of the people (33:2-3). Moses responded, "Look, you've been telling me, 'Lead these people forward.' But you haven't told me whom you will send with me" (verse 12).

In other words, Moses was asking, “Who is this messenger or this angel if you yourself are not with him?” Moses was not accepting the condition of having “a substitute for God’s presence among the Israelites.”¹ He persisted, saying, “Remember too that this nation is your people” (verse 13). Do we hear Moses emphasizing the word *your*?

When have you openly expressed your feelings before God? When have you asked God, “Who will go with me?”

God Will Go

When speaking of the Lord’s presence, Moses declared, “Only that distinguishes us, me and your people, from every other people on the earth” (Exodus 33:16). I wonder if Moses had any idea of the far-reaching truth of that statement. He had in mind, specifically, the journey that lay before him and the challenges the Israelites might face as they came to inhabit the land God had promised them. He saw no point in continuing that journey if God would not go with them (verse 15).

Without God’s presence, they and the other nations they would encounter would not know they had God’s “special approval” (verse 16). The Israelites would not know themselves to be the chosen people of God. It was this relationship with God that gave Moses and the Israelites a purpose and a reason to keep on going. Without God’s presence, they would be lost.

God made the divine presence known in a real way generations later in the birth of Jesus. In Matthew 1, we read this announcement: “*Look! A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, And they will call him, Emmanuel. (Emmanuel means ‘God with us.’)*” (Matthew 1:23). In the closing sentence in the Gospel of Matthew, the risen Jesus proclaims, “Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age” (Matthew 28:20).

The risen Christ assures us of God’s everlasting presence in our lives on earth and in our eternal life to come. It is this promise of presence that reminds us that we have God’s “special approval” (Exodus 33:16). It is this assurance of God’s continuing presence that gives us the strength and the courage to journey through the challenging places in our lives.

Early one Sunday morning, I received a phone call from my uncle with the unexpected news that my cousin had died. She was one of my best friends. As the news slowly sank in, I wondered, *Who will I call now? Who will I exchange text messages with when something newsworthy happens?* Her death left an empty space in my life.

As I experienced this grief and loss, one question I did not ask, however, was, *How will I get through this?* I already knew the answer to that question: God. God said to Moses, “I’ll go myself, and I’ll help you” (verse 14). God continues to make the same promise to us. God journeys with us through all the challenges and hardships we face. God helps us through our sorrow, fear, and uncertainty.

In what ways have you experienced God’s presence, especially during times of crisis and uncertainty?

God’s Goodness

Moses wanted to know his Lord more closely. He said, “Show me your ways so that I may know you” (Exodus 33:13) and “Please show me your glorious presence” (verse 18). God revealed the divine character to Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD! The LORD! A God who is compassionate and merciful, very patient, full of great loyalty and faithfulness, . . . forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion” (34:6-7).

We see these characteristics of God displayed many times throughout Israel’s history. God faithfully delivered the Israelites to the Land of Promise. God forgave their sin and rebellion time after time. Even after their punishment of exile to foreign lands, God allowed them to return to their homeland and rebuild the Temple. The Book of Psalms contains songs and poems that proclaim God’s ongoing compassion, mercy, and patience.

God proclaimed, “I will be kind to whomever I wish to be kind, and I will have compassion to whomever I wish to be compassionate” (33:19). We are fortunate that God’s kindness and compassion are based on God’s choice and not on our merit!

In 1854, Frederick W. Faber wrote, “There’s a wideness in God’s mercy like the wideness of the sea; there’s a kindness in God’s justice, which is more than liberty.”² The wideness in God’s mercy reaches across space and time. God chose to grant Moses’ request for mercy for the stubborn people (34:9) of Israel and blessed them with God’s “glorious presence” (33:18) as they journeyed through the wilderness to the Land of Promise. God shows divine mercy to all humankind in the person of Jesus Christ.

How have you experienced God’s compassion, mercy, patience, loyalty, faithfulness, and forgiveness?

Praise, Thanksgiving, and Song

After Moses experienced God’s glorious presence, he “bowed to the ground and worshipped” (Exodus 34:8). Like Moses, we too can respond to God’s presence through spiritual practices such as praise, thanksgiving, and song, which are all acts of worship.

As you engage with these practices this week, review your responses to the questions in this lesson, and think about the ways God has made divine “goodness pass in front of you” (33:19). You may want to make a list in your journal or on a separate piece of paper. You may want to look through photographs that remind you of God’s presence and provision in your life.

Respond to God's goodness by offering your praise, thanksgiving, and songs. You may want to kneel and offer a quiet prayer. You may feel led to go outside and shout alleluia! You may want to sing a hymn or a worship song or compose your own song that expresses your feelings.

God graces our lives with faithful presence, compassion, and love. Our natural response is worship!

Holy Lord, we thank you for your compassion, mercy, patience, loyalty, faithfulness, and

forgiveness. Accept our words and songs of praise and thanksgiving. Make us always mindful of your presence with us; in Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

⌚From *The CEB Study Bible*, Old Testament; page 140.

⌚*Hymnal*, 121