



ASCENT

Following Moses Up the Path to Deeper Intimacy with God

In the book of Exodus we're told that, after rescuing them from Pharaoh's clutches and bringing them out of Egypt, God brings His people through the desert to the base of Mount Sinai. There they remain for nearly a year while God teaches them what it means to be His people.

This is where Moses receives the Ten Commandments and other instruction, all of which he passes on to God's people. But this year-long period of preparation and equipping isn't just one in which God's people receive His word, important as that is. This is a time when they encounter God *Himself*.

At Mount Sinai God reveals His holy and loving character to Moses and His people and invites them to learn how to approach him in worship and adoration. It is not just a time of learning information *about* God, it is a time of growing in intimacy *with* God. After all, God made us for relationship with Himself. It is the reason we exist.

The portion of Scripture we'll be looking at begins with God descending to the top of Mount Sinai and then inviting Moses up to meet him:

"The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up." (Exodus 19.20)

Studying the story of Moses and the Israelites at the mountain as told in Exodus 19 through 34, we'll be following God's people into deeper intimacy with God. In each message we'll explore a different aspect of God's invitation to draw nearer to Him as well as how He desires us to respond.

Are you ready to grow closer to God? To deepen your worship life? To live with a larger view of God? To grow in intimacy with Him?

This series is about all the wonders, joys, and challenges that come with saying yes to God's invitation to draw near to Him. Join us as we follow Moses up the path into deeper intimacy with God.

May 1 God's Gracious Invitation and Our Response
Exodus 19.1-25, 24.1-2 (19.20)

All intimacy with God begins at his invitation. God always takes the first step. God calls us; He says, "Come." God condescends to draw near to us, and then He graciously calls us to draw near to Him, to come "further up and further in," as CS Lewis put it.

Our corporate worship each week reestablishes our identity as God's people, and recalibrates our sense of reality with God occupying the center. Our drawing near to God rests on our experience of God's faithfulness in the past, as He "carried us on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (Exodus 19.7). As God's people we worship God together, side by side, and we approach God alone, face to face.

May 8 God's Glorious Character and Our Response: Part One
Exodus 19.14-19, 20.18-21, 24.10, 33.18-34.8 (20.18-21)

As we approach God, He reminds us that He is transcendent (from outside of the created realm, unlike any created being), holy (exalted, unique, and separate in every aspect of his character), and loving (relating to his people with compassion and grace and deeply desiring their best). Intimacy with God is grounded in encountering Him, *seeing* Him. Each time we approach God we remember what is true about His nature and character. While God's transcendence and holiness may tempt us to pull back in fear, God's love compels us to step forward in awe.

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Interlude

May 15 Grief to Joy! The Final Chapter
John 21.1-25

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For three years Jesus prepared his disciples to live for Him, a call He reiterated in the upper room discourse on the last night He spent with them. And then, in the ensuing

hours, they all failed Him. It is tempting to believe that our sin and failure disqualify us from Kingdom service. Jesus shows us otherwise. By serving the disciples a meal He shows that His communion with them is unbroken by their sin, and by reiterating His call to love the sheep He reinstates the failed disciples. Kingdom ministry stands on His grace, not our performance.

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May 22 God's Glorious Character and Our Response, Part Two
Exodus 19.14-19, 20.18-21, 24.10, 33.18-34.8 (34.8)

When we worship, we do not merely remind ourselves and one another what is true about God. At some point in our daily and weekly worship our focus shifts from what is true about God to God Himself. We encounter Him, we come face to face with *Him*. Moving from "He is" to "You are," we experience his transcendent, holy, and loving character afresh. This fosters a response of awe and intimacy, moving us to bow before God and worship Him, giving physical expression to our internal devotion and adoration.

May 29 God's Sacrificial Provision and Our Response
***Communion* Exodus 24.1-22, 33.6-7a, Hebrews 9.11-10.14**

As fallen human beings, we have no footing on which to stand before God. We cannot approach God on the basis of our own merit. Unholy humanity cannot approach holy God . . . unless God makes provision for us and opens the way – which He did. God established us in a covenant relationship that is grounded in His own faithfulness to Himself and to us. Rooted in sacrifice (the innocent dying in place of the guilty), God's covenant makes it possible for us to stand before God as though innocent and deserving, our sin, our guilt, and our shame washed clean. This covenant was anticipated in the Old Testament, at Mount Sinai, and was fulfilled in the New Testament, at Golgotha.

June 5 God's Self-Revelation and Our Response
Exodus 24.1-7 (24.3 and 24.7)

Because God transcends the world He made, because God is invisible (or opaque) to us, we can only know about God what He graciously chooses to reveal to us. God gave His people the gift of His word to guide us in our understanding of Him and of the life to which He calls us as His people. Even more, He gave us His word to guide us into *relationship* with Him – not merely to inform us but to invite us. The response He desires of us is to take His word to heart, as His word to us, letting it determine how we say "Yes" to Him – how we believe and how we live, saying with the Israelites: "We will do everything the Lord has commanded."

June 12 God's Inscrutability and Our Response
Exodus 24.12-18

God is personal and knowable, and He has given us His word in order that we might know Him better. But there is much about our infinite and transcendent God that is, and will always be, mysterious and inscrutable. God is not at our beck and call. His ways are not our ways. Intimacy with God must make allowance for this: approaching God on His terms and not on our own. Surrender, relinquishment, abandonment – these are qualities necessary for us to grow in genuine intimacy with God.

June 19 God's Continual Presence and Our Response
Exodus 33.7-11, 34.29-35

God does not desire for our relationship with Him to be a series of “mountain top experiences.” God is present with us and available to us always, not just in the occasional moving Sunday morning worship “experience.” He desires for us to interact with him daily and all throughout each day – and He desires for that interaction to be transformative of us, to leave its mark on us. Time in God's presence gives God opportunity to form His likeness in us.