



TEENTEXT *MIDDLE SCHOOL*

GO DEEP. BE REAL. LET GO.

SEPTEMBER 2017

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Week of	Lectionary Selection
September 3	Exodus 3:1-15 (NRSV)
September 10	Matthew 18:15-20 (NRSV)
September 17	Matthew 18:21-35 (NRSV)
September 24	Matthew 20:1-16 (NRSV)



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Each monthly issue of *TeenText* is filled with background about the weekly scriptures, a series of provocative questions that encourage the youth to respond and share, activities centered around the text, and supplemental media which digs deeper into the story by exploring other dimensions through the use of song lyrics, poetry, visual art, and movie clips. For more information contact: info@educationalcenter.org or visit: www.educationalcenter.org



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September 3, 2017

I. SETTING THE STAGE:

Bible

Paper, pens, pencils, and/or markers

Computer + web access (for YouTube videos, film clips, and to enlarge art/images)

II. TODAY'S TEXT: Exodus 3:1-15 (NRSV)

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." 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.

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, ⁸ and 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." 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.”

¹³ But 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?” ¹⁴ God 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.’” ¹⁵ God 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.

III. ENTERING THE STORY:

Moses, Moses, Moses: a baby, a Hebrew baby, in a basket, in an Egyptian river; a prince raised in Pharaoh’s palace; an eyewitness to a beating; a killer and a fugitive running; a mountain-side shepherd beyond the wilderness in Midian. Now, Moses sees a burning bush and hears a voice.

In previous weeks we have already seen that weather is never just weather and water is never just water. Let’s add wilderness to the list. The text says Moses is even beyond the wilderness. Wilderness is never just wilderness. Whoever enters the wilderness emerges with a new way of perceiving, a new vision of how the world works, a new understanding of how they see themselves. Or they don’t emerge at all.

All of this happens before “Let my people go!” (the Exodus) and before “Thou shalt not... (the Ten Commandments)”. This story is the first visit of Moses to the mountain. That mountain is sometimes known as “Horeb” and other times as “Sinai”. It is the same mountain he returns to after leading the Israelites out of Egypt.

After seeing the bush, and hearing the voice, Moses receives the name of God. The name is represented by four letters, YHWH. From the Hebrew verb “to be”, it is translated as “I AM WHO I AM”.

A mountain-side shepherd with a long history goes up the mountain. Who emerges?

IV. EXPLORING THE STORY:

The most effective questions and activities (*ENGAGE*)—the ones that help participants connect their story with God’s story each week—are often those that are based on your personal knowledge of the participants and where they are. Listen carefully to their responses; ask follow-up questions that help them reflect on the text and their lives, right now, right where they are.

GO DEEP

(What’s happening in the story?)

1. What was Moses doing when he came across the burning bush? Where was he tending his flock?
2. What does Moses notice about the bush? What happens when he goes to investigate the mysterious burning?

3. How does Moses respond to the voice coming from the bush? What does the voice tell him to do? Why?
4. How does God speak about God's own identity? How does God identify to Moses? What is Moses' reaction to this?
5. How does God describe the situation the Israelites are in? What do God promise to do for the Israelites? What role is Moses to play in God's plan?
6. How does Moses react to God's call to lead the Israelites? What promise does God make to Moses?
7. How does God say God should be identified? How does this compare to what he says when he first greets Moses?

BE REAL

(What connections can you make between the story and the world around you?)

1. What causes God to act on behalf of the Israelites? Where do you see similar injustices in our world?
2. Where, throughout history, have you seen people, like Moses, leading the charge against such oppression? Where do you see these people today?
3. How does this text speak to those situations? Are God's promises just to Moses and his ancestors? Why or why not?
4. For the Israelites, their faith in God and their identity as God's chosen people was passed down from generation to generation. Is that still how religious faith works? Is this more true in some parts of the world than others? Why or why not?

LET GO

(Be open to discovering how this story is happening in your own life.)

1. Moses is, understandably, afraid to face Pharaoh. Have you ever been afraid to follow God's call? When have you felt God's promise to Moses to be true in your own life?
2. What does God have to do to get Moses' attention? Do you ever feel like you could use a burning bush to make you stop and listen? Have you ever had something that made you react like Moses did?
3. How have you experienced God speaking? Does it always happen in ways that are so dramatic?
4. How did this encounter change Moses? How does the person who entered the wilderness emerge differently on the other side? How have you been changed by your own experiences in the wilderness?

V. EXPLORING FURTHER:

A note about links: when TeenText goes to press all links are live and in working order. Links sometimes move or are renamed. If a link does not work for you try entering the search terms in Google.

ENGAGE—How do the experiences we have change the way we view and understand God? Explore this with the following activity. Give each student a few minutes to write down three things they used to think or believe about God or the world that no longer hold true. For

each thing, have youth think about any events or experiences that may have lead them to these changes.

Choose one statement and draw a 'map' of these experiences. If students are willing, share your maps with the group. How is the person at the start of the map different from the person on the end? How does this relate to Moses' journey we read about today?

Below is an artist's interpretation of the story we read today. The painting, titled Burning Bush, is by Sebastien Bourdon (date unknown). When you look at the image, what do you notice? How many characters are present? Who are they? How does Moses appear? How is he reacting to the bush?

Do you think this is similar to what Moses saw with his own eyes? Why or why not? How does this inform your understanding of today's text?



(Image Source: Wikiart.org)

VI. BETWEEN SUNDAYS:

The stories we learn from the Bible are not only helpful to us at church, but they also can help us live our lives each day. Consider the following question to see how this week's text might be challenging them to live differently as they go about their normal routines (school/sports/social events).

Moses is fearful of the task God has set before him. What are you scared of? What is causing you worry or anxiety? Do you hear God's promise to be with you? How can you lean on that promise this week?