

Connection Group Discussion Questions

For the week of June 26, 2016

Exodus 3:5-14; John 8:56-58

These questions are to be used as a spring board for discussion.

Answers may or may not be found in the sermons.

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

⁵ Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ He 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.

⁷ Then 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. ⁹ The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." ¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" ¹² He 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.'" *Exodus 3:5-14*

⁵⁶ "Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad." ⁵⁷ Then the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am." *John 8:56-58*

Common English Bible (CEB)

⁵ Then the LORD said, "Don't come any closer! Take off your sandals, because you are standing on holy ground." ⁶ He continued, "I am the God of your father, Abraham's God, Isaac's God, and Jacob's God." Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God. ⁷ Then the LORD said, "I've clearly seen my people oppressed in Egypt. I've heard their cry of injustice because of their slave masters. I know about their pain. ⁸ I've come down to rescue them from the Egyptians in order to take them out of that land and bring them to a good and broad land, a land that's full of milk and honey, a place where the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites all live. ⁹ Now the Israelites' cries of injustice have reached me. I've seen just how much the Egyptians have oppressed them. ¹⁰ So get going. I'm sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." ¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I to go to Pharaoh and to bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" ¹² God said, "I'll be with you. And this will show you that I'm the one who sent you. After you bring the people out of Egypt, you will come back here and worship God on this mountain." ¹³ But Moses said to God, "If I now come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' they are going to ask me, 'What's this God's name?' What am I supposed to say to them?" ¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I Am Who I Am. So say to the Israelites, 'I Am has sent me to you.'" -Exodus 3:5-14

⁵⁶ Your father Abraham was overjoyed that he would see my day. He saw it and was happy." ⁵⁷ "You aren't even 50 years old!" the Jewish opposition replied. "How can you say that you have seen Abraham?" ⁵⁸ "I assure you," Jesus replied, "before Abraham was, I Am." -John 8:56-58

Connection Questions:

1. "I am" sayings in the Bible can mean, "It is I," "I am He," or "I exist," or most commonly, "I am." Jesus uses the "I am" saying all throughout the gospel of John. Why do you think this was so important for the writer of John to include?

2. When Moses encountered the image of a burning bush in the wilderness God says to him, "I am." Why do you think the "I am" statement is emphasized in this situation?

3. The writer of John uses the other three synoptic gospels as a source to put forth a systematic theology, or an organized set of beliefs in God. Now in this light, discuss why you think the "I am" statements are an important part of John's theology.

4. All throughout John we see an emphasis on Jesus being closely connected to God. Jesus says, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me." Why is this important to John?

5. Theologian Barbara Brown says, "For many people the hardest thing to believe in the wilderness is that God has anything to do with it all." Discuss what you think this statement means. How can your faith address this issue?

6. How can Jesus be both Son and Creator at the same time or can he? How did the early church resolve this issue?

7. In the 1st chapter of John's gospel Jesus is connected with the beginning of Creation. "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God." (John 1:1) What was John's purpose with this beginning verse?

8. How important is it that we confront the issue of God's existence and his involvement in the world in having a healthy faith? Why or why not?

9. What is the difference in believing in God with your mind versus your heart? What do we risk losing with just a rational approach to God? What do we risk losing with just a heart approach to God? How are they different? Do we need both?

10. What are the problems with trying to explain the existence of God? Can you absolutely know God 100% with your heart and mind? Why or why not?