



GETTING CLOSER
TO GOD



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Prayer

Our Father, I offer praise to You.
I want to draw closer to You each day.
Help me to spend time in fellowship with You.
Teach me to delight in Your presence.
I pray with Moses, "show me Your glory."
Fill me with the Holy Spirit so that I might love others.
Share with me Your burden for the hurting and the lost.
Let me tell others of Jesus with passion.
Change me and those around me.
May others see Your Spirit in my life.
I pray that our Church will be a powerful witness in
Chicago.
Let me be all that I can be in the days You have given me to
serve You.

In the name of Jesus, our Savior and Lord,
Amen

THE
MOODY
CHURCH

GETTING CLOSER TO GOD

Introduction

Though God is everywhere, we are still invited to “draw near” to develop our confidence in Him, enjoy His company, and experience His presence. In the Bible, God is often pictured as One who is nearer to some people than to others; sometimes He extends His hand, at other times He hides His face. We’ve probably experienced both responses.

When the psalmist wanted to tell us something about the relationship Moses had with God, he wrote, “He made known His ways to Moses, His deeds to the people of Israel” (Psalm 103:7). While the vast multitude of Israelites saw only God’s outward deeds, Moses saw God’s character, beauty and faithfulness.

No person on earth has ever enjoyed the intimacy Moses had with God. “The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend” (Exodus 33:11). No one spent more time with God; no one understood Him better.

Just think of what would happen if we as individuals and as a church were to “get closer to God.” We don’t have the opportunity of meeting God on Mount Sinai, nor can we expect Him to write His laws on our own stone tablets. But we can speak to Him as Moses did; we can draw near to Him in repentance and faith. Yes, we can actually meet with Him in the spiritual Holy of Holies, the very room that was built under Moses’ direction.

If we were to **Get Closer to God** as a church, we might discover that:

The Moody Church is a trusted place where anyone can connect with God and others.

The Moody Church is a place where all who attend experience the presence of God.

The Moody Church is a place where anyone who is lonely, discouraged, hurting, and confused can find love, acceptance, hope, forgiveness, and encouragement.

The Moody Church is a place that affirms the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation and the only One who can connect us with God.

The Moody Church is a place of “irresistible influence,” a church that changes our neighborhood, our city and our country.

The Moody Church is an equipping church that sends missionaries and workers around the world for permanent and short-term mission assignments.

The Moody Church gives sacrificially to meet all of our ministry needs.

The Moody Church seeks God, inviting Him to lead us in the days ahead as we anticipate an expanding ministry in our community.

GETTING CLOSER TO GOD

Fall Series 2004

This fall we will be studying the book of *Exodus*, doing our best to understand the life and experiences of Moses that made him the outstanding man of God whom we still admire today. We might envy Moses who spoke “face to face with God,” but we have the same privilege as he. Let me emphasize again that we are not able to hide in a cave and see God’s glory pass by, but in Christ we also stand in the presence of the Almighty unveiled, speaking directly to our Lord. In an era of grace, the privileges of Moses become those of the most humble Christian.

In the messages titled, *Getting Closer to God*, I try to begin where all of us are and, through the life of another, lead us to where we should be. God invites us to draw near, to come into His throne room and speak to Him as Moses did. If these messages help whet our appetite for more of the Almighty, they will have fulfilled their purpose.

Please note that in the pages that follow, the sermon topics are given for each week along with questions for interaction and family involvement. Together in our Sunday School, Adult Bible Fellowships and personal devotions we want to focus on the life of Moses, letting God’s Word change our hearts.

Join us as we take some giant steps in God’s direction.

LIFE IN THE PENALTY BOX

September 12, 2004

EXODUS 1, 2

There are lessons Moses learned in the desert that could never have been learned in the palace. We might never be confined to a hot desert, but all of us have had our “desert experiences” when we don’t see God in our lives, but we are burdened by hopelessness and monotony.

MEMORY VERSE

God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them. -Exodus 2:24, 25

RESPONDING TO THE STORY

- What lessons did Moses learn in the desert that he would not have learned in the palace?
- Can you think of an experience that you deeply resented but in the end it benefited you?

FOR THE FAMILY

- Have a child look up the word *shepherd* in an encyclopedia to better understand what Moses experienced in the desert.
- Help your children list as many characteristics as you can that highlight the similarities between us and sheep.
- Share experiences that you have had where your future looked disappointing and hopeless. What did you learn during those times?

EXCUSES! EXCUSES!

September 19, 2004

EXODUS 3, 4

When Moses was called to return to Egypt, we might expect him to say, “Well yes, of course I will, I’m the natural choice!” But he offers five excuses for not wanting to return to the country where he was rejected.

MEMORY VERSE

The LORD said to him, “Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.

-Exodus 4:11

RESPONDING TO THE STORY

- What are the most common excuses we use when we don’t want to do our duty?
- Ask yourself how these excuses reflect unfavorably on God and why He is not amused with our tendency to wiggle out of obedience.

FOR THE FAMILY

- Choose a child to play the role of Moses, giving excuses for not wanting to return to Egypt.
- Share various personal experiences of when excuses were used to justify disobedience. List other excuses you have heard for failed behavior.

REDEEMED AT HIGH COST

September 26, 2004

EXODUS 12

This story marks the beginning of the Passover, still celebrated by Jews who are looking forward to the coming of Messiah, the Lamb of God. This is a powerful story of salvation and it illustrates the blood that would eventually be shed by Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE

The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt. -Exodus 12:13

RESPONDING TO THE STORY

- What was more important: the kind of lifestyle of the individual Israelite families or whether or not there was blood on their door? Why?
- Think of as many parallels as you can between the lamb that was slain and Jesus, the Lamb of God.

FOR THE FAMILY

- Have children role play the scene of the Passover. One child can be responsible for “putting blood on the door.” The other can think through what it must have been like to be the older brother. Contrast what happens with the experience of the Egyptians.
- Discuss: how does this story represent Jesus?

ESCAPING FROM TIGHT PLACES

October 3, 2004

EXODUS 14

Moses found himself in an impossible situation: leading hundreds of thousands of people, the Egyptians pursuing behind, the Red Sea in front, and mountains on both sides! He would have to learn that if he did what was possible, God was responsible for doing the impossible!

The well-armed Egyptians had iron chariots, sharp spears and a strong contingent of horses. In contrast, the Israelites had no military equipment. They had nothing more than unleavened bread in their satchels, and a few sticks to herd their sheep and cattle.

What a perfect opportunity for God to act!

MEMORY VERSE

Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

-Exodus 14:13, 14

RESPONDING TO THE STORY

- Discuss this quote, “Our character is tested in tight places; where we turn when we are under duress reveals where our loyalties lie.”
- Give examples of where people turn when they are in a tight place.

FOR THE FAMILY

- Have the children enact the story of the crossing of the Red Sea. One child can describe what the Israelites must have been thinking as they walked between walls of water. Another can describe what the Egyptians were thinking as they pursued the Israelites along the same path.
- Share examples of tight places you’ve been in and how you were brought through them.

WHEN BITTER WATERS ARE MADE SWEET

October 10, 2004

EXODUS 15

After days of walking, the Israelites had their hopes revived when they saw an oasis in the distance. Parched with thirst, we can imagine parents encouraging their children to “hang in” for just a mile more. But when they arrived, they discovered that the water was too bitter to drink. This was a deep disappointment and the Israelites began to turn on Moses and blame him for their thirst. Moses had no recourse except to cry to God. Fortunately, God answered.

MEMORY VERSE

The LORD is my strength and my song;

he has become my salvation.

He is my God, and I will praise him,

my father’s God, and I will exalt him.

-Exodus 15:2

RESPONDING TO THE STORY

- How does the tree that was thrown into the bitter water represent the cross of Christ?
- What bitter experiences have you had that have not yet been “made sweet?” Is there something you should be doing to get over the bitterness?

FOR THE FAMILY

- Have the children enact the story, demonstrating the impossibility of drinking the water and then Moses throwing the tree into the oasis.
- Give them glasses of refreshing water to drink and tell them how this illustrates what God has done for us in Jesus.

WHEN GOD COMES!

October 31, 2004

EXODUS 19, 20

What we think about God is probably the most important thing about us. Today, our concept of God is, for the most part, made according to our own liking. As Paul taught, we are always faced with the temptation of creating God in our own image.

Moses would say that if your belief in God does not affect the way you live, you have believed in the wrong god! God wanted Moses to understand that there is no one like Him in glory and majesty. As we read the description of God given on Mount Sinai, we are struck by the awesomeness of the Almighty; we can't help but be impressed by His holiness, power and grace.

MEMORY VERSE

Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." -Exodus 20:20

RESPONDING TO THE STORY

- Discuss each of the Ten Commandments and how they should apply to us today. How do the commandments reflect the nature of God?

(Note: the Roman Catholic Church numbers the commandments differently, combining #1 and #2, then dividing the tenth commandment into two parts).

FOR THE FAMILY

- Teach the children all ten of the Commandments, explaining as best you can the meaning of each. Then choose one of the Commandments such as #3, "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God" and explain the implications of it for what we say. Connect this with Ephesians 4:29, 30, emphasizing the importance of our speech.

BUILDING GOD'S TEMPLE

November 7, 2004

EXODUS 25, 35

When God wanted a tabernacle for Israel's worship, He asked that the Israelites build it. This represents the principle of "shared giving," when God gives to His people with the expectation that they will give back to Him. Here we see the generosity of God's people and the wisdom God gave the people to use the funds wisely.

MEMORY VERSE

And everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the LORD for the work on the Tent of Meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments. -Exodus 35:21

RESPONDING TO THE STORY

- Discuss how the articles of furniture listed in chapter 25 represent Jesus.
- What lessons can we learn about giving in chapter 35? Why are we so reluctant to give?

FOR THE FAMILY

- Have the children draw a diagram of the tabernacle based on sketches found in Bible dictionaries, commentaries, etc.

WORSHIPPING IN GOD'S TEMPLE

November 14, 2004

EXODUS 29, 30

Worshipping in God's temple was a complicated process; God had to be approached very carefully. After all, He was holy and the people were sinful. Today, we approach God through Jesus, our Mediator, but there is much we can learn from the Old Testament worshippers. God is just as holy today as He was back then. Let's rethink what the Israelites experienced and apply it to our own lives.

MEMORY VERSE

Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.

-Exodus 29:45, 46

RESPONDING TO THE STORY

- What does the tabernacle teach us about worship?
- Recall a meaningful experience of worship you have had. What made it special? What did you learn from the experience?

FOR THE FAMILY

- Return to the diagram of the tabernacle made last week. Discuss what the various articles of furniture mean and what they teach us about worship.

CELEBRATING GOD'S TEMPLE

November 21, 2004 - Commitment Sunday

EXODUS 38-40

At last the tabernacle was finished and God showed His approval of their work by the coming of the cloud upon the newly completed structure. Here at last was a place where they could worship God and where priests could come in direct contact with the Almighty. This structure represented the sacrifice and work of many, and demonstrates what can be done when people work together for His glory.

MEMORY VERSE

Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

-Exodus 40:34, 35

RESPONDING TO THE STORY

- Why do you think the nation would have been excited about having their first worship service in the tabernacle?
- Describe what you think the people saw when the glory of the Lord filled the place (40:34-38).

FOR THE FAMILY

- Teach the children how worship took place in the tabernacle. Then spend some time worshipping as a family. Make a rule that there are to be no requests, only praise to God for who He is and what He has done.
- Read one of the Psalms, then share as many attributes (or qualities) of God, as you and your children can think of; pray these qualities with gratitude.

A GLIMPSE OF GOD'S GLORY

November 28, 2004

EXODUS 32, 33

When Moses is up on the mountain, the people in the valley below make a god who is more compatible to their desires. This story is one of the most convincing evidences of the deceitfulness of the human heart. In contrast, Moses showed his single-minded devotion to God by rebuking the people and being willing to die on their behalf. It is then that he has a remarkable vision of God's glory.

MEMORY VERSE

The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

-Exodus 33:14

RESPONDING TO THE STORY

- What does the "golden calf" episode show about the human heart? How is that fatal flaw revealed today?
- What can we learn from Moses' desire to get closer to God? Why are we so easily content without intimacy with the Almighty?

FOR THE FAMILY

- Have the children act out the story of Moses' anger and his breaking of the stone tablets. Discuss what the Bible has to say about anger and how it must be controlled. Is all anger sinful? What should we do when we find ourselves on the verge of being out of control? Have the children share stories of when they were angry and what happened as a result.

My Commitment to Getting Closer to God During the Next Twelve Months.

I have earnestly prayed and thoughtfully considered what things God wants me to do to get closer to Him and I am this day making my commitment to:

Share my faith with others by my life and my words _____
(Fill in how much time you will spend)

Read and study my Bible each week for _____
(Fill in how much time you will spend)

Devote time in thoughtful prayer each week for _____
(Fill in how much time you will spend)

Dedicate my spiritual gifts in service to the _____
ministries as the Lord leads me. (Fill in which ministries you plan to serve)

Give \$ _____ weekly/monthly to meet the day-to-day operational needs of the ministries of The Moody Church.

Give sacrificially \$ _____ weekly/monthly/annually, over the coming year, to meet the Reaching Toward Tomorrow capital needs of The Moody Church.

Date: _____

Keep this copy as a personal reminder of your commitment to get closer to God.

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MOODY
CHURCH

1609 North LaSalle
Chicago, Illinois 60614
312.943.0466
www.moodychurch.org