

REVIEW

Francis opened this session by pointing out that Exodus occurred at a time when followers of God didn't have access to thousands of years of biblical history as we do. Their knowledge of God was different from ours—they didn't have a Bible like us. **What can we learn from the Israelites, who didn't have the Scriptures, about listening to and obeying God?**

In what ways is having the Bible a special privilege?

Francis imagined what it must have been like for Moses and the Israelites who, at that point, didn't know God all that well. He imagined what their thoughts and expectations must have been—some of them, no doubt, would have been a little off. We, too, can be a little off in our thoughts of God before coming to know him. **Before you came to know God, what thoughts and assumptions did you have about him? In what ways can you relate to Moses and the Israelites' thoughts or assumptions about God?**

Moses returned down the mountain to people eager to hear what God had to say. Some people may have expected God to be angry with them, others might have assumed he didn't care about them, and others may have assumed that he was pleased with them regardless of what they did. **If this event had happened today, what might our society expect God to say about us? What do you imagine God would say to you if he addressed you directly?**

In what ways does it surprise you to learn that the first words God uses to describe himself are "merciful" and "gracious"?

We may be hesitant to seek God because of things we've done. But Francis said that one thing we must understand is that God "wants to forgive." **Do you find it hard to believe God wants to forgive you? Why, or why not? How would your relationship with God change if you were convinced that God is merciful and wants to forgive you?**

Francis flipped ahead to Ephesians 2:1–5, which says before knowing God we not only followed "the course of the world" but we followed "the enemy." We were "dead"

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in our trespasses and sins and deserving of wrath. **How do we treat our enemies? What does it say about God that he is eager to forgive his enemies rather than treating them like we would?**

God wants us to know who he is and what he's like. As we read the Bible, we learn about his character, that he can be trusted, and that he wants a relationship with us. **What have you learned about God from reading the Bible? How does your knowledge of God shape the way you think about yourself? About others? About the way God sees and interacts with you?**

Instead of depending on our feelings and assumptions of what God is like, Francis challenged us to depend on what God says about himself in Scripture. He is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in faithful love. **What would it look like for you to prioritize the words of Scripture and what they say about God over your own opinions? If you don't know what the Bible says, whom could you ask to help you?**

We can be sure that we're not the only ones who need to hear these truths about God. **Who in your life needs to hear these words about God? When could you make time to go and tell them?**

BIBLE JOURNEY

If we're not careful, our understanding of God can be based on our own thoughts, emotions, and assumptions. This way of "knowing" God can be misleading, incomplete, or downright wrong. Thankfully, though, God has not kept us guessing about what he's like—he tells us in the Scriptures. Read Exodus 34:5–9.

Last week, we learned about God's transcendence—that he is holy and set apart. This week, we're learning about his immanence—despite being set apart, he remains near to us. We see his immanence in verse 5, where we learn that God came down and stood with Moses, which Francis used to remind us that God is a person. **Do you feel like God is near to you at all times? Why do you think it is important to remember that he is with us?**

God proceeded to tell Moses what he's like: compassionate, merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and truth. That sounds like good news, but we often treat God as if he were harsh, angry, impatient, and quick to punish us. **How can our wrong ideas about God keep us separated from him? Based on his description of himself, how will he treat us when we come to him?**

Moses's response to God and God's character is an example of how we should respond to God. Moses knelt low and worshiped, then pleaded for God to go with him, to forgive the people's stubbornness, and to keep Israel as his people. **What can we learn from the way Moses responds to God in this passage? In what ways can we model our own responses to God after Moses's?**

We are far from Mt. Sinai, but through Jesus Christ, we should come to the place, like Moses, where we fall before God and worship. Read Ephesians 2:1–10.

What do you think it means to live "according to the ways of the world"?

In this passage, Paul describes us as "dead in trespasses" before being "made alive" with Christ. **When you think about God saving you, him bringing you to life, how do you respond? How has God shown you mercy and changed your life?**

While this passage describes how we've been transformed, the real star of this text is God. Read through Ephesians 2:1–10 again and pay attention to its emphasis on what God does. **What is our role in salvation? What is our responsibility after God has saved us?**

When we are saved, the passage says that we become something new, God's workmanship "created in Christ Jesus for good works" (v.10). Salvation gives us purpose. **If you have been saved, how have God's grace and mercy transformed you? What are the things you do now that you never would have done before being saved? What can you do to step more into the good works God has prepared for you to do?**

God wants to show mercy because he's merciful. He wants to give grace because he's gracious. He saves us because he loves us; he loves us because he is love. We have the opportunity to do good works or show others his love, grace, and mercy through our actions. **What opportunities do you have to do good works today?**

LAST WORD

Moses encountered God on the peak of Mt. Sinai and learned from the lips of God himself what he is like. He is a merciful and gracious God. He's slow to anger and abounding in faithful love. He is eager to forgive his enemies. These truths sent Moses to his knees in worship and compelled Moses to plead with God to stay with Israel. After all, who would want to leave a merciful God?

God is the same God today as he was atop Sinai. He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and full of love. And still today, he forgives us, his former enemies. These truths, which we see in the person of Jesus, should drive us to our knees in worship.
