



GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

The story of Moses is one of the most familiar in scripture. However, there is more to the story than we often know or remember. Join us for a series where we learn some of the wisdom this ancient prophet has to offer our modern lives.

This guide is designed for individual or group use. Sermons in this series are available at MiddletownChristian.org/Sermons.

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June 12, 2022: Philoxenia

Key Scripture: Exodus 1:1-2:10

While there were many things that set the story of Moses into motion, one of the most powerful and dangerous of them was *xenophobia*, the fear of the stranger or foreigner. However, as is always the case in our faith history, fear and hate don't stand a chance against love.

Discussion Questions:

1. When you hear the name Moses, what images or thoughts come to mind?

2. At the heart of Moses' story is the rise of fear and hatred in the heart of Pharaoh toward the Israelites. That fear, which was rooted in *xenophobia* (fear of the stranger or foreigner), led Pharaoh to treat the Israelites unjustly.
 - a. What are some modern examples of xenophobia?
 - b. How does xenophobia lead to injustice or persecution in today's world?

3. The Bible's antidote for xenophobia is *philoxenia*, which means the love of the stranger or foreigner.
 - a. What are some modern examples of philoxenia?
 - b. In what ways to philoxenia push back against the injustice and hatred caused by xenophobia?

4. While we must always be careful about our motivations, our faith sometimes calls us to challenge and, at times, disobey unjust laws or rules. What are some examples in our nation's history when this kind of disobedience has been justified? What are the risks of doing so?

5. Did you have any other thoughts or questions about this week's sermon that you'd like to discuss or have answered?

June 19, 2022: GO!

Key Scripture: Exodus 3

While there are plenty of moments in the story of Moses where God does amazing things, there are just as many moments when God works through ordinary people to make amazing things happen. What was true then is still true now if only we will GO!

Discussion Questions:

1. According to scripture, when Moses was forty years old, he witnessed an act of such horrible injustice that he intervened, killing the perpetrator (Exodus 2:11-15). What is your response to this story?

2. In his message, Brian mentioned the theme of ordinary people doing incredible things in the name of God. While these actions were not miraculous in the divine sense, they were still extraordinary. What do these stories tell us about how God works through ordinary people in the modern world? If you've ever witnessed someone doing something extraordinary, explain what happened and how you experienced the moment.

3. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, only about 25% of our country's population volunteer to serve others in any given year. Why do you think that percentage is so low?

4. When it comes to serving our community and world, Brian encouraged the congregation to answer the following questions:
 - a. Where do you see brokenness in our world?
 - b. How can you bring healing to that situation?
 - c. What resources, including money, do you need from your church to help answer that call?
 - d. Finally - if not you, then who? If not now, then when?

June 26, 2022: The Exodus

Key Scripture: Exodus 3-15

The Exodus is one of the most important stories of our faith. But how much do you really know about it? In this message, we explore this familiar story in some unfamiliar ways.

Discussion Questions:

1. When you think of the Exodus story, what comes to mind? What have you been taught about the story?
2. To best interpret the meaning of scripture, it is essential that we understand the context in which it was written. In his message, Brian shared some historical context around the plagues. In what ways does that add to your understanding of these stories?
3. The final plague is a difficult one because God takes the lives of every firstborn human and animal in every house and field that was not protected by a sign made from a sacrificed animal's blood (Exodus 12). What do you think about this story? What lessons do you take away from this story that relate to the modern world?
4. Brian suggested that after this event took place, God knew there had to be a better way. That way included the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In what way does the story of Christ replace/supersede the story of the tenth plague?

July 3, 2022: Sacred Cows

Key Scriptures: Exodus 32-34

After receiving the Ten Commandments and making a covenant with God, Israel finds itself in a difficult situation. Instead of remembering God's commandments and promises, they make a golden calf and begin to worship it. In this message, we explore the ways our own sacred cows get in the way of the life God has called us to live and how we move forward.

Discussion Questions:

1. What surprised you in this story?
2. What sacred cows do we worship in our current culture?
3. How do sacred cows affect how we live out our faith?
4. What would our lives look like if we put the teachings of Jesus before the sacred cows we worship?

July 10, 2022: Standing Still

Key Scripture: Exodus 14

As they were fleeing Egypt, the Israelites came to Red Sea and found themselves trapped by the water in front of them and the Egyptian army behind them. It was a frightening and frustrating moment. In response, Moses called them to do something difficult – stand still. Sometimes the only way forward is for us to do the same.

Discussion Questions:

1. It was an impossible moment for the Israelites. They were trapped by the Red Sea on one side and the Egyptian army on the other. In response, Moses told them not to be afraid and to keep still (Exodus 14:13-14). How would you have felt in that moment?
2. Have you ever been in a situation where you were so eager to get to the other side of what you were facing that you were willing to do just about anything to start the journey? If so, what was that like?
3. Sometimes the most important thing we can do when facing a challenge is to take some time to be still, to center ourselves and connect with God's presence. What are the challenges in doing that? What are some ways you've learned to be still and be present with God?
4. When the Israelites reached safety on the other side of the Red Sea, Moses began to sing. Soon after the people joined him. Moses' sister Miriam took a tambourine and began to play, leading people to begin dancing with joy. If you've ever gotten to the other side of a difficult journey, how did you celebrate? Why is it important to do so?

July 17, 2022: A Little Help, Please

Key Scripture: Exodus 16-18

Not long into their wilderness journey, the Israelites began to realize how difficult things were going to be, and they cried out to God for help. God responded by providing manna for them to eat and water for them to drink. Not long after, Moses found himself in a place of need. This time, God sent a person to help.

When we need something, God still provides for us. Sometimes by giving us our daily bread. Sometimes by sending someone to help us along the way.

Discussion Questions:

1. In response to God providing them manna from heaven, the Israelites broke the rule that God gave them regarding how much they collected. Why do you think they took more than what was allowed?
2. Sometimes, when we are in wilderness moments in life, it is easy to focus on the things we don't have. We can even feel like God is not with us. If you've ever been in a moment like that, what was it like? How did you move beyond it?
3. When Moses was holding his arms up to keep the enemy army from winning, he had to have some help holding them up. Initially, Moses kept trying to keep them up himself but couldn't do it. Finally, some friends stepped in to offer support (Exodus 16:8-16). Why do you think Moses refused to ask for help? What can make asking for help difficult to do?
4. While asking for help can be difficult, it can also be difficult to find appropriate ways to offer care for others. If you've offered to help someone through a difficult time, describe what that experience was like. How did you initiate the care?

July 24, 2022: The Choice

Key Scripture: Deuteronomy 30:11-20

In this week's passage, Israel begins looking to the future. As Moses reminds them of all they have been through and the ways God has been faithful to them in the past, he gives them a choice. They can choose life or choose death. What will they choose and what do those choices look like for us today?

Discussion Questions:

1. What encouraged you in today's scripture?
2. What challenged you in today's scripture?
3. What does it mean to choose life? How do we choose life on a daily basis?
4. Moses says that the Israelites' choice between the way of life and the way of death will impact the generations after them. How will the choices we make now affect those who come after us?
5. What does it mean to be a church that chooses life?

July 31, 2022: A Promise Land Denied

Key Scripture: Numbers 13-14

While their journey toward the Promised Land ultimately took 40 years, the Israelites could have arrived a lot sooner. Because they failed to trust God, they were denied entry. It's a difficult story to hear, but its lessons may keep us from making the same mistake.

Discussion Questions:

1. Two years after the Israelites escaped Egypt, they arrived at the Promised Land. Upon getting there, they sent spies into the land to see what they were up against. Despite God's promise of victory, the people were too afraid to move forward. Sometimes, it is hard to trust God. What are some examples where you've struggled to trust God? Have you been able to find any resolution? If so, how? If not, why?
2. The punishment for not trusting God was that the people of Israel would have to spend forty years in the wilderness. God told them that during that time, almost every one of them would die and only their descendants would enter the Promised Land. What do you think about this part of the story? Is it fair? Why or why not?
3. While grace is ultimately the only way we will enter heaven, Jesus describes several actions that Christians must take in order to get there (Matthew 5-7, Matthew 25). Which teachings of Jesus do you find the most difficult to follow?
4. In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day, many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?" Then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers."
 - a. What do you think this passage means?
 - b. What does it say to Christians today?

August 7, 2022: Final Blessings

Key Scripture: Deuteronomy 32:48-34:12

After telling the story of Moses' death, scripture writes this about his life: "Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses."

Those words would hold true until the birth of Jesus. As we wrap up this series on Moses, we will hear some final words of wisdom from the ancient prophet that could lead to an incredible blessing.

Discussion Questions:

1. Before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, God told Moses that he would not enter the land with them. As a final farewell, Moses gathered his people and blessed them in a deeply loving and caring way. The words he spoke no doubt stayed with the people long after Moses had died. What are some words of blessing and/or wisdom that people have shared that you will never forget?
2. In his sermon, Brian talked about the importance of blessing others. What did he mean by that? What are some ways that we can live into the call to bless others?
3. After Moses offered his blessings to the people, God led him up to the top of the mountain where Moses was able to see the Promised Land. As he looked over it, he saw the future of his children and his people, and the future was good. What are some things you'd like to see or be reassured of before you die?
4. Moses was a reluctant prophet. He didn't want to follow God and initially resisted. Yet he became the greatest of all prophets. What are some things you've learned from his faith and his call? How might you be able to reflect those things in your life?