

WEEK TWO

XL: Acts 7:23-30

FAMILY ENCOUNTER

SUPPLIES:

- Bible
- Sacred Candle & Matches/Lighter

WELCOMING GOD:

Gather together, and welcome God into this time and space through the lighting of a candle. Take this moment to pause briefly and sit quietly in this light for a few moments allowing time for everyone to relax their body, mind, and spirit for this time. In these moments, the invitation is to become aware of God's presence with and amongst you as a family.

Sharing with God and One Another:

Say: "If anything is on our minds that makes it difficult for us to focus, let's share it now and then let it go."

-Whoever leads this portion might share what is on his or her mind to model this. Give time for each person to respond. When everyone who desires to has responded, invite everyone to place their hands out and lift them up as we give these distractions to God

OR

you can invite the family to pray together as one person leads saying the following:

Dear Loving God,

The One who knows our hearts, celebrates our victories, grieves with us during our losses, and gives us the strength to overcome our challenges. Please help us to let go of the distractions we name now, so that we can openly share with our family and may encounter you in a special way today. Our distractions are: (let there be silence here, so everyone has an opportunity to name aloud what is distracting them).

In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Encountering God:

Read: Read aloud Acts 7:23-30

- Take turns reading the scripture or have a different family member read the scripture each week.

Acts 7:23-30

“When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his relatives, the Israelites. When he saw one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. He supposed that his kinsfolk would understand that God through him was rescuing them, but they did not understand. The next day he came to some of them as they were quarrelling and tried to reconcile them, saying, “Men, you are brothers; why do you wrong each other?” But the man who was wronging his neighbor pushed Moses aside, saying, “Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?” When he heard this, Moses fled and became a resident alien in the land of Midian. There he became the father of two sons.’ Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning bush.”

Encountering Each Other:

Discussion Questions:

- Have you ever heard a story (like, from a parent) over and over again?
- How does it feel when someone keeps telling you the same story time and again?
- What is the most important lesson you’ve ever learned?
- How did you learn that lesson?

Say: That’s what is going on in this Scripture from Acts today. The person telling this story (Stephen) tells it about Moses. When Stephen is accused of blaspheming—or speaking against—God and Moses, his response is to tell his accusers a story. It’s one they’ve heard time and time again. He tells them Moses’ story. It is as if Stephen knows something that we sometimes forget: stories matter. When he tells the story of Moses, he reminds his accusers that Moses learned throughout his own life, that Moses’ story could teach Stephen and his accusers, and that Moses’ story teaches us.

I imagine that when Moses lived in Midian and tended sheep, he learned quite a bit about speaking so he could be heard. Sheep, after all, follow their shepherd because they know their shepherd’s voice. I wonder if his forty years as a shepherd prepared him to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt later.

I imagine that hearing the Moses story, taught Stephen and others in his time about faithfulness to God—even when we are in places we don’t expect to be.

I imagine that hearing the Moses story can teach us something, too. Like Moses who learned during his unexpected time in Midian, we can learn in our unexpected moments. And, like Moses, it’s

what we learn in the unexpected times that can prepare us for our purposeful times. Remember: after his 40 years in Midian, Moses led the Israelites to freedom.

Discussion Questions:

- Are there stories that we tell in our family to remember each other? A lesson? A tradition?
- What can stories teach us?
- What can ancient stories like the one about Moses teach us today?

Say: Stephen told a story to remember what we can learn from Moses. Let's take a moment to think about what we have learned in our own lives.

We tell stories about the lessons we learn, and we learn from the stories we hear and tell. Let's take time together to give thanks to God for stories and the lessons they teach us.

Encountering God Together:

Say:

May we pray together as a family...

- Let us share our prayers for the world: for our country and leaders, for other countries and their leaders...
- Let us share our prayers for the church, ministers, and spiritual leaders...
- Let us share our prayers for our teachers, first responders, friends, and others in the community...
- Let us share our prayers for our family and our own specific needs...

If you would like to record the people for whom you pray, use the next few lines to do so:

*You can also record these requests in a family prayer journal if you are using one.

Encountering Transformation Together:

Pray aloud together:

God, we welcomed you here and read Your Word,
we prayed and we spent time with you,
we rested in your love for us,

and we did this all together.

Now, we promise to love one another and others as you love us.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

Blessing One Another for our Encounters with the World:

Invite family members to bless one another using any of the examples below or their own blessings.

Examples:

“I love you. God loves you. I pray God blesses you.”

“God loves you exactly like you are—and so do I.”

“I love the gifts God has given you and how you bless the world with them.”