



Next Steps

Cultivating Our Ground

Exodus 3.1-12

I know a lady who keeps a jar of river water on her office desk. Sounds like a pretty strange thing to keep sitting around. What is so special about river water? Well, she doesn't keep it for those moments of great thirst. She keeps it because of what river water does when it sets. Here's the thing about river water. It is constantly rolling and churning. Rivers are agitated by nature. They are continually bumping into stuff, washing at something with the result being that they get pretty dark and murky. However, if you will let river water set and be still, it will in time become crystal clear. All the things it picked up in its activity will settle out, and you can see right through it like fresh spring water. My friend tells me that she keeps that jar of river water on her desk to remind her that too much activity, an agitated life gets murky. If she wants to be clear, clear enough to hear and see God and His purposes, she has to intentionally reduce the movement in her life so that the sediment can fall out.

Moses was a fellow whose life had gotten pretty murky. Born of Hebrew parents and raised by Egyptians, Moses was someone who was at the very least was a great candidate for inner conflict and angst. That was before the incident, a blow up that left an Egyptian dead and Moses running for his life, a fugitive from justice. Can we agree that Moses as he fled from Egypt had a life that was somewhat agitated? What did Moses do? He went to the wilderness. Rather than keep up the activity, Moses broke from the routine and fled to the wilderness to tend sheep. In the still and quiet of the desert pastures, Moses' life began to settle out, to the point that he could see and hear God, and what a word God had for him. The ability to hear God came when Moses broke from life as usual and ran for the desert.

As I consider my own life, agitated is often an apt descriptor. Life is full of busyness. I am continually moving, bumping into stuff and people. The result is that life can begin to get a little murky. I begin to wonder who I am, what I am doing, and where I am going. It is in those periods that God and His will for me are often the least apparent. When this begins to happen I realize that I need some time in the wilderness. I break from the routine in big and little ways so that the cloudiness can settle and once again I can see clearly. At first, I journeyed to the wilderness out of desperation. Now I do so regularly for preparation. I am beginning to realize that I need the wilderness. I need the break from the routine, the settling of my soul so that I can

be clear and open to God and what He has for me. So, every day, in little and big ways you will find me headed out to the wilderness, because I know that it is there that I am most ready to meet with God.

A fellow traveler,

Blake
Spiritual Formation Pastor

My Next Step

We encourage you to consider doing the following as a way of handing off faith to your family. . .

- **Build in wilderness experiences:** God has great plans for our families. However, we are often so busy we can't see or act upon them. Our family lives become murky and agitated. We can give God the space to settle the sediment of our busyness by building in periods of rest and quiet. This week you might consider brief journeys to the wilderness by doing simple things like turning off the TV in the evenings or the radio in your car. You might also simply have moments of silence, one to two minutes of silence before meals instead of offering the obligatory blessing. A larger step might be the practices of Sabbath, a day of rest for the entire family. These "wilderness" journeys help clear our lives and make them more open to God.

We encourage you to consider taking the following next step on your faith journey. . .

- **Be a hermit:** Moses, Elijah, and Jesus all journeyed to the wilderness to be alone so that they might meet with God. Following their example, people across the ages have journeyed to the wilderness to be alone in preparation of meeting with God. Those that made the trek to the wilderness were called aspirants or pilgrims. Those that realized they needed to stay there were called hermits. This week, consider how you might become a hermit by intentionally working wilderness into your life in large and small ways. Ten minutes of silence and solitude each day is a small way to be a hermit. A larger way is a monthly "hermit day" where you withdraw to be alone with God. Consider how you might "withdraw" in ways that fit your life in order to prepare your soul to meet with God.