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Listening to the God of Covenant

Exodus 33:7–34:14

Another seven hundred years or so have passed since our last study. The people of God are now organized into twelve tribes. They've spent a few hundred years in Egypt, first as honored guests as Joseph's relatives and later as slaves (possibly doing the manual labor of building the pyramids). They still worshiped Abraham's God and identified themselves as Hebrews. But they were in danger of becoming assimilated into the Egyptian culture and religion. God intervened again. This time God appointed Moses as their leader, who marched them out of Egypt. At God's command, the Red Sea closed in and drowned the pursuing Egyptians. Then God began the work of reeducating his people. He gave them (through Moses listening to God on a mountain top) the Ten Commandments, written on stone, beginning with "You shall have no other gods"—which the people broke by molding a gold calf and trying to worship it even before Moses got down from the mountain. Perhaps symbolizing an already-shattered relationship, Moses shattered against the rocks these "tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18).

But God still wanted these people as his own. So he laid out a covenant with them to define that relationship.

GROUP DISCUSSION. What kinds of covenants do you see today?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. If God were to describe his covenant with you (how you and he relate to each other), what do you think he would say?

In this study you will find God beginning to carve a relationship with a people group he would call his own. *Read Exodus 33:7-11.*

1. What do you see here suggesting that what took place in the tent of meeting was no ordinary conversation?

2. Focus particularly on the first sentence of verse 11. What does this suggest about the relationship between God and Moses?

Read Exodus 33:12–34:14.

3. Have two people in your group read this passage aloud as a dialogue between Moses and God. Appoint a third person as narrator to read any sections not enclosed in quotation marks. What is the emotional impact of having heard this conversation between God and Moses?

4. Keeping in mind the covenant relationship being established between God and his people, what did God require of Moses?

5. What will God do and be for his people?

What did Moses ask of God?

6. What can you know of the character of God by hearing his conversation with Moses?

7. If you could have your own ideal relationship with God, what would that look like?

8. The word *name* appears five times in this text (Exodus 33:12, 17, 19; 34:5, 14). Reread each sentence where the word *name* appears. What seems important about each statement?

9. What difference does it make to you that God knows your name, and you know his?

10. Exodus 33:18-23 provides an illustration of the relationship between God and humans—even humans who are loved and chosen by God. What do you notice there about how God does and doesn't connect with his covenant people?

11. After God created a fresh copy of his commandments written in stone, God provided Moses with a fresh description of his character (Exodus 34:6-7). Would you have found this confronting or reassuring? Why?

12. Look at Exodus 34:10-14. What do you think God meant when he named himself “Jealous” in verse 14?

13. In view of the way God has identified himself to Moses in Exodus 34:4-6, why do you think Moses responded as he did in verses 8-9?

14. Would you do the same in your own setting? Why or why not?

Pray for someone you know who is not as close to God as you wish.

Now or Later

The dialogue between Moses and God in Exodus 33 provides an example for our own prayers. Pray a paraphrase of Moses' prayer drawn from verses 12-13. Insert your current greatest challenge in the space. Then continue to pray and meditate on that subject as you place yourself within the covenant care of God. Draw encouragement from God's response to Moses. He provides the same for us.