

# Making Space for God

## Exodus 32-34

### OPENING PRAYER

O God, early in the morning I cry to you. Help me to pray and to concentrate my thoughts on you; I cannot do this alone.

In me there is darkness, but with you there is light; I am lonely, but you do not leave me; I am feeble in heart, but with you there is help; I am restless but with you there is

peace. In me there is bitterness, but with you there is patience; I do not understand your ways, but you know the way for me...

Restore me to liberty, and enable me to live now that I may answer before you and before men. Lord, whatever this day may bring, your name be praised. Amen

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Germany/1906-1945)*

### Looking Back

Take some time to settle yourself. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you quiet your mind. Review your calendar and journal for the past two months.

- List the people, projects, and events that have occupied your time.
- What emotions colored your experiences?
- When did you sense that Jesus was present to you?
- When did he seem distant or you seem distant from him?
- Note any life lessons or themes that have surfaced for you in this time. Offer that up to Jesus.
- What do you want or expect from Jesus during this retreat. Tell Him



*Mt Sinai*

*Photo from [www.getintravel.com](http://www.getintravel.com)*

**Scripture Reading-** No sooner were the Ten Commandment tablets complete than the people broke their covenant with God. Chapters 32-34 describe the desecration and later restoration of the relationship with the people of Israel and Yahweh. We catch a glimpse of the downfall of one leader and the making of another. Read Exodus 32 twice in preparation for tonight's discussion.

### Reading for Reflection

Success is a very dubious enterprise. In a way, the children of God are always meant to be in the opposition. They're outsiders. When they become successful, that's when the problems begin... I think Moses can be described as clinically depressed at the end. I've done all this, God and you do this to me! There's a sense of not being rewarded. And yet, you bargain for that. You don't know God's will. You really don't. If there is any lesson to be learned, it is a certain modesty in the face of great opportunity. The biblical mandate is not success, it's humility. You're not God. You're not supposed to be fat and happy... But that is not the lesson most Americans take from the Bible. No, they take American exceptionalism. But it seems to me that an exceptional people has to be willing to subordinate their own ambitions to God's ultimate design. And no one ever accused Americans of doing that. What we have done is take God's design and make it conform to our ambition.

*Bruce Feilder in America's Prophet- How the Story of Moses Shaped America, page 32*

“Not the least of my problems is that I can hardly even imagine what kind of an experience a genuine, self-authenticating religious experience would be. Without somehow destroying me in the process, how could God reveal himself in a way that would leave no room for doubt? If there were no room for doubt, there would be no room for me.

*Frederick Buechner*

You are sent into a world full of tortured, twisted, overdriven souls: . . . How are you going to show these souls, who need it so dreadfully, the joy and delightfulness of God and surrender to God, unless you have it yourselves? But that means giving time, patience and effort to such a special discipline and cultivation of your attention as artists must give if they are to enter deeply into the reality and joy of natural loveliness and impart it in their work.

*Evelyn Underhill, Concerning the Inner Life, Page 20*

We start with the obvious fact, that as persons professionally concerned to teach and demonstrate the truths of religion, to spread the knowledge of God and to work with souls, the problems of the personal spiritual life are of most transcendent importance to you: indeed, that they concern you more certainly and directly than they do Christians of any other type. The very first requisite for a minister of religion is that his or her own inner life should be maintained in a healthy state, his or her own contact with God be steady and true. But just because you are ministers of religion, and therefore committed to perpetual external activities, this fostering and feeding of the inner life is often in some ways far more difficult for you, than it is for those whom you work and whom you teach.

*Evelyn Underhill, Concerning the Inner Life, Page 12*

A leader is someone with the power to project either shadow or light onto some part of the world and onto the lives of the people who dwell there. A leader shapes the ethos in which others must live, an ethos as light-filled as heaven or as shadowy as hell. A good leader is intensely aware of the interplay of inner shadow and light, lest the act of leadership do more harm than good.

*Parker Palmer in Let Your life Speak, Page 78*

Those of us who readily embrace leadership, especially public leadership, tend towards extroversion, which often means ignoring what is happening inside ourselves. If we have any sort of inner life, we “compartmentalize” it, walling it off from our public work. This, of course, allows the shadows to grow unchecked until it emerges, larger than life, in the public realm, a real problem we are well acquainted with in our own domestic politics. Leaders need not only the technical skills to manage the external world but also the spiritual skills to journey inward toward the source of both shadow and light.

*Parker Palmer in Let Your life Speak, Page 79*

## **Benediction**

Friends, as you go on your way, may Jesus go with you:

Before you to show you the way, behind you to encourage you, above you to watch over you,  
below you to uphold you, within in you to give you his peace, and beside you to be your Friend.  
In the faithful love of the Father, the amazing grace of the Son and the guiding power of the Spirit.

Yes! Yes! Yes! Amen