

“Please, Show Me Your Glory”



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Exod. 33:7–34:35; Deut. 18:15, 18; John 17:3; Rom. 2:4; John 3:16; 2 Cor. 3:18.*

Memory Text: “And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation’ ” (*Exod. 34:6, 7, NKJV*).

We all need to grow in our walk with God. Without growth, we are dead. The apostle Peter declares: “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen” (*2 Pet. 3:18, NIV*). We need to be willing to grow. We are daily in God’s university, where there is no graduation but a constant learning process. In each stage of growth, you can be perfect if you allow God to mold you into the person that He calls you, in Christ, to be.

Think of a school. If first-graders learn how to read and count to 100, they receive a passing grade because their knowledge is perfect at that stage and scale of growth. However, if this same level of knowledge, and no more, was detected in a high schooler, it would indicate a colossal failure in his or her education. It is similar with our growth in the grace and knowledge of God. In each stage of our development, we can be as perfect in our sphere as Christ was in His.

This week we study how Moses, through knowing and following God’s instructions, was growing in his walk with the Lord.

* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 20.

The Tent of Meeting

Read Exodus 33:7–11. Why did God ask Moses to build the tent of meeting?

We must not confuse “the tent of meeting” (built outside of Israel’s camp) with the tabernacle, which was later constructed and located in the center of the camp. We do not know how often Moses consulted with God in the tent of meeting. However, one thing we know for sure: Moses’ encounters with God resulted in a close friendship between them. “The LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (*Exod. 33:11, NKJV*). A friend is a person we can consult and openly discuss most everything with and trust that he or she will never reveal it to others. A friend is one of the nicest things to have and one of the nicest persons to be.

As recorded in Exodus 19–34, the story of Moses is very instructive of how God transforms our lives. How did God build a relationship with this outstanding leader? A study of the life of Moses shows how he grew in his knowledge, not only of God’s power but of His love and character. This is a crucial component of having a relationship with God.

Prior to arriving at Mount Sinai, Moses was mightily used by God even while being prepared for a special leadership role. In the land of Midian, while taking care of sheep, God inspired him to write two books: Job and Genesis. Then, in the dramatic event of the burning bush, he was called by God to lead Israel out of Egypt. He saw the defeat of the Egyptian gods and the mighty Egyptian army in the Red Sea. He observed for many weeks how God led Israel from Egypt to Sinai. After the experience resulted in his shining face, he led Israel for another 39 years, to the brink of the Promised Land. The biblical message states that Moses was a faithful servant of God (*Deut. 34:5, Josh. 1:1*), an unimpaired light in the darkness, a model prophet by whom others would be measured (*Deut. 18:15, 18*). He was an agent of change, even though the people did not always follow his directions and words. When they did, they prospered.

We may learn from Moses because his exceptional life story tells us what God can do when we let Him change us. What were some turning points in your walk with God, where you recognized how He worked powerfully in your life?

That I May Know You

Read Exodus 33:12–17. What did Moses ask the Lord to teach him? Why did he demand God’s presence to guide them?

Moses’ growth in the Lord was steady. He drew closer and closer to the Lord and sought to model himself after God’s image. One day when he was conversing with God in the tent of meeting, Moses suddenly realized that he did not know Him, and he uttered a specific prayer: “ ‘Show me now Your way, that I may know You’ ” (*Exod. 33:13, NKJV*). Moses was aware of his deep need to understand God on a new level. He discovered that the more he knew the Lord, the more he did not know Him. He recognized his need and wholeheartedly desired to know Him better. God willingly granted Moses’ wish.

By looking at the experiences of Moses so far, we can observe how Moses was drawn into a deeper, intimate relationship with the Lord and how he grew spiritually.

First, Moses climbed the mountain and “went up to God” (*Exod. 19:3, NKJV*). Then he went “to the top of the mountain” (*Exod. 19:20, NKJV*) and afterward approached the cloud, “the thick darkness” in which God resided (*Exod. 20:21, NKJV*).

On another occasion, “Moses entered the cloud” where God was, and he stayed with the Lord 40 days and 40 nights (*Exod. 24:18, NIV*). During these 40 days, God gave Moses two precious gifts: (1) the gift of the Decalogue written by God Himself on the two tablets, also chiseled by Him (*Exod. 24:12*), and (2) the instructions on how to build and furnish the tabernacle (*see Exodus 25–31*).

Then he spent another 40 days and nights with the Lord, interceding for sinners (*Exod. 32:30–32, Deut. 9:18*).

Yet, even after all this, Moses desired to know God’s character more concretely, and God soon gave him special insights to understand who He is. This knowledge Moses desired was not a mere intellectual understanding of God but an experiential knowledge of His person.

No wonder centuries later Jesus would say: “ ‘And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent’ ” (*John 17:3, NKJV*). What better way for God to make Himself known to humans than by becoming a human Himself?

Do you know God, or do you just know *about* Him? What is the crucial difference between the two?

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After the golden calf apostasy, Moses interceded for God’s people and wanted to be assured that the Lord would continue leading them to the Promised Land. Deep down within his being, he also wanted to know the Lord better.

Read Exodus 33:18–23. How did God answer Moses’ request to see His glory?

“Please, show me your glory,” Moses asked the Lord. In His mercy, the Lord did reveal His glory to him. However, when answering Moses’ request, God promised to show him His “goodness.” One can safely conclude that God’s glory is His goodness, that is, His character (see also Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 576; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 414, 415; *Prophets and Kings*, p. 313).

“It is the glory of God to give His virtue to His children. He desires to see men and women reaching the highest standard.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 530. His glory is to embrace repentant sinners (see *Prophets and Kings*, p. 668) and supply everything needed to change them. At the same time, it is our “glory” to reveal His character in our own lives and to make it known to others.

This reflection of God’s character, His goodness, kindness, and tender love, must be seen in our actions. This way, we have a chance to be not only a blessing to the world but a shining light to the onlooking universe. As Paul states: “For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings” (*1 Cor. 4:9, NIV*). This cosmic dimension gives to our lives and service a meaning and purpose that we can barely begin to imagine.

In Romans 2:4, Paul says that “the goodness of God leads you to repentance” (*NKJV*). That is, it is God’s goodness and character pointed out by the Holy Spirit that convinces people of their sinfulness and need of salvation. Indeed, when we look at the cross and know who was there (the Lord Himself) and why He was there—because He loved us and this was the only way to save us—we have the greatest revelation possible of His goodness and character.

How much time do you spend focusing on the Cross and what it tells you about the character of God?

The Self-Revelation of God

Read Exodus 34:1–28. How did God reveal His glory to Moses?

Moses had to take with him two stone tablets like the first ones, which he had broken (*Exod. 32:19*). He was going to meet with the Lord on Mount Sinai for the seventh time. His previous climbs are mentioned in the following texts: (1) *Exod. 19:3, 7*; (2) *Exod. 19:8, 14*; (3) *Exod. 19:20, 25*; (4) *Exod. 20:21, Exod. 24:3*; (5) *Exod. 24:9, 12–18; Exod. 32:15*; (6) *Exod. 32:30, 31*. Moses started his climb early in the morning.

Moses was now prepared for this glorious insight into God's character. The beauty of God's character is best explained in this stunning self-revelation of Himself. It is the most important description of who God is; it is the golden thread woven throughout the Bible (*Num. 14:18, Neh. 9:17, Ps. 103:8, Joel 2:13, Jonah 4:2*). The Lord's proclamation here is the John 3:16 of the Old Testament. In crucial places, biblical authors apply, repeat, or expand on this self-proclamation of the living God because God's character must be correctly understood.

When Moses received the exceptional, unprecedented, and unparalleled explanation of God's name, he bowed down and worshiped the Lord. When we get glimpses of God's love, grace, mercy, compassion, goodness, faithfulness, forgiveness, holiness, and justice, we also are attracted to Him. It is when we see and admire His exceptional qualities that we start to love Him, a love that leads to the desire to serve and obey Him. Because He loves us, we love Him back (*1 John 4:19*).

In this self-revelation, God assures Moses that He will perform marvelous deeds for His people and lead them into the Promised Land. He renews the covenant with them, promising that other nations will see His majesty and awesome work. "Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD. For it is an awesome thing that I will do with you" (*Exod. 34:10, NKJV*).

However, the Israelites needed to obey God and follow ten clear stipulations in order to secure their prosperity. Then Moses was asked by God to write the content of that covenant, which had already been broken (*Exod. 34:27, 28*).

The Shining Face of Moses

Read Exodus 34:29–35. What was the cause of Moses' radiant face?

After God revealed His character of love to Moses, Moses descended to Israel's camp with a radiant face. Did Moses know at first that his face was radiant? Not at all. The closer one is to the Lord, the more keenly aware the person is of his or her imperfections compared to God's holiness.

What was the cause for Moses' transformation that resulted in his face becoming radiant? The reason was not in the simple fact that he was in God's presence, because several times previously he had been with the Lord and his face did not become radiant after those encounters. However, if he had never been in the Lord's presence, his face would never have shone. It was only when he understood God's goodness and kindness, and he completely opened himself to God because of the beauty of His character, that Moses was transformed, and his face shone. Our hearts and minds can experience a change when we surrender to God and allow Him to be the Lord and King of our lives.

Read 2 Corinthians 3:18. How can Jesus gradually transform you into His image?

Paul compares Moses' shining face with Jesus Christ and that the glory of Jesus (in whom God's law and grace were personified) surpasses the glory of the law with Moses. Christ, together with His law, can be engraved in our characters only when we fix our eyes on Jesus (*Heb. 3:1, Heb. 12:2*) and only by the power of the Spirit of God (*2 Cor. 3:12–18*).

Moses is a model for us, demonstrating what God can do for us when we allow Him to change our characters and to mold us into His divine image. This is what Paul means when he talks about walking in the "newness of life" (*Rom. 6:4*).

What areas of your character need to reflect the character of God better? Probably every area, right? However, how can focusing on the Cross, and what it means, give you encouragement and assurance of salvation?

Further Thought: Carefully read Ellen G. White, “Idolatry at Sinai,” pp. 327–330, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

On a gloomy day, a father and son visited a cathedral. As they looked at the stained-glass windows with beautiful depictions of different biblical scenarios, the sun suddenly began shining through the glass picture of people, brightly illuminating them with impressive light. The small boy asked his father: “Daddy, who are these people?” The father didn’t know much about Christianity, Christ, or His disciples but quickly replied: “These people are Christians.” This dazzling picture stayed in the mind of the son. One day the boy’s teacher asked in class: “Children, do you know who Christians are?” The small boy remembered the bright picture in the cathedral and answered: “I know; Christians are shining people.” Along the same line, Jesus said to His followers, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (*Matt. 5:16, NKJV*). Only shining people can be agents of change.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 “If we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 189. What powerful message is here for all of us about how our characters, our actions, and our attitudes impact our witness?
- 2 Exodus 34:6, 7 is rightly called the John 3:16 of the Old Testament. Why?
- 3 How can you explain the beauty of God’s character, based on the self-revelation of God in Exodus 34:6, 7, to people who ask who your God is?
- 4 In class, let people discuss how the character and actions of people professing Christ impact their walk. That is, what has been the influence of those who were kind, gracious, humble, and forgiving on your own experience? At the same time, how have unkind, unforgiving, and arrogant “Christians” impacted your walk with the Lord?

Baatka's Forever Best Friend

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

Baatka felt so lonely in Mongolia. He often stood at the window of his home, looking outside for a real friend who would be with him forever.

The shy and timid 14-year-old boy was the only son in his family. Father was always at work. Mother had mental health issues, and she spent a month in the hospital every year. Baatka felt so alone. He contemplated death.

Then a cousin, Doogii, invited him to go to a Seventh-day Adventist church in Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar. "Come to church," she said. "Something interesting will happen there."

Baatka went because he was lonely. He didn't hear a word of the sermon. The microphone wasn't working because of electricity problems, and he had a hearing impairment that made it difficult to hear the preacher. But he liked the church members. They smiled and accepted him. They treated him like a friend. He also liked the singing. The church gave him goosebumps, and he returned the next Sabbath to feel the goosebumps again.

Church members spoke about God as their best friend.

"God can be your forever friend," one told the boy.

"You'll never be alone," said another.

Baatka wondered if God was real. *I can't see Him. Can He be my friend?* he thought.

After that, he went to the church every Sabbath. The church became the only positive place in his life, and the church members became his family. Life gained meaning, and Baatka found a desire to live.

Little by little, Baatka began to believe that God was real. His ears didn't hear God speak, but his heart heard God's voice. God became his forever best friend, transforming his mind and changing his life.

Today, Baatka Orgil is 31 and a new person in God. The once quiet and timid boy is now a Global Mission pioneer, planting churches in unentered areas of Mongolia. "I love to share how my life has changed," he said. "I want to help people like me. That's why I am serving as a missionary."

Baatka, who is married and has two children, said he once thought that God chose only talented people as missionaries. "But now I understand that He chooses only the right people."

"Even though I didn't believe in myself, God believed in me," he said. "If God could believe in me, I want to believe in Him, too."



Thank you for your prayers for Global Mission pioneers who, like Baatka, face huge challenges planting churches among unreached people groups around the world. Learn more about Global Mission pioneers on the Adventist Mission website: bit.ly/GMPioneers.