

Middle School

October 20-21, 2012



Title: A Journey Home: Week 3 (Trust Your Dad)

Series: A Journey Home

Series Description: Something incredible happens when we feel at home. We know we belong. We let our guard down and put up our feet. We know we're loved and we are brave—terrifically brave. But home doesn't come from a street address, kind group of friends or even a good family. The direct source of home is God—the perfect dad who treasures his children. Because no matter our history or family of origin, we can all feel abandoned and alone. So, we can either default to living as emotional and spiritual orphans or live in our true identity as sons and daughters.

Objectives:

Know: In order to understand our place in God's family, we have to learn to get our approval and worth from our heavenly Dad. His opinion of us, as we really receive our place in his family, shapes everything. We'll walk through the story of Moses to see how God longs for us to trust him.

Do: Identify a way to take a break from striving for someone's approval or from guarding a certain image.

Where to find it: Exodus 2-4 (Pg. 56-58), James 4:1-3 (Pg. 1231)

Schedule for all Sites:

Hang time	(10 minutes before service begins)
Worship and Teaching	(at the start of the service hour, 25-30 minutes)
Small Groups	(last 35 minutes of the service)

Leader Notes: Don't forget to share personal insights you're getting and don't be afraid to be vulnerable with your group. Share your story where and when it's appropriate. Invite students into your life and into what God is teaching you. That's part of the discipleship process.

Large Group Teaching Script

Kids enter large group with *“Home” playing in the background.* (It’s in the Keynote.)

Video: *Phillip Phillips’ “Home”* [youtube.com/watch?v=HoRkntoHkIE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoRkntoHkIE)

Songs: Home (Original song written for A Journey Home)
Insert another song—Site’s choice

Is God Good?

Welcome to Middle School! I’m _____ and I’m pumped that we get to hang out together for the next few minutes. We’re on a journey together—a Journey Home— (**Show Series Slide**) and we’re looking at what it means to live as if we’re God’s treasured child versus living as if we’re an orphan without a home. The last two weeks we’ve explored our family’s history—how we’ve chosen not to trust God and how our distorted views of God cause us to push back against his authority. Today we’re going to talk about where we get our approval.

Let’s begin today by asking ourselves two questions. So answer these in your head:
Give kids 5-10 seconds to ponder each question

- Who do you most want to like you?

Do you have that person’s image in you brain? Ok, now answer this:

- Whose approval means the most to you? It might be a person, a group or it could even be someone you’ve never actually met in person. Whose approval means the most to you?

Approval is huge

We probably don’t even realize it, but we think and act in ways every day in search of approval. NOTE: a background pic is provided for each of these points as you quickly move through the list.

- ***Because of approval, we choose certain places to sit in the lunch room***
- ***Because of approval, we either studied harder or didn’t study hard enough for that math test last week***
- ***Because of approval, we will pretend to not know something or pretend that we do know something that we actually don’t***
- ***Because of approval, we buy certain clothes***
- ***Because of approval, we might choose friends that we really don’t like or connect with***
- ***Because of approval, I _____ (fill in the blank with a statement from your own life)***

The search for approval affects just about everything in our lives. We are hard-wired to need approval—that’s not the issue. The issue is where we seek approval. We often spend our lives

living like abandoned orphans when our father is inviting us to be his treasured child—to get all of our approval from being his treasured child.

Moses Intro

The bible is full of people whose lives were far from perfect and who lived as orphans even though their heavenly dad was offering the place of a treasured kid in the family. Some of the most influential people in the history of the world struggled to receive their father's love. One of those people is Moses. You might have heard of Moses before—he's kind of famous. He led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt by performing all kinds of crazy miracles. Moses famously led the nation of Israel across the Red Sea as God miraculously parted the waters and the people walked across on dry ground. Moses led the people for 40 years as they made their way to the land God had promised to give them as a home. But Moses almost missed all of this.

Moses was born to an ordinary Israelite family. However, when Moses was born, it was also the same time that the leader of Egypt—the Pharaoh—had issued an order that all Israelite baby boys were to be killed. The people of Israel were growing in numbers and they were threatening the power structure of Egypt. Pharaoh had already enslaved them and he thought he could also get the upper hand if he could control the population by having the baby boys killed. Stop for a second and imagine what that would be like. It's easy for us to hear that and just miss the magnitude of it.

Thankfully, Moses' family didn't obey Pharaoh's decree and they actually put him in a little water-proof basket in the Nile River. From the bank of the river, Moses' sister would watch out for him. It just so happened that the Pharaoh's daughter found Moses one day and eventually adopted him into her family. That meant that Moses was raised as a prince and had access to the best of the best. He had education, power, money and connections. While his fellow Israelites slaved away each day, Moses enjoyed the life of a prince.

Judge and Prince?

Later when Moses was older, he was out among his fellow Israelites when he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite. When Moses thought no one was watching, he killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. The next day he was back out among his Israelite family again and found 2 Israelites fighting. Moses intervened and asked the guy who started the fight, "Why are you beating up your friend." He got this reply:

"Who appointed you to be our prince and judge? Are you going to kill me as you killed that Egyptian yesterday?" Exodus 2:14

Busted! So Moses' secret wasn't really a secret. Even Pharaoh found out and tried to have Moses killed. So Moses escaped into a remote desert area. The funny thing about what that guy said to Moses, "Who appointed you to be our prince and judge?" is that it was actually true. God was going to one day appoint Moses as their prince and judge. But that was a long way off.

Assessing Moses

So let's dissect Moses for a second. At this point, he is living in isolation taking care of sheep in the middle of the desert. That's a long way away from life in a palace. He had no family around him as His birth family, The Israelites, had rejected him since he had been raised with wealth and privilege while they slaved away making bricks. His adoptive Egyptian family had rejected him and tried to have him killed. Moses was in a tough spot.

Burning Bush

Moses was going to hide out in the desert for the next 40 years. Enter God into the picture. One day Moses was taking care of his sheep when he saw this weird bush that was on fire. It was on fire except it wasn't burning up. Naturally, he had to check it out. When he got there, the bush started talking to him. ...Um, yeah—a talking, burning bush. And it happened to be God talking through the bush. Here's what God said:

Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. ¹⁰ Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt.” Exodus 3:9-10

Excuses

God is essentially saying, “You, Moses, you're the guy for the job.” If God spoke to you through a burning bush that wasn't really burning, would you have believed him? Moses didn't.

But Moses protested to God, “Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?” Exodus 3:11

Moses wasn't trying to be humble or modest. He couldn't imagine that God would pick him. After all, everyone else had rejected him, so why would anyone listen to him all these years later? He didn't really believe that God was being serious. God had to be joking, right?!? Moses did not believe that he was deeply loved by his heavenly dad. So he keeps making excuses, like this one:

But Moses protested again, “What if they won't believe me or listen to me? What if they say, ‘The Lord never appeared to you’?” Exodus 4:1

If we're thinking through the lens of getting our approval from God, Moses is not confident enough in the way God sees him to handle the potential doubts from others. If Moses could have really understood the way God saw him, he could confidently walk in to Egypt to do this job, simply because he knew what his Father thought of him. It wouldn't have mattered what others thought. Even if they didn't believe him, it wouldn't have affected the confidence he received from being in relationship with his Father.

To help Moses understand, God showed Moses some wicked cool tricks like turning his walking staff into a snake and then back into a staff again. He also made his hand diseased and then healed it. God kept reassuring Moses and Moses kept coming up with excuses. Here is the last one he gave:

But Moses pleaded with the Lord, “O Lord, I’m not very good with words. I never have been, and I’m not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled.” Exodus 4:10

So after numerous reassurances from God and even after all of these crazy feats like turning a stick into a snake and such, Moses blames his inability to speak. God answers Moses this way:

¹¹ Then the Lord asked Moses, “Who makes a person’s mouth? Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I, the Lord? ¹² Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say.” ¹³ But Moses again pleaded, “Lord, please! Send anyone else.” Exodus 4:11-13

(CONTINUED)

What’s great about God’s response is how God meets Moses right where he is—even in his doubts. God’s essentially saying, “Moses, I am all powerful. Do you think I’m going to let your struggle to speak the right words to stop the rescue of my people? I’m going to give you what you need. Just trust me.” But Moses pleads for God to send anyone else but me. Here’s God’s last response:

Then the Lord became angry with Moses. “All right,” he said. “What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he speaks well. And look! He is on his way to meet you now. He will be delighted to see you. ¹⁵ Talk to him, and put the words in his mouth. I will be with both of you as you speak, and I will instruct you both in what to do. Exodus 4:14-15

Moses actually angers God by saying, “Send anyone else.” God was angry because Moses refused to believe that God was being truthful with him. Moses was refusing to trust God and was operating as if God could really care less about him. He’s almost in a self-pity, poor-me mode. God wants Moses to really understand the way God sees him—a dearly loved child with an eternal family. Not an abandoned orphan without a home.

Moses finally goes back to Egypt and well, the rest is part of history. If you read the rest of Moses’ story in the Bible, you can almost see him growing in confidence as he believes in his Father’s love.

I asked you earlier whose approval means the most to you and who do you most want to like you. My prayer for us today is that we will begin to answer that question by seeking our Heavenly Dad’s approval, that his opinion of us would be the most important. It’s incredibly hard to believe that, but God meets us where we are, just like he did with Moses.

Pray

Let’s pray and ask God to help us get our approval from him as our good Father.

Dismiss to small groups

Small Group:

Instructions:

Follow these activities in order. Unless the Holy Spirit seems to be doing something in the midst of the discussion questions, don't spend tons of time there. Leave time for kids to identify a way to take a break from striving for someone's approval or from guarding a certain image. We want them walking away with a challenge to do this week.

Part 1: Discussion Questions—Large Group Recap

- Last week we chose a statement about God we wanted to experience and a verse to go along with it. Does anyone want to share anything from this past week?
 - Note: depending on your group, you may or may not get any response to this first question. No biggie. Just move on if no one has anything to share
- What struck you about Moses' story?
- Could you identify with Moses? How so?
- What is one way you seek approval from others?

Part 2: Assessment Tool

SAY/READ: As we begin to focus on who God is and how he can shape our life, we can begin to let go of letting other people define us. It's not wrong to want people to like us, or to find encouragement from people around you. That's all good. But it becomes a problem when we strive for people's approval and when our identity gets wrapped up in what others think of us.

We're going to do a little assessment on where we get approval from others. Let's take about 5 minutes and each fill this out. Then we'll talk through it and make a plan for the next week.

DO: ***Give each student an assessment—it's page 44-45 in the Guide.*** We will have individual copies for kids to use if they don't have a guide with them.

After everyone has had a chance to complete their assessment, ask if anyone would like to share the following (and you can lead by example by going first):

- 1. Tell the group one sentence that you filled in**
- 2. Give one example of how it plays out in your life**
- 3. Say what you're hoping for when you try to get approval from others**

Part 3: Weekly Challenge and Pray together

SAY: You probably guessed it. Your challenge this week is to take a break from striving for someone's approval or from guarding a certain image. This should feel like a wonderful rest. We'll take a minute to write this out—either the person's name you're not going to seek approval from, or the image that you'll let go of.

DO: ***Give each student a copy of the weekly challenge page.***

SAY: Now let's take it a step further. When you take a break from something, it's important to fill that space with something else. It could be as simple as walking around your classroom, sending a text to a friend or writing on the Bible verse you reflected on last week. **Right now, everyone brainstorm out loud some things you could do this week instead of striving for that person's approval or guarding a certain image.**

SAY: Let's pray for each other as we seek to stop striving for other's approval or trying to protect an identity. Pray together as a group.

Prep Needs

Small Group

- Pens
- Assessment Tool (1 per kid—see Curriculum Folder for master) (Page 44-45 in the Adult Guide PDF Version)
- Weekly Challenge Page (1 per student—see Curriculum folder for master) (Page 48 in the Adult Guide PDF Version)

Large Group

- LIVE bible

AV/Tech

1. Phillip Phillips' "Home" video (In KC Tech Multimedia Folder already)
2. Song: Home
3. Song: (site's choice)
4. A Journey Home Series Slide
5. Pictures of something to represent each of the following statements:
 - Because of approval, we choose certain places to sit in the lunch room
 - Because of approval, we either studied harder or didn't study hard enough for that math test last week
 - Because of approval, we will pretend to not know something or pretend that we do know something that we actually don't
 - Because of approval, we buy certain clothes
 - Because of approval, we might choose friends that we really don't like or connect with
6. Verse: "Who appointed you to be our prince and judge? Are you going to kill me as you killed that Egyptian yesterday?" Exodus 2:14
7. Verse: Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. ¹⁰Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt." Exodus 3:9-10
8. Verse: But Moses protested to God, "Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?" Exodus 3:11
9. Verse: But Moses protested again, "What if they won't believe me or listen to me? What if they say, 'The Lord never appeared to you'?" Exodus 4:1
10. Verse: But Moses pleaded with the Lord, "O Lord, I'm not very good with words. I never have been, and I'm not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled." Exodus 4:10
11. Verse: ¹¹Then the Lord asked Moses, "Who makes a person's mouth? Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I, the Lord? ¹²Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say." ¹³But Moses again pleaded, "Lord, please! Send anyone else." Exodus 4:11-13
12. Verse: Then the Lord became angry with Moses. "All right," he said. "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he speaks well. And look! He is on his way to meet you now. He will be delighted to see you. ¹⁵Talk to him, and put the words in his mouth.

I will be with both of you as you speak, and I will instruct you both in what to do. Exodus 4:14-15