

ELEVATE: Your Vision of God

Session #4: From Out There To In Here

Session Objective: The objective of this session is to grow the ‘God-confidence’ of students by reminding them that God now lives inside us. If God was at a distance in the Old Testament (due to as yet unresolved sin), He has now drawn near through Christ. We carry in us the most powerful force in the Universe. Where we advance, the Gates of Hell must retreat. God has chosen to make his home in the human heart made new in Christ. This lesson would seek to inform and remind students of what that means. He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world. We need to elevate our vision of God so that we can live the Christian life with confidence! For we have not been given a spirit of timidity but one of power, love and self control. (2 Timothy 1:7)

Minimum Prep: Read through the entire session outline. Prepare an environment where discussion can occur.

Extended Prep: This lesson requires some advance preparation to be of maximum benefit. The use of the clip from LOTR: ROTK is crucial.

- Cue up the clip from The Return of the King where Frodo and Sam begin to make their way across the Valley toward Mt. Doom. This is right after Frodo has been freed from the guard tower. He and Sam dress in Orc armour and think they will have to sneak through the entire Orc army on their journey. It seems hopeless! Then as they step onto the valley floor, the entire Orc army begins to leave. The clip begins with the words: “To the gate, you slugs!” Let it run through the end of the Aragorn’s speech and the point where the Orc army begins to splinter and run away. About 5 minutes total.

Session Outline

Leader Preamble:

We’ve all met a lot of people who like to describe themselves as “Agnostics” and a bunch of other people who refer to themselves as “Deists”. Agnostics believe that there probably is a God but that He would be so different from us that there is really no way we can know anything about Him or have anything to do with him. Deists believe that a God created the earth and the universe, but that He is not personally involved with it in any sort of human or emotional way. They describe a God who is a lot like a clock maker. He makes the clock, and then watches it work from a distance with a mixture of curiosity and detachment. What would it be like to think like that? It must be scary to believe that God is so ‘out there’ so ‘far off’ and uninvolved. What hope is there for this planet if God is not interested in it?

The Bible tells a different story. The Bible tells of a God who created us and who walked with us in the garden and spoke to us face to face. Sin ruined that closeness but the rest of the Bible story is the story of God doing everything necessary to restore that connection. He doesn't want to be 'out there', He wants to be in here with you and me. God desires intimacy with us. He created us to be His family, and He resides in us if we invite Him into a heart prepared to receive Him through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Some of us have God living inside of us but you'd never know it. We are still afraid, still unsure of what to do and still unclear as to who we are. We haven't yet understood that we are in the grip of a force greater than any other in this universe.

There is a scene in the movie The Return of the King where Frodo and Sam began to realize that they were in the grip of something greater than themselves. They had reached the end of their strength. They were exhausted. They were out of ideas and out of allies and yet they still had to cross the Valley of Mordor so that they could ascend Mt. Doom and cast the ring into its fires. The most dangerous part of their journey lay in front of them and they saw no way to get across. They dressed up in Orc armour and stepped out onto the Valley floor, expecting to have to wade through miles upon miles of enemy troops. Let's watch what happens. (Play clip)

What happened? As Frodo and Sam took a step of faith they discovered that all the armies of Sauron had left the Valley to march to the Black Gate. It seemed that Providence had conspired to bring the army of Aragorn to the Black Gate at just the moment Frodo needed a distraction. Sam and Frodo began to realize that maybe they were in the grip of something greater than themselves.

As Christians sometimes we forget that we are in the grip of a power greater than any other in the Universe. Aragorn's speech revealed that he had a sense too that THIS DAY was a day of destiny, that on THIS DAY, darkness could not prevail. The Bible says that where the light is, the darkness must retreat. With God inside us, where we advance, the Gates of Hell must retreat. Tonight, we are going to talk a little bit about what it means to have such a force inside of us. What does it mean that God moved from out there to in here? Let's break up into our Small Groups.

Small Group Questions:

- 1. Take a look at 1 Samuel 7:7-14. Remember that the Philistines are actually a lot like the ancient Greeks you saw in the movie Troy. How do you think Brad Pitt and his army of ancient Greeks must have felt when they found themselves at war with God? What might it have looked like when God unleashed a fury of thunder and lightening against them? How do you think it made the puny Hebrews feel? Why do you think the Philistine's were afraid to come back?**

- 2. Check out Galatians 4:6-7 and Ephesians 3:16-19. What do these verses teach us?**

Leader help: The important thing for students to grasp here is that God now lives in the human heart through faith in Christ! All the power of the God from 1 Samuel 7 now resides in our hearts! That is why Paul wanted them to know and to understand this when he wrote to the Ephesians, he wanted them to be rightly confident! Sometimes we make God too small, and so we lose faith. Help students express the wonder that God lives in us!

- 3. Take a look at Romans 8:31-39. What promises are there for you and me?**

- 4. In the Lord of the Rings, Sam and Frodo once talked about how they felt as though they had been caught up in a big story that they didn't know the ending of. As their adventures went on though, they began to get a sense that Providence was in control and that they needed only to do their part. It is the same for us. We need to do our part but trust that God is in control of the story. What do you think your part of the story might be? What contribution do you think you could make to the Kingdom of God?**

Leader help: You will need to be a Pastor here. Most students will say: "I don't know". Your job is to help them recognize their spiritual gifts, unique talents and sensitivities and then suggest how those might translate into a Kingdom Role. Get creative here. You might even enlist the help of others in the group in dreaming roles for the students. In my youth group we sometimes do an activity called "Hotseat" where one person is on the Hotseat and we go around the circle and everyone offers a word of encouragement about that person. Do what you need to do to help students become aware that they have a role and that God will empower them to achieve it.

- 5. Many times in the LOTR story Frodo became paralyzed by fear. He saw so many obstacles to his quest that it didn't seem he could make it. What are some obstacles you face in living the Christian life? What makes it hard?**
- 6. The Spirit of God resides in us to help empower our efforts. We have to partner with him in prayer however. Let's spend some time identifying challenges and then targeting the awesome power of the Holy Spirit at those problems.**

Leader help: Help students identify barriers (i.e. busyness, peer pressure, temptations) and then lead a prayer time asking the Holy Spirit to help the students overcome those barriers.

