

HOLY GROUND

Week 1 | Unceasing | Exodus 3:1-5

Deeper Dive

Old Testament Holy Ground:

Tabernacle - Exodus 25:8-9 - The inner most sanctuary was called The Holy of Holies. This was the space where the presence of the Lord literally dwelled.

Altars and Memorials - There are many instances where the Israelites built altars in locations where God did or said something miraculous. This served as a reminder of God's presence. For example, in Bethel (Genesis 28:17) a stone pillar was created as a to commemorate Jacob's encounter with the Lord when he received the vision of "Jacob's Ladder".

New Testament Holy Ground:

Body - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 - Since we have the Holy Spirit living in us as believers, our bodies are individually a place for God's presence to dwell within us.

Church - 1 Peter 2:5 - As a group of believers, we are the body of Christ. Not as a physical location, but as a gathering of believers. God's presence is always with us as a collective group.

Day 1 - Holy Ground = Presence

READ: Exodus 3:1-6

What does it mean to walk on "Holy Ground"? The exact Hebrew translation means "ground (or earth) that is set apart for divine presence". The concept of Holy Ground is mentioned throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament, there are specific locations where God's presence is evident. Some of these places remain Holy, such as in the Temple with the Holy of Holies (see deeper dive section). However, other places are made Holy for a specific time and purpose, such as the burning bush in Exodus 3.

In the New Testament, following the resurrection, we see a shift from these specific "Holy" locations to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within each of us. When Jesus was crucified the veil in the temple that separated us from God's presence in the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). This was symbolic of the direct relationship that we can now have with the Lord because Jesus paid the price for the sin that once separated us from God. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 Paul says "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?"

Holy ground is not necessarily a specific location, although it can be. Instead, Holy Ground is our awareness of God's presence already always around us. When Moses encountered the burning bush, God's presence created Holy Ground in an ordinary place that Moses worked every single day. Similarly, in our lives today Holy ground can be found anywhere. It could be in your office, on your commute, walking your dog, standing in your kitchen, or even late at night in your bed when you can't sleep. Anytime we are aware of God's presence we can experience walking on "Holy Ground".

DAILY PRAYER ACTIVITY: It can be hard to quiet the noise long enough to notice God's presence in our lives. Awareness of Holy Ground often requires stillness. Take 5 minutes today, set a timer, and spend time noticing God's presence. Simply pray "*Hey God, I am here*".

- What did you notice? Was the stillness uncomfortable? Did anything distract you from noticing God? Honestly confess any of that to the Lord today, and let Him meet you where you are.

Deeper Dive

- **Exodus 3:5** ~ "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."
- **Joshua 5:15** ~ The commander of the Lord's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so
- **Romans 12:1** ~ Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.
- **Galatians 2:20** ~ I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
- **Philippians 3:8** ~ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ.
- **Matthew 16:24-25** ~ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it."

Day 2 - Holy Ground = Surrender

When Moses walks towards the burning bush, God calls out and commands him to take off his sandals because he is walking on "Holy Ground". Similarly, Joshua is also instructed to take off his sandals in Joshua chapter 5 because he is walking on "Holy Ground". This might seem like an odd request to us today. However, there is great cultural significance and symbolism behind removing one's shoes in the Bible. This was a sign of humility, respect, and surrender. Let's take a deeper look at the multiple meanings behind taking off your sandals.

1. **Humility and Servitude** - Servants and those of a lower class didn't wear sandals. Therefore, removing your sandals was symbolically placing yourself in a position of submission and humble servitude to the Lord's authority.
2. **Respect and Honor** - Sandals were removed before entering someone's home or before entering the Holy temple. This was a sign of respect and honor.
3. **Covenantal Agreement** - Sandals were used as a symbol of agreement or covenant. Removing a sandal and giving it to someone served as a public declaration of a covenant with them.

As you spend time in God's presence today, think about these three symbols of surrender. While God might not command you to take off your Nike's, there is a cost associated with surrendering to God's authority in your prayer life. In order for us to truly experience God's presence on Holy Ground it can cost us our control, pride, self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and even our desire for busyness and productivity.

Are you approaching your time with God trying to micro-manage the outcome? Are you trying to "impress" God, or "do it right"? Or are you approaching His throne in humble surrender?

DAILY PRAYER ACTIVITY: Take a moment to symbolically surrender to God's presence today. Take off your shoes, open up your hands, and get on your knees (if you are able). Spend 5 minutes being still with God in this surrendered state. Then list every area in your life and as you pray symbolically take your hands and lay it at His feet in surrender. For example: *Lord take my kids & my parenting, I lay it at your feet, I trust you. Lord take my career, I lay it at your feet, I trust you.*

- What did you notice, or hear from Him? How did you feel inside your body and spirit during this exercise? Why do you think that was?
- Why do we resist surrender? How does vulnerability create deeper relational intimacy with God?
- What does control look like in your prayer life? How can you move towards surrendering your need to control the outcome of your prayers to Him?

Deeper Dive

- **Psalm 62:8** ~Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.
- **Hebrews 4:16** ~Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need
- **Mark 9:24** ~"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"
- **Matthew 27:46** ~About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").
- **Psalm 142:2** ~I pour out before him my complaint; before him I tell my trouble..
- **Psalm 34:18** ~The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.
- **Lamentations 3:21-23** ~Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.
- **Job 1:22** ~In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing
- **Psalm 13:5** ~But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.

Day 3 - Holy Ground = Authenticity

When we are walking on Holy Ground, God invites us to share our doubt, fear, anxiety, confusion, exhaustion, desires, anger, grief, and ALL of our raw & honest emotions. The truth is, He already knows our hearts anyways. God desires an authentic relationship with us, not a fake conversation dripping in religiosity. In the words of CS Lewis "We must lay before Him what is in us, not what ought to be in us." He wants us to take off our masks and come to Him as we are. God values truth and honesty over performance and attempted perfection.

When we read the Bible, we can find plenty of examples of these raw and honest prayers in the book of Psalms. David expresses many prayers of "lament". Laments are prayers of crying out to God in our distress, sadness, anger or brokenness. Most scholars agree that between 40-50% of Psalms are actually prayers of lament. This might surprise some of us because there has been a common misinterpretation that somehow certain emotions are not "good". It's important to know that this is not what God's Word says. Even Jesus Himself brought His sorrows to the Lord in grief (Matthew 27:46). Let's take a look at what God says about bringing our authentic selves along with all our sorrow and lamenting into Holy Ground with Him.

1. **Name your pain** - God calls us to pour out our sorrows to Him. Don't sugar coat it, God already knows your heart. Bring ALL your emotions to Him. - Psalm 62:8; Psalm 142:2; Psalm 34:18
2. **Anchor it in truth** - We can question God's ways, while still trusting in His genuine goodness. Take your sorrows and pair them with the promises and truths of God. God loves to hear us repeat His promises. - Lamentations 3:21-23; Job 1:22; Psalm 13:5
3. **Ask & keep asking** - God is not human and He doesn't get sick of us. In fact, He calls us to keep on asking persistently. He wants us to come to Him, and stay close in our need. - Luke 18:1-8
4. **Share your burdens** - God often works in and through those around us in our times of need. Being part of a small group is where the body of Christ can build relational trust and depth. This is how we are able to support each other when we need it most. - Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Galatians 6:2

DAILY PRAYER ACTIVITY: Take 5 minutes and write down a completely raw, unedited, unfiltered prayer to God. No fancy religious language, no masks, no filters, just raw honesty with any intense emotions you may be feeling in this moment.

- Did this exercise feel freeing or completely uncomfortable? Why?
- What emotions have you been trying to filter away from God? Where have you been pretending or being performative? Why do we feel that we need to hide our emotions from God?

Deeper Dive

- **Isaiah 6:6-8** ~“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.” Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”
- **2 Corinthians 3:18** ~And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.
- **Luke 10:38-42** ~As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.

Week 1: Unceasing

Day 4 - Holy Ground = Transformation

READ: Isaiah 6:1-8; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Luke 10:38-42; Exodus 3:1-5

We often enter into God’s presence with the goal of getting our prayers answered. Of course, let’s be honest, we also want them answered quickly and in the exact way we think they should be. We are quick to try and micromanage our prayers. Instead of surrendering our needs to God’s authority, we come to Him like a project manager with our spreadsheets, timelines, task lists, calendars, and agendas. Sound familiar? We have a natural human desire to want to control, especially when there is pain or suffering involved. We want God to focus on changing our circumstances, while God is much more interested in changing us.

Spending time in God’s presence should absolutely transform us, if we let it. In our verses for today we see Moses leave with a mission, Isaiah leave cleansed, the disciples leave empowered, and Mary & Martha leave with greater purpose. Spending time on Holy Ground should align our heart’s desires with His. As we mature in our faith, spending time with God becomes more about communion with Him, and less about getting our answers or following our agenda. Often, this is the key to healing our issues with seemingly “unanswered prayers”. Sometimes prayers feel unanswered because we haven’t gotten the answer we wanted in the timeframe that we wanted it in. Taking time to spend in God’s presence without our checklists and agendas gives us the time and space to listen to Him. We need to hear His truth, and allow it to transform our hearts into alignment with His.

DAILY PRAYER ACTIVITY: In your prayer time today, instead of giving God a lengthy checklist or your new “project timeline”, pray with an open heart. Instead of a detail specific prayer, attempt to pray using only 5 words (examples below). Then set a timer for 5 minutes and silently spend time in God’s presence. Listen for His voice. Close your time with only praise and adoration, not asking God for anything.

5 Word prayer examples (make these your own):

1. Searching for a job or making a big life decision? - *“God provide what I need”.*
2. Have a health concern? - *“God heal me”.*
3. Concerned about a friend? - *“God meet their needs”.*
4. Searching for an answer? - *“Let me hear your voice”.*

- Did this make your prayer time harder or easier today? Did your time with God feel more open or intimate? Why, or why not?
- How could seeking God’s desires and plans transform the way we seek and spend time Him? Why is it hard for us to turn over our control, agendas and desires to God?

Deeper Dive

- **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

~ Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

- **Colossians 4:2** ~ Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

- **Ephesians 6:18** ~ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.

- **John 15:4-5** ~Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing..

- **Colossians 3:17** ~And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

- **Isaiah 26:3** ~ You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You!

- **Romans 12:12** ~ Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Day 5 - Daily walking on Holy Ground

Holy Ground isn’t found in sacred perfection, it’s simply found in God’s presence. This isn’t reserved for a certain time of day or week, you don’t have to be in church, or sitting alone with your Bible in reverent solitude. You can walk on Holy Ground throughout your day, every day. In fact, God wants us to do that!

In our verses for today, God calls us to “abide in Him” and to “pray without ceasing”. In the Bible, God meets people in deserts, kitchens, fishing boats, prisons, gardens, roads, work places and dinner tables. Instead of trying to escape our busy lives for a sacred moment or a retreat, God wants us to see that He can fill any moment of our lives. His presence can become woven into our everyday ordinary lives. Just like strengthening a muscle, we have to practice becoming aware of His presence to find this daily Holy Ground. Consistent daily moments matter more than overly dramatic spiritual encounters. You don’t need eloquent prayers, emotional intensity, or uninterrupted hours. Instead, you just need the willingness to return your attention to God again and again. As you practice this type of awareness, you will realize that almost anywhere can become a sacred space where heaven meets earth.

Practicing daily walking on Holy Ground (These are just a few examples. Take this list, add to it, and make your own):

Kitchen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank God for His provision • Pray for those that farmed and transported your food • Pray for those eating your food ~ <i>Lord nourish my family spiritually just as you do physically</i>
Car	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to worship music • Pray for those you pass and for those that cut you off • Imagine Jesus in your passenger seat & talk to Him like a close friend (It’s not weird because He’s actually there!)
Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pray for your co-workers, managers, and customers • Look for the Kingdom purpose that God might be training you for in this earthly work • Set a phone alarm to stop and pray several times a day
Bedtime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release all that was left unfinished today to Him • Thank God for His grace listing specific moments • List all the places you noticed God today

- What ordinary space in your life most needs to become Holy Ground? Prayerfully write down your own list of ideas for increasing your awareness of God in that space.

- What distracts you the most from the awareness of God in your life? What steps do you need to take to overcome that distraction?