

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Gather

Invite participants to gather in small groups of four to six, plus a facilitator, welcome them, and ask them to become quiet as we become aware of God's presence.

Listen

Proclaim Exodus 3:1-15

Respond

Continue with this prayer: *"Yahweh, thank you for seeking us out in the busy-ness of our lives. We praise you for the ways you make yourself and your will known to us. Forgive us for those times when distractions cause us to tune you out and miss your call. Be with us now as we seek to know you, and ourselves, more deeply. Amen."*



Send Forth

Say, *"God is here, among us. God wants to be with you. This is holy ground. Is there any better place to be? Tonight, we will learn about God, about who we are, and God's call. Relax, but be reverent. As Moses did, remove your shoes. Please, place them neatly in the center of your group."*

A. What's in a Name? (45 minutes)

1. Review the burning bush passage by saying these or similar words, *"Moses was unsure of himself when God called him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Would people believe him? What if they said, 'God sent you? Yeah, right! If you know God, tell us his name.' What would Moses say in reply? God said 'I AM WHO I AM ... I AM has sent me to you.' I AM WHO I AM. What does that mean? The Catechism of the Catholic Church (206-207, 211, 213) tells us that there is much to these four simple words. For starters, it means that God wants us to know him better, even though God knows that he is beyond our understanding. God is a mystery, yet he makes himself close to us. God told us that he is the source of all being, always there for us, faithful despite our sin, and eager to forgive and save us. Many have come to use the name 'Yahweh,' a sacred word for I AM WHO I AM. Some consider God's name too holy to speak. We usually say 'God' or 'Lord.' Whatever we call God, we need to understand him as best we can."*
2. Assign one of the "I Am" statements from the Gospel of John (available in Resource 8) to each small group. Distribute Bibles, pieces of blank paper, and pens. If there are more than seven groups, duplicate assignments; if less, divide groups in order to create seven.
3. Introduce the small group activity by saying, *"Jesus is God and shows God's desire to be with us, for us to know him. Jesus seems less mysterious than a burning bush. In John's Gospel, Jesus makes several 'I am' statements, using metaphors to show that he is sent by the Father, is of the Father, and brings us to the Father. Each small group will explore one of these statements and then create a new metaphor to explain who Jesus is to you. In your small groups, find the passage in John's Gospel and proclaim it. If time allows, read the expanded passage around the statement to add context. Finally, decide as a small group what this means, in your own words."*

Materials Needed

- ✓ Markers (one per person)
- ✓ Masking tape
- ✓ Pens (one per person)
- ✓ Blank pieces of paper (two per small group)
- ✓ Name tags (preferably those that read, "Hello, my name is . . .")
- ✓ Four and one quarter by five and one half inch sheets of paper, on which you have copied this phrase (for closing prayer): "You are a child of God. God wants you to know, love, and follow him. Seek God and his ways always."
- ✓ I Am statements from Resource 8 (one per small group)
- ✓ Bibles (one per person)
- ✓ Enthroned Bible
- ✓ Candle, matches
- ✓ Optional: CD player and CD: Ken Canedo and Jesse Manibusan's *Fish With Me, Love Never Fails*, OC

4. When complete, and with participants still in small groups, say: *"We know that God is here because Jesus told us, '...Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them' (Mt 18:20). However, there is no burning bush to help us recognize God. So we are going to make a name tag for God. There is just one rule, though: you cannot write 'God' on the tag. On a blank sheet of paper, describe in a word or phrase who God is to you."* Each participant will write a word or phrase and then pass the piece of paper to another group member. Invite small group facilitators to ask participants to share what they have written, affirm responses, and ask for explanation if necessary.
5. Return to the large group for sharing. Invite a member of each small group to share with the group the passage they explored, what new metaphor for Jesus the group created, and what names were written on God's name tag. Make any clarifying points to the large group as needed.

B. Be Careful How You Answer This . . . (30 minutes)

1. Invite a young person to proclaim Matthew 16:13-19. Then ask *"Why do you think it was important to Jesus to know what people—especially his disciples—thought of him?"*
2. Invite participants to return to their small groups and distribute the name tags. Ask them to write their name on the tags. If group members know each other well, ask them to pass the tags around the circle. Instruct each young person to write a word or phrase on the tag that describes that person (a positive attribute). If group members are new to each other, have each person describe briefly how they would like to be known by others. When this step is completed, ask participants to read aloud in their small groups what is written on their tag.
3. Say, *"Jesus was a total stranger to Peter when they first met along the Sea of Galilee. Over the years, Peter came to fully realize who Jesus was. It was more than an affirmation. It was proof that Peter 'got it.' He obviously was a good follower, which helped him to become a great leader."*
4. Invite participants to shout out the answers to these questions:
 - *When God first called Moses, what was Moses' occupation? (Shepherd)*
 - *What did God call Moses to do? (Lead, or "shepherd" his people)*
 - *When Jesus first called Peter, what was Peter's occupation? (Fisherman)*
 - *What did God call Peter to do? (Be a fisher of men)*
 - *When Jesus got to know him better, what did Jesus call Peter to do? (Tend and feed his flock—his people—as a shepherd would)*

5. Next, say, *"Think for a few moments about what God might call you to do as you come to know him better."* (Pause for a few minutes. While young people are thinking, you might play the song, *Fish with Me*. During this time, small group facilitators can assist you by placing the quarter sheets of paper with the closing prayer response into one of the shoes from each participant.) *"Now, take a pair of shoes, but not your own, from the group pile. Think about the person whose name you find on the soles of those shoes, and offer a silent prayer that he or she might hear and respond to God's call in all that they do."*

C. Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

Gather

Invite a young person to stand in the front and center of the group, and to call forward the name of the person whose shoes he or she has.

Listen

Explain to participants that when they are called forward, they are to ask, *"Who do you say that I am?"*

Respond

In response to the question, the person holding the shoes will read from the sheet of paper.

Send Forth

Pray, *"Let us go forward from this sacred ground to encounter God in others. May each step we take fall on holy ground, so that our lives, and the lives of all those we encounter, will never be the same. We ask this, Yahweh, in your most holy name. Amen. Let us offer each other a sign of God's peace."*

