

## **Sermon    WHERE IS YOUR HOLY GROUND**

adapted from a Bible Study by Brian Markle in CoB Youth Sunday Resources  
youth read the parts in bold print, which are adapted from the Bible study resource

### **Where is Your Holy Ground?**

Youth: That is the question we want all of you to consider with us today. Just exactly where is *your* “holy ground”?

**Exodus 3:5** “‘Do not come any closer,’ God said. ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.’”

**Have you ever stood in a place that had a special meaning to you? Some place that was and will always be unforgettable for you?**

**Just thinking about that place brings to mind a memory that may be good, or even not so good. Each of us, at some time in our lives, have stood in a place that has given us a memory. You may have been by yourself in a place of quiet ‘reflection’ drawing you closer to God or maybe a memorable ‘wild and crazy’ time surrounded by people and noise. The ground you stood on may have been a place as simple as a scenic overlook, seeing God’s beauty from a vista, or the front row of a music concert experiencing the heart-pounding sounds of your favorite band or group, or in a historical church building feeling our awesome God close, very close to you.**

PJ: Where have you been that have been special “holy ground” places for you? Where have you felt particularly close to God? [youth share]

PJ: What about the rest of you [meaning, the congregation]? Are you remembering places that have been “holy ground” for you – places where you sensed God’s presence in a special way – on a mountain top or along a river or at the bedside of a dying friend or holding a newborn baby – are there special “holy ground” places that you go to when you need to feel close to the Lord?

PJ: One of our advisors talked about a special place on the farm where one could be alone with God and with oneself. This sanctuary can be a place to come to be close to God. Where is *your* holy ground?

**There are many places that we hold special and remember fondly in our hearts. There are experiences that have been particularly vivid -- we can remember what**

**we were doing and who we were with at the time. The “Holy Ground” in Exodus may not be what you were thinking about, but maybe it is not as different as you may believe.**

**God clearly has a history with “ground.”**

**“In the beginning, God created” are the very first words of the Bible. God created ground, and all ground belongs to God. On the third day of creating, God gathered the seas and let the dry ground appear. After God made the ground, he gathered some of that ground in his hands and created the first man and breathed life into his nostrils. Then God took a rib from the man and created a woman to be his helpmate. Each one of us is all linked to God through God’s creation of ground. We all have that ‘ground’ in common.**

PJ: That’s why in some funeral services, a minister might take a handful of dust and spread it out on the casket, reading from Genesis 3:19, “for dust you are and to dust you will return” or perhaps from Ecclesiastes 3:20, which recognizes that animal and human beings are much the same as they die: “all come from dust, and to dust all return.” We live in earthly bodies that are frail, made of dust. We do well to kneel humbly before God, our Maker.

**In our scripture today from Exodus 3, Moses was told by God, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you stand is Holy Ground.” The Lord God was present, and that made the ground holy.**

PJ: Let’s say that again – it was because God was present. That’s why that particular place was holy. The presence of God makes ground holy.

**Where, then, is the ‘holy ground’ of today for you? You may not have to remove your sandals at the mall, but the mall probably ranks high on the list of ‘Holy Ground’ places for most young people today. Everything you want or need – or don’t need – can be found there. The mall teems with life and is reflective of our culture ... See and be seen ... Every trendy store with its marketing genius hard at work.**

PJ: Do you and your friends hang out at the malls? [youth respond] Where else do you get together to talk with your friends? [youth respond]

**God can be there. God lives and thrives in relationships. ‘Did you see ...,’ ‘Guess who is going with ...,’ ‘What are you doing later?’ ‘He’s cute ...,’ ‘Want some pizza?’ ... on and on go the conversations. And you have a choice – to make that ‘ground holy’ by letting God be in your relationships or you can let the idols of our culture rule your world and relationships.**

PJ: That’s important! – Not just for the youth, but for all of us to hear ... that we must pay attention to God’s presence in the midst of the hubbub of our every-day relationships, so that we let God’s Ways guide us instead of following the patterns of the culture around us – with efforts to manipulate and overpower, to take short cuts, looking for love and happiness in all the wrong places. God’s call to set people free comes to each of us, wherever our “holy ground” might be.

**You have opportunity to stand on ‘Holy Ground’. Conversations may include drugs, sex, alcohol, who’s doing what to whom, lies, cheating, stealing, disobeying parents ... and you have the opportunity to either stand on ‘Holy Ground’ or fall prey to the easy way of the world.**

PJ: Have you had experiences where you “stood firm” instead of “falling prey” to the ways of the world? [youth respond] It is important to stay in touch with the “holy ground” – to be aware of God’s presence everywhere.

**Taking off his sandals, I am sure Moses was able to feel the ‘Holy Ground’ under his feet -- ‘Holy Ground’ that connects bare feet to a heart that is in right relationship to God.**

**“Holy Ground” is where you make it. Our God is wherever we need and allow him to be. Just as God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, God wants to speak to us. When we read God’s Word, we are in his presence. God speaks through his Word, shows us his holiness, tells us about himself and gives us tasks.**

PJ: Moses didn’t just have an awesome experience of the presence of the Holy God. Perhaps the most important part of what happened is that God gave him a task. Let’s read the rest of this passage from Exodus 3:5-10. [read the scripture]

PJ: Have you been given a task during your “holy ground” experiences? -- perhaps to take care of this awesome creation, perhaps to work to improve a relationship, perhaps to work for justice and peace, perhaps to take care of vulnerable people.

**God is looking forward to your coming to him so you will discover who he is and what he wants you to do. Take off your sandals, and connect with him on his ‘Holy Ground’. He is waiting for you. Amen.**

Hymn *Here I Am, Lord* with verses 395