

# SAGE Quest

## A Learning & Serving Curriculum *Of Journey*

Thank you for deciding to journey to the Yakama Indian Reservation and spend your time of learning and serving with us at the Yakama Christian Mission. My hope with this curriculum is to provide you with a resource that might enhance preparation for your visit. The goal of this curriculum is to better the conversation and reflection of this journey within your group.

As you use the curriculum please let me know about where you have problems, e.g., “The movies don’t work for my middle-schoolers.” If you have suggestions please send those on as well, e.g., “What about *Finding Nemo* for the Pilgrimage section for non-PG-13 groups ?” Also, after your Quest, please let me know about curriculum changes you would make. Together we will develop a fluid curriculum that improves and changes with each Quest.

The curriculum is broken into five sections. The first section is on pilgrimage. This section asks participants to reflect on what it means to think of their journey as a quest rather than a “worktrip,” or “missiontrip.” The next four sections coincide with topical conversations we expect to have each day of the SAGE Quest: Landscape, Culture, Economics, and Justice. All five are developed to encourage conversation. Because conversation is the basic component to experiencing the landscape of the reservation, we encourage modeling this before arriving.

The format is simple. Each section opens with a thought pertaining to the section title. Then a scripture is given with background and interpretation. Next are a few questions to spark conversation. Last is a suggested movie that might be watched as a group (or as individuals before getting together) and which might lead to conversation as it relates to the section.

Please copy any of this as is best for your group. If you have any questions please ask. And if you would like me to join one of your conversations by phone or Skype, let me know.

Be well, Dave

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## PILGRIMAGE

Pilgrimage, Phil Cousineau notes, “is an ancient tradition of the transformative journey to a sacred place.” SAGE Quest’s are better understood as pilgrimages than a *worktrip* or *missiontrip*. The base to a worktrips and missiontrips, as their names imply, are about changing something in the place of destination. The traveling participants may very well have life changing experiences on a worktrip or missiontrip, but the trip itself is not specifically about the participant. Whereas pilgrimages are specifically about the transformation of the participant and in that transformation work and change occurs in the place of destination. SAGE Quest is about the transformation one experiences in both the travel and the stay in the sacred landscape of the reservation.

A SAGE Quest pilgrimage allows at least two opportunities for a transformative experience. First is in the preparation and travel. Preparation is more than finding a time frame for journey, developing the means of travel, wondering about where to spend the night(s), and questioning where and how meals are prepared and eaten—though each of these questions enhance the transformative experience. A quest begins to have greater meaning when the participant/group begin to ask questions such as “what landscape am I beginning in?” e.g., At home, where in the horizon does the sun rise during the Winter Solstice, during the Summer Solstice?, “what landscapes I will travel through?” e.g., What one plant is found every 100-500 miles of travel that is unlike that of home?, and “what landscape I will live in when I arrive?” e.g., How might peoples culture of destination be like/unlike that of my home? Each of these lend themselves to a deeper questioning: *how will the Sacred travel with me* and *how will I recognize the Sacred?* Intentional questioning of and intentional asking for Sacred relationship prior to beginning the journey allows for deep and rich journeying. Paying attention to a journeys preparation allows the horizon to beckon and journey to unfold and the fear of *what’s going to happen next* to fade.

A quest also summons transformation the moment ones foot falls on reservation soil. For at that moment, one’s home culture begins to converse with the cultural landscape of another. In the framework of SAGE Quest, this is a rich conversation because new questions, new thoughts, and new ideas, impossible to explore at home well up in the journeyer’s life. One changes when they begin to center themselves toward learning the landscape of another and serving to enhance the landscapes wellbeing. And when one thoughtfully journeys to a place unlike that of their home, their imagination blossoms in a manner that is unattainable at home. Imaginative freedom, allows the journeyer to cross a threshold and enter into a Sacred relationship. Such relationship is transformative.

**Scripture:** Exodus 3:1-12

Intentional journey is the stuff of pilgrimage and quest. Richness is realized when one mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, prepares for a journey into the unknown. The Hebrew story of Moses and his journey across the wilderness is such an intentional pilgrimage.

Moses’ young life did not prepare him for his wilderness journey and his mountaintop transformative experience. Having spent his life in an urban setting, Moses was unaware that the landscape of open land might have something to say to him. Though the death event with the Egyptian is regrettable, the

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event led Moses down a path where he experienced the richness of landscape and found his life forever changed.

Killing a human being calls one to lead a life unlike any that might have been imagined before the event. Moses' world is turned upside down the moment he killed the Egyptian. Suddenly he needs to deal with what it means to take a human life. Suddenly he is filled with fear of what might happen to him. These suddenly's take him on a life-changing journey. This journey is not that of pilgrimage, but of fear, apprehension, and survival.

Moses leaves the urban setting of his youth and finds himself in a rural landscape unlike anything he has known. The new landscape calls him into a new way of living if he were to survive. Maybe it was chance, maybe it was destiny, in either case Moses meets Zipporah and because of Zipporah he begins to learn about a rural landscape beyond his imagination. This learning is deepened because upon marrying Zipporah Moses enters into a relationship with his father-in-law Jethro. Moses' imagination of the Sacred flourishes by have a priest for a father-in-law and conversations are unlike anything he has known before. Thirty years (some say) of conversations with a rural priest leads Moses to learn and hear the landscape as few have. Being in relationship with the landscape leads Moses to take a journey that was impossible years before.

This time, Moses intentional prepares for a journey. Unlike his young-adult journey that occurred at the spur of the moment, Moses contemplates, imagines, and asks questions before setting out on a journey that will take him to a landscape unlike that he has ever known. Intentional and thoughtful preparation readied Moses for a Sacred quest that can only be called transformative.

## **Conversation**

1. Have you ever taken a journey, a field trip, a hike, a walk that you had not given much thought about, but once on it you learned, observed, or experienced something you have never forgotten?
2. The Yakama valley is different than your home landscape. Your experience in the valley will naturally be different than at home. Yet, the imagination is creative and imagining allows for rich journeying. How do you imagine the Yakama valley—the soil, plants, animals, people, wind?
3. Your understanding of God, Creator, Mystery, Great Spirit, has changed as you have aged and experienced new places and people. How is your understanding of God different today than a year ago? five years ago? ten years ago?

**Movie: The Way** (PG-13) (2011) *The Way* is about an unintentional pilgrimage. Conversation might explore questions like: *What might the journey have been like had it been intentional? Why was the unintentional journey meaningful?*

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## LANDSCAPE

When one hears the word *landscape* what often comes to mind is that of *landscaping*—like *landscaping a yard*. Nothing wrong with such an image, however, landscape at its best is much bolder. Where landscaping deals with scenery and the manipulation of scenery, landscape is about Creation.

Landscape incorporates all of place. While landscape is of soil and plants, it is also of animals, humans, wind and interrelationship. Landscape lends toward the development of culture. Which means culture is an aspect of landscape. Therefore, landscape is much richer than is often thought of because landscape is more than the view of a hillside, lake, or desert reach; landscape is Creation's fullness in place.

What landscape is not is stable. Rather landscape is alive, fluid, and changing. There is life in the landscape, and when one chooses to listen to the voice of landscape they hear this life in a story that ranges from the ancient to the modern. Within this story is the stories are of the people. For those who have lived generationally in the landscape, the stories of their people can be heard in the land and on the wind. For those who are new to the landscape, the landscape remembers them from the moment foot was stepped upon the landscape.

The Yakama valley is one such landscape. It carries the voices of the ancients and the recently arrived, These voices and their stories are embedded in the soil of the valley, the dirt of the ridges, the roots of the plants, the paths of the animals, the wind that wanders through the valley, and most importantly—the people.

When understood this way it is easy to understand God-Creator-Spirit is in the midst of landscape. And by residing in the landscape, the Creator is waiting, calling, wanting for the journeyer to pay attention and ask *their* questions. Such attention allows for a conversation, unique to a particular landscape, to be had.

### **Scripture:** Matthew 6: 25-33

<sup>25</sup>“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup>And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? <sup>28</sup>And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup>yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you— you of little faith? <sup>31</sup>Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ <sup>32</sup>For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup>But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

The fullness of the landscape arises in this passage. The author of Matthew tells a story of Jesus where Jesus travels to a mountain and asks the community to consider life anew. In this call he asks folk to pay attention to that creation which they have learned to consider less than humanity. By gathering the birds and the lilies into a conversational comparison, Jesus asks the people to step beyond themselves to learn that a relationship with the Creator is much richer than they have imagined.

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Jesus poses the thought that all of Creation is made *good*. People, animals, and plants all are of the realm of God and all have value because they have all been created equal. However, because they have accepted societal views that have disconnected them from relationship with the landscape, they have forgotten the fullness of God is in their midst and lost the midst of landscape, found in the birdsong, the rippling of water, and the beauty of flower. This loss has made them a worrisome people. Jesus takes a step to say all of Creation is wonderfully made—flowers, animals, people—and if attention is paid to the creational life of God, their worries cease as the richness of life blossoms as they come to know God in creation.

## **Conversation**

1. Have you ever been outside on a windy day and thought you heard a voice, but moved on saying to yourself, “it is only the wind.” Might those non-human aspects of Creation speak a language humans could understand if they took the time to listen closely?
2. Where are your parents from? grandparents? great- grandparents? How might their lives in the landscape of their birth be different from yours? Yours from your children?
3. Is the landscape alive? Is it living? If not, does that matter to the way it is treated? If so, does that matter to the way it is treated?

**Movie: Electric Horseman** (PG) (1979) Electric Horseman tells a story that moves from an urban landscape to a rural-rustic landscape. The journey travels through many landscapes, each asking new questions of the characters—most noticed through the eyes of the reporter. Conversation might explore questions like: *What are sounds and sights of each community? Does the wind sound different at the home of each person in the room? What does it mean to see or not see mountains or desert or ocean from your home?*

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## CULTURE

Many congregations and institutions claim multiculturalism. However, folk also have a hard time distinguishing between multiculturalism and diversity. Diversity is about variety. A diverse community can be made of many cultures. However, a diverse community does not necessarily mean the community's people engage one another's culture. Multicultural is similar, except conversation is engage between the community's cultures. A multicultural community goes deeper than a diverse community because the people of each culture struggle with their identity, their heritage, and their history in the midst of relationship with others.

To understand this is to understand culture. Culture rises out of the landscape. The landscape informs who the people are, how they live, and how they survive. Therefore, basic culture, a peoples dress, food, art, law, and religion are informed by the landscape in which they live. For instance the clothing of a Mojave Desert people is different from a people on the north coast of Ireland. Similarly, art and laws are different between the two. As such, *what is right and what is wrong* for one community may not be the same for another—a backcountry Alaskan village may have parental rules that require toddlers to wear heavy coats when outside in January, where the folk on the coast of Hawaii may think it more important that all children learn how to swim—not only are laws different, but they may have now similarity. The same holds true with food—hunting cultures eat different than gathering cultures, and art—lake cultures might weave baskets where desert cultures might make pottery. Landscape also informs a cultures way of understanding Creator, God, Allah, Spirit. Because of experience, the Creator may sound and act different for a people who live with eyes and ears full of windblown sand than from those who live in a landscape of conifers, rivers, and misty evenings.

Therefore a diverse congregation might be have folk who are Polish, American Indian, Welsh, African-American, Philippine, Jamaican, and say, Korean heritages. However, the culture of these heritages remain in the background while the culture of the dominate groups drives what is considered *normal* for the group. A congregation may have folk of many cultures, but if the laws, the food, and the most difficult, the religion of the many cultures are not reflected in the community, the congregation is one of diversity.

A multicultural community though, is quite different and the struggles much greater. In a nutshell, a multicultural community is neither passive nor quiet for all cultures are vying for voice, style, law, religion, art. Multicultural communities in their own way develop a culture that is unique from all the others while allowing all other to maintain their cultural heritage. Recognizing this is to understand the beliefs of religious multicultural community is no longer centered in the religious history or faith of a dominate culture, but a developing history of blended understandings of faith and Sacred. Multicultural is a normality of cultural interweaving while holding cultural and traditional independence. Thus to be a diverse congregation, while hard, is easy compared to becoming a multicultural congregation.

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**Scripture:** Luke 20: 27-38

Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to him and asked him a question, ‘Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies, leaving a wife but no children, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. Now there were seven brothers; the first married, and died childless; then the second and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. Finally the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her.’

Jesus said to them, ‘Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. Indeed they cannot die any more, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.’

The author of Luke encourages us engage in the possibility that we may to rethink what we believe is normal. To do that is to rethink our cultural norms—laws and religion being the big two. This does not mean to leave our culture behind, but rather to wonder about has it has been passed down to us—another way of saying this is how our culture is interpreted to us by others.

The story opens with the Sadducees calling upon the tradition of Moses saying, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies, leaving a wife but no children, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother.” Jesus challenges the Sadducees to grasp that they are taking a societal norm and making it a cultural religious norm.

Jesus recognizes that the traditional teaching of Moses is one of life. That in a time of homelessness, when a people are required to walk to survive, a wife’s loss of a husband is devastating. For the one within the walking culture who has the ability and the authority to find food and maintain a family is lost. Culturally, the wife has lost her ability to feed herself and maintain *any* status within her community. Having ones brother marry his widow is a culturally compassionate law that allows the woman to survive in a time when there is no town, no city that might otherwise afford opportunities of survival.

Jesus challenge to the Sadducees comes from their saying, “In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be?” For in this line they move away from the cultural norm of compassion—saving the woman from dying, and buys into the societal norm that the woman is property. Jesus calls the religious leaders to recognize *they* have made a societal norm a cultural norm. In doing so, Jesus calls them to understand that instead of standing counter to societal norms that cause death, they have both married these norms of death into their understanding of God *and* are in the process of marrying the minds of their children into these same norms.

Jesus boldly moves forward saying that in the age of God (which he believes is *now*) people are called to neither marry nor to give their children into the marriage of beliefs (such as that of women as property) that cause death. Jesus counters Sadducee thinking by countering their use of Moses law with Moses story. In using the story of the bush, Jesus reminds the Sadducees that God is not a “God ...of the dead, but of the living;” for to God all of them “[Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob] are alive.” Jesus pushes back by saying the true culture of the people is one of compassion and life.

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Luke has us observe one instance where cultural norms butt up against one another. In this case, Luke calls the people to know their own culture intimately. For only by knowing themselves and the lives of their ancestors can they navigate in cultures unlike their own. In the course of knowing self, we are better able to know the richness found in the midst of many cultures.

## **Conversation**

1. What cultures do we have in the room? Are these really cultures or are they heritage?
2. If we are a multicultural congregation, how are we honoring the faith of all our people? Are Buddhist, Sikh, Islam, Jewish practices, for instance, intertwined into our Christian practices? If so, then are we practicing Christianity? If so, are we honoring the faiths of Hinduism, Washatt, Baha'i?
3. If we live within a dominate culture, can other cultures really have an identity?
4. Is it possible to be bi-cultural? If so, is bi-cultural what we are called to be? If so, can we be bi-cultural without appropriating the culture of others?

**Movie: Rabbit Proof Fence** (PG) (2002) Rabbit Proof Fence tells a story of clashing cultures. This Australian story mirrors the story of European colonization of the North America and the subjugation of American Tribes and peoples. The story works well for conversation in the United States because the viewer experiences one culture dominating another through the lenses of another continent. This allows the moderator of conversation to have views, feeling, and emotions to come into the conversation through the context of another. Then the moderator can move conversation (as appropriate to the group) into the context of the group's home landscape. Rabbit Proof Fence is a powerful movie and the moderator should be aware that many folk will have problems experiencing the hurtful actions seen in the movie as the actions of their fore-folk in the United States—conversation itself could be hurtful to the participants.

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## ECONOMICS

There are a number of ways to define economics. For instance, economics might be defined as knowledge that is concerned with the production, consumption, and transfer of wealth. Another definition is to understand economics as the social science that studies how individuals, governments, firms and nations make choices on allocating scarce resources. An important consideration is to grasp economics is a human construct rather than a Sacred creation. In other words, economics is not soil or plants or animals or humans, but rather a process/method developed by humans to control the use of soil, plants, animals, and humans.

One might fairly say there is no need for economics in the naturally created world. However, due to human intervention economics has replaced the natural interaction of creation in most of the world's landscapes. Since creation's natural order is lost, and any sense of creational balance vanished, we need some way to talk about restoring harmony. Therefore, we use what folk are most familiar with—economics, to talk about how to restore creational balance.

Pairing economics with justice is a step toward the restoration of creational harmony. To be clear, economic justice is *only a step* for it is mostly, if not all, about people. The land, plants, or animals are but a second thought. However, if folk are ever to find harmony in creation again, humanity must first learn to engage their human neighbor with a radical abundance of compassion and justice. Once that is done, then meaningful steps toward the restoration of creational harmony can occur (Of course this isn't hard and fast, or one or the other. Work of restoring harmony with the land, plants, and animals must occur while working to better human to human relationships).

Economic justice is a consideration of how the human community functions. To deal with this is to think about how businesses and institutions consume and allocate resources for the wellbeing or non-wellbeing of humans. These institutions include every sector of society: schools, hospitals, police, banks, insurance agencies, airports, railroads, restaurants, and, of course, Churches/ Mandirs/Synagogues/ Mosques/ Gurdwaras/Long-Houses. Economic justice concerns itself with creating a community where humans need not worry about food, healthcare, and shelter, thus freeing them to live a life where their mind and spirit naturally engages their created being *and the created being of others*.

### **Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 12: 21-26

The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

"The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'" These words are so powerful and radical, interpreters normally diminished their impact. Rather than interpreting these words as a call for economic justice, they are marginalized to speak only to individual gifts.

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While Paul calls the people to recognize the gifts of individuals, he also calls them to grasp the community cannot survive without the gift of *every* person. Such a call is to understand the gift of every person is as valuable as the next. Carried to its logical conclusion is to say no gift is worth more than another. In our modern context, this theological (God talk) construct is to say all folk (dancers, attorneys, musicians, carpenters, doctors, farm-workers) are economically equal and as such should live with equitable resources.

Such radical thinking calls for (in our current economic construct) those whose work is of the *Head*—say academic (pharmaceutical scientist), to adjust income so equitable compensation is allowed for those whose work is of the *Feet*—say physical (plumber). Such thinking calls for drastic rethinking of our current economic system of how and why people are paid that amount they are for the work they do.

## **Conversation**

1. Should an attorney, a doctor, an accountant, an architect, be paid more than a social worker, a carpenter, a plumber, a pastor, or a farmworker? Why? Try justifying your answer by finishing this sentence, “God argues the pay of an accountant and a plumber should be the same/different because...”

**Movie: Trading Places** (R) (1983) Trading Places promotes a conversation of how access to education, business, and politics influence access to economic well-being. **A Christmas Carol** (Great if you are looking for a (G) or (GP) rating.) Most any one of the many *A Christmas Carol* movies does a good job of dealing with economic disparity and promoting a conversation to the reasons why there are *haves* and *have-nots*.)

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## JUSTICE FOR ALL

Much of humanity sees the world through anthropocentric lenses. Believing Creation is based in a hierarchical system with humans at *the top*, humans have marginalized the landscape. What was once created with radical equality and sweeping justice is now a landscape of thorough injustice.

The mindset of humanity being *better* than all other creation has made it okay to judge non-human creations purpose is to serve humanity. Such thinking has led upside down thinking. Where humanity once believed their purpose was to serve the wellbeing of creation—plants, animals, soil; belief now deems plants, animals, and soil were created to serve the whims of humanity. Such thinking has led to creational imbalance.

This loss of balance has driven humanity to treat creation as a commodity or asset. No balance means creation harmonious relationship has experienced death and the result has made it okay to tear mountain tops off to extract coal, okay to pump pressurized liquids into the earth until earths bowels are fracked to extract gasses, and okay to raise animals in unnatural conditions allowing them to be mistreated as if they are commodities so humans might eat unnatural amounts of meat at absurdly low prices. The loss of harmony means humanity has lost its understanding of balance, harmony and ancient concept of shalom.

With the loss of shalom has also come the loss of justice. Creation is now fractured because the human component has loss its relationship with its natural created neighbor. For instance, humanity no longer experiences the wind as its sister in creation and because of this loss it is now okay to fill the air with toxins. Shalom, the balance of creation is lost today because it is no longer possible for all animals of creation to breath clean cool air.

To reclaim balance and a new sense of shalom, humanity must renew an ancient worldview that claims the web of creation. Such reclamation understands no part of creation is independent. Rather every aspect of creation, from the smallest particle of existence to the furthest outreaches of the universe(s) are interdependent upon one another. Such knowledge lived out recognizes creations familial relationship. Such relationship allows for a natural living out of justice for then the justice of sister corn and brother rabbit is the harmonic relationship of Creator and Creation.

### **Scripture:** Deuteronomy 26: 5-9

“you shall make this response before the Lord your God: ‘A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labour on us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

Speaking in the court of King Solomon the Deuteronomic priest makes a call for justice. The priest is in a time when it doesn’t get any better for the Hebrew people. They are independent, there is plenty of food and housing, and their children are not at risk from other empires. In the midst of these good times the priest looks around and is alarmed.

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For the priest recognizes the justice the Hebrews are living out is no better than the justice they once knew in Egypt. Throughout the landscape the priest finds slaves in the vineyards, herding the cattle, and in the homes of the wealthy. Other than the size of their empire, the living conditions of non-Hebrews is no different than the injustice the Hebrews experienced as non-Egyptians long ago.

The priest turns to the people and asks: “Don’t you remember when you wandered and had no home?” “Do you not remember you days as a slave and were treated harshly?” “Do you not know your God is a God of justice and compassion who brought you out of Egypt and gave you freedom?” “Do you not know that you God give you this wonderful land and you have turned it into a place of oppression and injustice?”

This text calls for a new understanding of shalom. This understanding is unlike what they thought of before, for this is a justice and a peace is not for *a people* but for *all people*. In our modern context this call not only continues, but it is a call for *more*. For now we are called to understand *justice for all* creation. Justice that is good for humans is a call for harmony for everything. A radical justice to be sure, for this is a call of understanding the mountains, the air, the plants, the animals, and the ever reaching universe is our kin.

## **Conversation**

1. Thinking of “Creation,” does God have a preference for humanity?
2. The Hebrew creation story has plants and animals created prior to humanity. Each declared “good” for its own unique creativity. Is all of creation equal or are some aspects of creation better than others?
3. Do plants or animals or soil have a God given *right* to justice? Is that justice different than the justice humans should have?

**Movie: Smoke Signals** (PG-13) (1998) Smoke Signals walks a trail that borders the known and the almost known, of human knowledge and knowledge residing at the edge of human perception. The movie can lead to group conversations that might arise out of questions like, “What is the justice of the breaking of fry bread?” “What is the importance of the women driving the car backwards? How is this implied throughout the movie?” “What is the dogs name? What does it have to do with the lives of Victor and Thomas?” “Thomas Builds-the-Fire ends the movie speaking to ‘How do we forgive our fathers?...and, ‘If we forgive our fathers, what is left?’ What does that have to do with the justice concerning the water?, the wind?, the salmon?, and their relationship with humanity?”